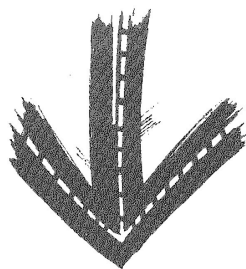


EXCURSIONS



Fite Dem Back

*We gonna smash their brains in
Cause they ain't got nothin' in 'em
Some of dem say dem a nigger hater
Some of dem say dem a nigger beater
Some of dem say in a black star bar
Some of dem say dem a Paki-basher
Fascists on di attack
No matter worry 'bout dat
Fascists on di attack
We will fite dem back
Fascists on di attack
We will counter-attack
Fascists on di attack
We will drive dem back.
L.K.J.*



LINTON KWESI JOHNSON

Politics in the Cultural Trenches

It's not for me to define my audience. Well who are you? What are your political views? Are you political or non-political? Why did you come to see my show? For the music? For the poetry? I don't know who my audience is. My audience is whoever comes. Being involved in sound organizations who have a clear political position worked out over a period of years is a source of tremendous strength to me and it would be very strange if I'm writing about things going on in England and whatever I have to say isn't informed by that political position. My audience? I see black people come to my shows. I see white people come to my shows. I see young, I see old.

Structurally, Larry's is one of the worst place in Toronto to listen to music. "Obstructed view" is transformed into a principle. Aesthetically, however, it's always seemed perfectly in line hardcore rock and roll nights: loud, dirty and cavern-like. Appropriately scuzzy.

Perhaps it was against this background that Linton Kwesi Johnson's performance took on its anomalous character. Introducing the social and political origins of each of his songs he moved easily from "Inglan is a Bitch", to "Di Eagle and Di Bear", to "Di Black Petty Booshwah" and it became clear, not only through the lyrics but also through the detail of his introductions ("We expected support from certain sectors of the white left..."), that the regular clientele of Larry's was in for a very different type of evening.

Backed by Dennis Bovell and the excellent Dub Band, Linton Johnson's music charted the racist and fascist attacks on blacks in Britain and the daily oppression black immigrants face in the position assigned them by bourgeois and colonial ideology. While songs like "Sonny's Lettuh Home (Anti-SUS Poem)" and "Di Insuh-recshun" concentrated on the particular conditions for blacks within Britain, other songs were more global, such as "Reggae Fi Rodney", commemorating the assassination of Walter Rodney, leader of the Worker's Party in Guyana, or "What About Di Workin' Class", a comparison between Poland and England.

Our experiences in Britain are still my pivotal point and everything else emanates from that. If it seems much broader, perhaps that's only a reflection of my political development over the years.

To open the second set, Johnson came out without the band and recited a number of his poems without accompaniment. In essence, this was Linton Kwesi Johnson: a very serious poet, not a performer. His deeply intoned poetry arises out of strong political commitments and his concern is to communicate artistically, as a poet, the experiences of an oppressed people.

I just saw it as artistic activity which had no political significance and relevance hopefully. But to see it primarily as Art and Art how to entertain people. If it doesn't entertain people then it's just cheap propaganda. It must conform to certain artistic criteria. So I've always seen it as artistic activity with political relevance... Once you begin to put a political role to your art you can get into difficulties.

Johnson's concentration on his music as poetry, his poems set within reggae, is a concentration on the voice as instrument. In the lilt and pauses of Jamaican-English Johnson captures both the art of the story-telling tradition and the dramatic emphasis of poetic utterance; a sonorous, verbal music. As well in Johnson's writing, the Creole Jamaican enunciation is spelled out, an affirmation of Jamaican language and idiom. Johnson's music become the scat rhythms of his language.

In this sense Johnson joins on oral history within popular music pioneered by the jazz poets or the '50s, Gil Scott-Heron, Amiri Baraka, Melvin Van Peebles, Elaine Brown and The Last Poets. Their poetry expressed, through distinctly Afro-American forms, the daily effects of capitalism in limiting and shaping the life-experience of oppressed people. Perhaps this was clearest in Johnson's reading alone a poem for his father who died two years ago, "Reggae Fi Daddi". The story of a man who had nothing but "just one life to give". Through this unsentimental unfolding of the nature of his father's life, Linton Johnson captures the essence of neo-colonial existence.

All that's happening in American music (rap) is they're using the dub technique reggae's been using for years... the American version of the reggae DJ and the rapping thing is an extension of that, and yes there is that particular social focus. In fact the rappers have brought back that social element, that protest element, that political content, back into black music in America because, post black-power period, it seemed to be 'let's get down' and that's all their was to it.

This tradition in popular music, however, has its own basis in the much deeper history of African oral traditions and culture. It is expressed in such diverse forms as Hi-Life, Miriam Makeba's Azanian 'click' songs, Thomas Mafumfo's music from Zimbabwe, Sonny Ade, and is the inspiration for recent material from David Byrne, Brian Eno, and Peter Gabriel. The force giving rise to Linton Johnson's material comes out of an oral tradition characteristic of Jamaican national music today. Just as LKJ's songs reflect the oppression and rage of blacks in Britain, the current political affairs of Jamaica, Seaga's phony elections, are all telegraphed through popular reggae tunes. From Eek-A-Mouse, John and others, music becomes the form through which people's voices are expressed and their daily conditions recorded.

I've never tried to fuse politics into my poetry whatsoever. The fact of it is my initial impetus to write came out of my political convictions. So it wasn't a matter of bringing politics to bear on my poetry. That was the nature of the inspiration anyway. I write about what I write about because those are the things which move me emotionally or intellectually and I write about them. It's not a matter of bringing politics to bear on it. That is the nature of it.



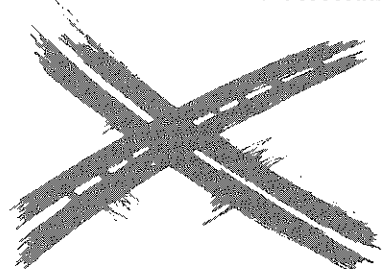
Within this cultural history, Linton Kwesi Johnson's position is unique. He expands and continues the aural/oral traditions of a national culture. Johnson's poems arise out of a political sensibility and commitment; they are at once critical and popular. Throughout his material, independence of action and autonomy are stressed, whether for blacks in Britain or for liberation struggles in the Third World. His difference within a pop field, even within reggae itself, is an expression of his own independence as an artist, poet, and political activist.

I'm just writing poetry in my language, Jamaican poetry, about things I feel are important, trying to convey the experience of what blacks and Asians are in Britain. I'm doing so in the reggae tradition . . . Nothing has changed (since the riots of 1980). Only that some of the houses we burnt down should of been demolished years ago and now they're building some new ones. But Brixton isn't black Britain. Black Britain is London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Bradford, Leeds, the inner cities. We're stronger now than we've ever been and we have a greater sense of what we can do in extreme situations. From that point of view there's been a transformation in people's consciousness, people are much more aware of what they can do now than before.

Johnson is a member of the *Race Today* collective and the liner notes on *Making History* (his latest LP) give a comprehensive outline of their activities in such groups as the Black Parents Movement, Black Youth Movement and of Johnson's relationship as an artist to these. Unlike many performing artists and entertainers Johnson is not immersed in music to the exclusion of a political practice. It is this which defines Linton Johnson's strengths and consistency as an artist and what surfaces in his poetry, his recordings and through his presence on a club stage.

We've been able to win some new audiences because I'm sure some of the people coming to see me have never heard of me before . . . that's why I always take the trouble to introduce each number so people can be clear what I'm going on about. I believe in beginning with the particular and coming to the general. It's in our particular focuses that we tend to make general statements of universal relevance. You don't suddenly from somewhere out of the blue grasp the universal.

Denis Corcoran



DISCOGRAPHY

'Dread Beat An' Blood'—Poet and The Roots; Virgin, 1978
'Forces of Victory'—Linton Kwesi Johnson; Mango, 1979
'Bass Culture'—Linton Kwesi Johnson; Mango, 1980
'Making History'—Linton Kwesi Johnson; Mango, 1984

The Bun, the Beef

There were somewhat fewer than 45 billion papers served at the 1984 convention of The Popular Culture Association and The American Culture Association. Given the claim by the associations that there were 1,400 participants, my guess is that about 1,100 papers were given. How are we to read this figure? Does it simply assert that volume is a virtue in and of itself? Or is it a subtle warning that given the number of papers some may leave the audience asking, "Where's the beef?" For me, the number of titles in the program simply represented an overwhelming array of sessions. In the end those I chose to attend, were for the most part, focused on literary texts. While a few of the papers I heard might be described as intellectual white buns, devoid even of sesame seeds (and a couple could be described as stale), by far the majority were intellectually meaty. Speakers chose to discuss a wide range of texts: Alcott, Emerson, Canadian women poets, the novels of Engel, of Hammett and of Hansen, to name a few. But for me, attending the conference as both a participant and member of the audience, the important issue became the assumed relation of the literary critic to the study of popular culture.

Of course, the sophomoric analogy to be read in my title was intended to make an obvious point: while the subject of the conference was popular culture it was also its determinant. None of us is immune to the effects of popular culture. It determines our consciousness. Yet, the posture the literary critic so assuredly adopts is that of the outsider who critiques popular culture from this position of privilege. Thus, there is a failure to acknowledge that culture reads the critic even as the critic reads culture; no position of critical privilege exists.

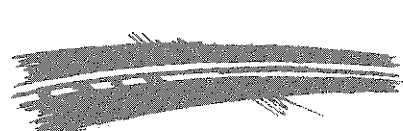
Let me recount two incidents which precipitated my formulation of the question. The first was an exchange in one of the few non-literary sessions I attended. After an uncritical, and therefore politically problematic, presentation of ethnic jokes, the speaker was asked, "What is popular culture?" She had no answer. Her inability even to begin to address the term "popular culture" was not, I suspect, exceptional. While it might be expected that all of the speakers would question, to some degree, the notion of popular culture, this was not the case. Not only did the speakers fail to interrogate the terms of their criticism but the audience never called for them to do so. This suppressed interrogation of the notion of popular culture

in all of the papers I heard (and I include my own) is curious. I now ask: what is the implication of this suppression? What is this silence?

If we allow that commodification constructs mass culture, which in the industrialized world is an aspect of popular culture, the silence is a refusal to articulate critical praxis within relations of commodification. This was illustrated by the session called "Cultural Metamorphosis in Margaret Atwood's Work." After the four papers had been read an agent from a university press in Texas announced that a collection of essays in honour of Atwood's visit to the campus will be published. Submissions were invited. Then there was another announcement made by someone else to the assembled: The Margaret Atwood Society, to be affiliated with The Modern Language Association, is being founded. Atwood's cultural metamorphosis would seem not to be simply restricted to her literary work. She is a commodity. Canadian publishers have long recognized that Atwood's picture on the jacket of a book or the cover of a magazine will generate sales. Atwood, the commodity, now has been franchised to academics. Atwood scholarship is an industry of feminist and Canadian studies. What could be more symptomatic of Atwood's cultural metamorphosis into a commodity than my grammatical transposition of her name into an adjective?

While I am not prepared to assert that economics is the primary determination of human activity it is one of them. The silence inscribed by the literary critic's refusal to acknowledge this determination allows the construction of critical privilege. The importance of the critic is validated by his role as the de-coder of textual mysteries. The critic, however, does not stand outside of the network of textual relations. The critic reads from within a praxis which is socially constructed. Thus, a complex inter-reading between society and critic is established by every reading. It is neither to be condemned nor celebrated because there is neither an inside nor an outside where critical praxis is located. Literary criticism must recognize its project is located within social and historical determinants. The refusal to make such a recognition is tantamount to an affirmation of existing social relations. Thus, the silence pre-empts the possibility of a radical literary praxis. Critics must articulate the complex of relations so that they may speak of popular culture. Regrettably this did not happen at the literary sessions.

Ann Wilson



Discussions: Art & Criticism in the Eighties

Because Toronto would not go to the mountain, *Parachute* brought the conference to Toronto. The Montreal-based magazine had to bring the three-day conference on art and criticism in the 1980s (Ontario College of Art, March 16-18) to the communications capital of Canada, said organizer Johanne Lamoureux, because that is where you come to talk. The double-bind of this tale of two cities is that to get heard one thereby confirms that Toronto is where everything happens.

Yet it would be an extraordinary reduction to describe this conference as a conflict between two cities: Montreal busily assimilating post-structuralist discourse from France, Toronto longing for a country where "art" is spelt with a capital A. Even if this describes the difference between Lamoureux of *Parachute* magazine and Richard Rhodes, Toronto-based editor of the new *C* art magazine, there were many other voices, many other discourses.

Indeed, it seemed that Richard Rhodes had a rough time of it. The highlights of the three days of discussion can be described in terms of the *trace* or shadow that is the beloved of the post-structuralists, or in terms of an on-going activity or practice. The first neo-expressionist painting seen by John Scott was spray-painted on a Detroit store window and it survived three minutes until the glass was smashed by a rock or a bullet. The first slide shown at this conference was a lingering gay parade pornographic image show by Tim Guest. My own memory is the deep intelligent voice of Benjamin Buchloh. It seemed to embrace what he had to say. These are the shadows. Speakers at the conference repeatedly described our situation as unheroic, post-feminist and beyond revolutionary politics. The voices of *activity* seemed not to believe this. These voices are local and women's voices. John Bentley Mays and Philip Monk want a local and historical art criticism about the city of Toronto. And as yet another male-dominated panel took the stage on the third day of the conference an anonymous woman's voice said, "It's another boys' club."

"Richard Rhodes has been digging his own grave," said John Bentley Mays (art critic for *The Globe and Mail*), speaking from the floor. "I have come to help him." Rhodes had said that the conference topics set by the organizers kept us at arm's-length from the new. He objected to the blocking stance of such questions as: "The Burden of History: A New Amnesia?" and "Intentions: Must We Mean What We Say/Do What We Mean?" He found the set questions irresponsible because the new art work, which provoked the conference in the first place, questions the stability of an art-critical discourse of external description. The value of intentions is that they are the personal striving matrix that is the purpose of the new art.

What is this "full weight of the work" to which Rhodes was attached, asked Mays. Art work is a *verb* and not a noun. It was suggested that what Rhodes needed was a humanist grid or method instead on an appeal to "the inner movement of the work." It was clear that the effect of Rhodes' appeal to the full weight of the work is to postpone issues of cultural politics in art. Benjamin Buchloh pointed out that Rhodes is trapped in a code or concept of essentialism. What is this "movement of the work itself?" There is no universalizing movement in history as we know it, he continued, only concrete and historical practices which can be changed. Buchloh himself is interested in such matters as the role of the audience for art, and the institutionalization of art work, along with the power that legitimizes some of what is produced. There are issues of centralization and control in the dominant centres and galleries. How are minorities represented in art institutions and discourses? The artist is a cultural interpreter, though all art does not have to do this (there is a place for transgression and even fun), and certainly other practices also do it.

There was an interesting contrast between the revised Kantian aesthetic proposed by Thierry de Duve and calls for a Toronto art criticism that is anthropological and historical. For de Duve, all claims to be a mere "description" of art are inevitably a hidden abuse of power. Unlike Rhodes, he does not believe in the possibility of such description. His project is to rehabilitate aesthetic judgement. Anything can and should be *judged* art. This is not a disinterested judgement. It involves the personal responsibility to say: yet this is art. Such judgements postulate a universality which is not the voice of everyone but a necessary and *impossible* universal voice. Such judgements are not final, but are themselves open to judgement. In an age that apparently lacks utopias, perhaps the small utopia that remains is that anyone could name or produce art. In this revision of Kant, we retain all elements except the postulate of disinterestedness. To say, "this shovel is art," is not a description, but a prescription. Art is not a thing. It is an operation of judgement.

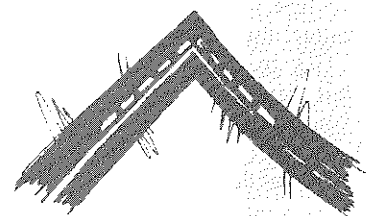
In spite of de Duve's denial that he intends to raise a new universalism, it is difficult to see how such a project could ever mesh with the local art-critical discourses called for by John Bentley Mays and Philip Monk. Recent art in Toronto, said Mays, operates to create a pseudo-community among artists, dealers and collectors, built around the idea of the artist as victim. We must demystify artists' transhistorical pretensions about desire and subjectivity. A proper historical question might be: what are the structures in Toronto such that artists feel victimized? The answer, suggests Mays, is that Toronto is the most authoritarian civic structure in North America. At the centre of Canadian information networks, the city of Toronto is enclosed in rigid authority structures. In attempting to develop a local criticism for this centre of power, a weak and discredited language of criticism may be most effective. Mays suggested two possibilities: the critique of a culture of information developed by recent canonic theology, and a *fictional* criticism drawing on the bourgeois novel. For example, there is a specificity about desire and the city in the novels of Dickens. This example may provide a format for a local, historical criticism. Mays is himself writing, apart from his work for *The Globe and Mail*, such a fictional criticism.

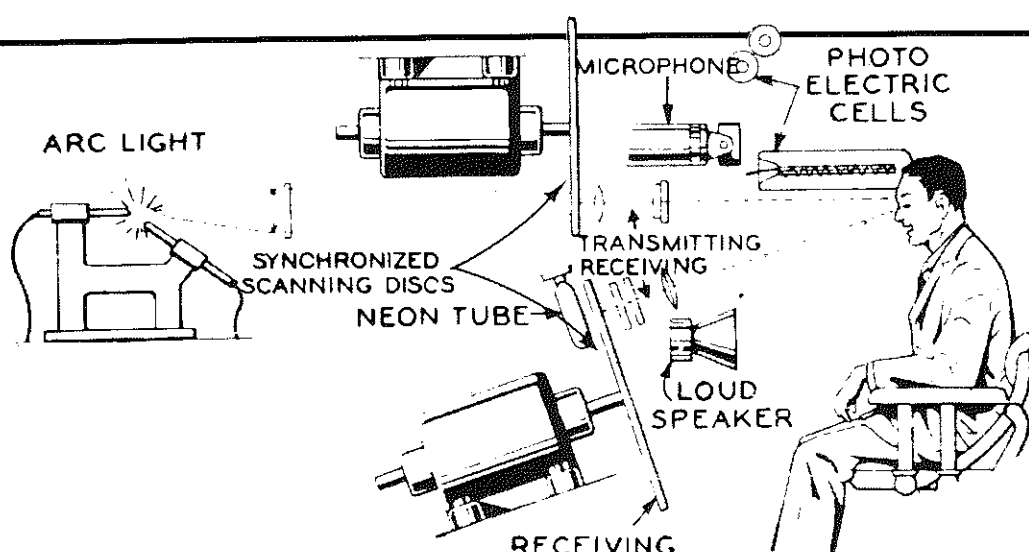
The first slide of the conference was shown at the end of day one by Tim Guest. From the first of four exhibitions which he organized at A Space in 1983 on the theme of "Sex and Representation," the image was one of those slightly absurd classical Greek figures beautifully photographed a century ago by Baron de Gloeden. Someone said that it was refreshing to see an image at last. What no one said is that this image at an international conference on recent art practice, still had the effect of a shock. It challenged, as did the exhibition it came from, the taboo on gay imagery in Toronto. Sold my mail order in the cottage-industry period of homosexual pornography, de Gloeden's vaguely classical imagery remained an important prototype of gay porn until the 1960s. Describing viewers' reaction to the exhibition, Guest said that different responses told us something about the social order rather than about the amorous soul. It says something about the social construction of sexual representations that straight men were indifferent or worse, women found the photographs cold and forbidding (women's socialization into sexuality is surrounded by warnings and prohibitions), while gay men recognized the imagery even if they had never heard the name of Baron de Gloeden. Commenting that this show, and the three other "Sex and Representation" exhibitions, seemed to have little direct effect on debates in the women's movement, the gay movement, or the Toronto art scene, Guest suggested that that may have been because he offered complexity instead of immediate answers.

One sensed that Guest's presentation and later John Scott's description of his politics in art were heard and then promptly marginalized. Scott said that his primary identity was not as a painter. He had intended in the 1970s to be a Marxist theoretician of culture and the ideological. In those days to be such a theorist had seemed a possibility. He turned to art as a way of getting attention for what he wanted to say. A successful painting, like his recent cruise missile image, is one that is used in newspapers and wallposters throughout the city.

The project of elaborating a feminist art-critical discourse never really got off the ground. During the two hours devoted to the topic, sexuality was never once mentioned. Neither was the equally difficult notion of a lesbian art. Most comments were criticisms of male-dominated art institutions. Later in the conference, Joyce Mason, managing editor of *Fuse* magazine, criticized the material conditions of the conference itself. Feminist practice has developed an alternative to speakers on a platform. There are other models for communication than taking turns at being the smartest boy on the block and using Kant or Lacan. In institutions such as the Womens' Cultural Building and Womens' Perspective there is a connectedness of many social forms of culture and conversation about them. René Payant said, speaking from the floor, that this was unfair on two counts. It was unfair to invite people from the universities and then to accuse them of being intellectuals. As for the platform and microphones, he too enjoyed developing ideas collectively with a small group of people, but when there are 300 people at a conference, it is good to be able to see the speakers and to hear them properly through a public address system. The material organization of this large public forum was extremely well done. At this point there was a round of applause for the technical staff who were producing the conference as an audiovisual practice but were hidden from view behind curtains and screens.

Alan O'Connor





"There is no getting away from the machine. It is only the use of it that is in your control."
- Jacques Barzun -

The A/PCA Conference: Science Fiction

"The function of science fiction, in common phrase is to provide social commentary with gadgets."

"Daleks, Cybermen, Xoanon, and the Key to Time Mortal Engines and Manicheism in the Television Series, *Doctor Who*", Frank W. Oglesbee

"Any criticism that ignores the ideological functions of paraliterature (or any literature) upholds a formalism that is itself guilty of an ideology that affirms the status quo."

"Ideological Functions of Science Fiction: Limitations and Possibilities of a Critical Approach to Popular Literature", H.J. Schulz

"... without those narratives, our abilities to cope with technological change would be greatly impaired."

"Science Fiction as Modern Mythos: The Archetypes of Science", C.W. Spinks

"Science fiction literature frequently involves themes which relate to the philosophy of mind."

"Philosophy of Mind and Science Fiction", Lee F. Werth

"We all wonder whether the horrors and madness of the twentieth century will ever be overcome."

"Madness in the Psychological Horror Film", Francis Shor

"... young academics who had wanted to write literary criticism of science fiction, but had been intimidated from doing so by fear that such work would seem inconsequential."

"... and many tend to model their own work along structuralist theoretical lines sketched by these two."

"The true SF buff waits for the solution to become manifest, and is then disappointed."

"Writers of the 'Golden Age': Pop Fiction, Metafiction, and Science Fiction", Thomas J. Remington

"... ready to be sacrificed, dismembered and scattered around, only to produce again, from this dissemination of fragments, narrative modes and traditions, a new harvest of meanings."

"... how to 're-invent themselves and their universe' chiefly through science fiction."

"Kurt Vonnegut's *Carousel of Narrative Forms*", Marcel Cornis-Pop

Approximately 23 of the approximately 416 sessions at the A/PCA conference dealt approximately with science fiction (that's approximately 5.5%).

Insofar as these sessions dealt with science fiction, in regards to a certain methodological machinery brought to bear upon objects of interest for criticism or analysis, they dealt with science fiction. They handled science fiction.

Insofar as these sessions dealt with a certain methodological machinery brought to bear upon objects of interest for criticism or analysis, they marked the efficacy, or inefficacy, of the application of the machinery. They laid the cards out and indicated the strength of the hand.

Insofar as these machines marked out the operation of a certain methodological machinery and further marked out the demarcation of a certain social machinery, these machines were put into motion without grounding the relationship between the construction of machines which construct the machinery of construction of a narrative machinery which demarcates the social machinery, and the very putting into motion of these machines as another (or a further) certain narrative machinery demarcating a certain social machinery. These stories about stories with significant social implications did not implicate themselves socially. These analyses were not analyzed.

Insofar as these analyses were analyzed they were analyzed insofar as the interest in the machine was outlined as an interest in knowledge. This interest in knowledge was not outlined. In this regard, it could be said that knowledge (particularly as an interest) was not a machine to speak of (i.e. was not spoken of either as a machine or an interest—and in this respect, interest in knowledge was not spoken of as a machine, which is to say, as a production).

Insofar as this was the case, usage, seen in its particular identified sense (i.e. as in 'this usage'), was seen as an indication of a certain controlling of a certain machinery, but was not seen as the machinery which identifies the machinery and produces this identification as a production of knowledge which is administered towards further productions of usage and itself. This machinery (all this machinery) remains in control of its use. This machinery: use. This use: machinery. It is only (the exception and the repetition of the exception) your control (which will control you) speaking.

This contradiction is yet to be approximated as a topic.

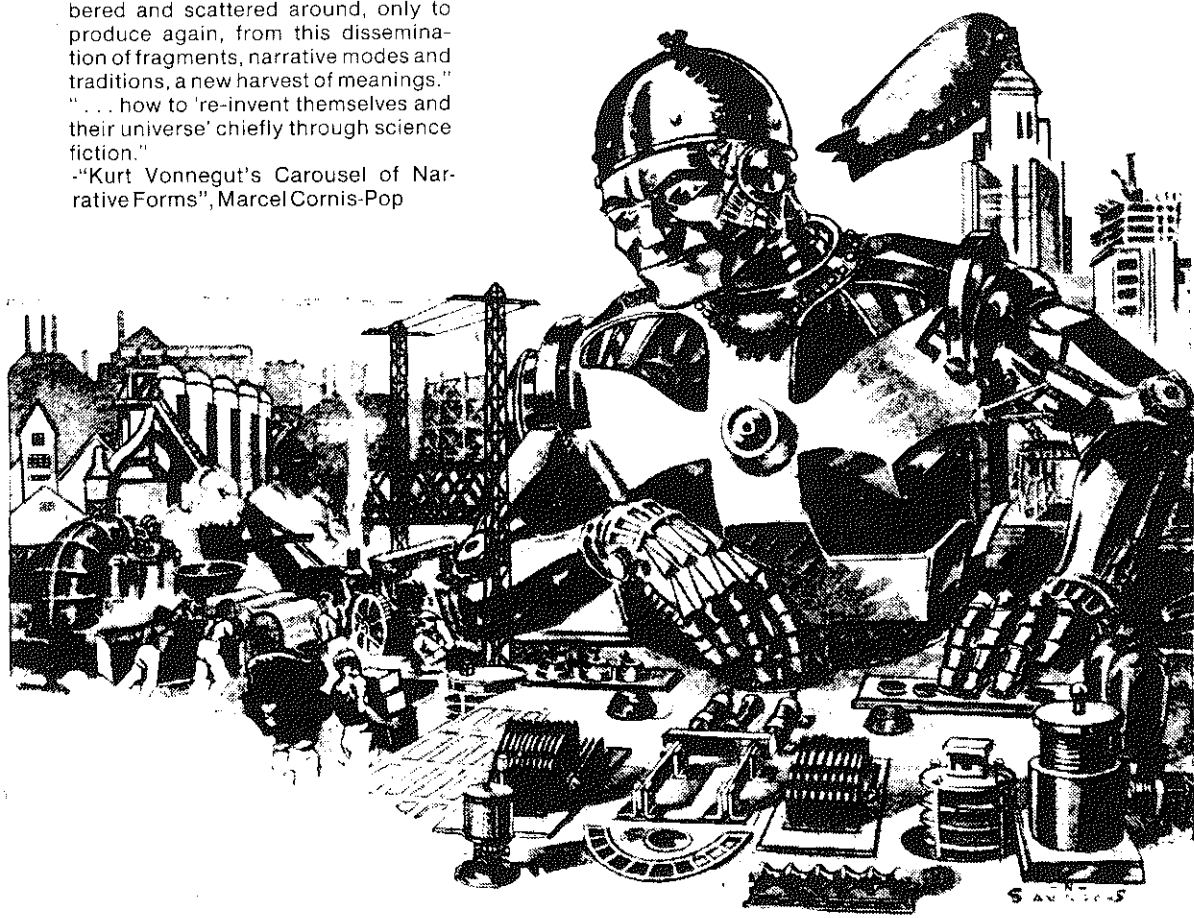
How was it? ... well, it was fun, but it was very tiring. And even though I could stand getting tired (partly because the possibility of such variety was always at first exciting and partly because the prospect of reporting on them was also exciting) I don't think that it was very rewarding. It's not as if I were tired-out from so many intriguing deliveries; that is, that it became difficult to concentrate because the intelligence of the discourse was high. I was tired merely because there was so much of it. Actually, if it were a little more intelligent, I might have found it a bit more inspiring. I did find it interesting, but I did not find it inspiring. Which means that the interest, insofar as it was agreeable, was trivial, and insofar as it was disagreeable, it was, in some sense, odd. For instance, the occurrence of a particular prefix modifying the sense of objects of their interest in the wake (and I only assume this because of certain references to Barthes, Foucault, Kristeva, and Derrida—apart from any clearly recognizable instance in which any attempt would have been made to come to any terms, even if only descriptively, with these people—particularly in relation to the latter when speaking about Samuel Delany and someone said: "Oh yes ... he's into Derrida ... but, you see, that's different; that's **metascience fiction**") of structuralist and post-structuralist criticism, the prefix "meta". The employment of this prefix as indicative of an affiliation to these critical movements is curious inasmuch as it seems to re-inscribe a notion of an outside to the text, to self-referentiality. This, for reasons which, if not already apparent to you, would take more time than I care to for explanation here, strikes me as odd. Apart from that, a lot of the analyses were fairly predictable in their outcome: one could have, I'm sure, merely read the abstract at the back of the programme if all that one wanted was a sense of the issue. Sometimes this seemed so obvious as to seem a bit peculiar to spend time overstating it: for instance, is there anyone out there who does not see *Star Trek* (specifically *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, but ...) as an example of American Imperialism? The interesting thing might be that in spite of that observation (and given that one would **want** to resist American Imperialism) one could relax one's reserve and still think it was fun. Much like the conference. This contradiction is yet to be approximated as a topic.

Michael Boyce

"This machine is on the move I'm looking out for number one."
- John Lydon

"Isn't your fascination with this subject, this genre, indicative of a certain need to fulfill a deemed necessary experience vicariously, much like its general audience could be said to be doing, and hence, an indication of a general social need which is unfulfilled? If so, or if not, why has this not yet been addressed?"
- A questioner

"Well I think it probably has in some way."
- An answerer



The Sweetening Machine

If you're old enough to remember the days when most television production was broadcast live, perhaps (like me) you have a certain fondness for the kind of energy and mistakes that can only happen in live programming. I don't mean TV programs that are "pre-recorded live on tape", or "taped before a live studio audience", I'm talking about TV productions that are conveyed to us in real-time, as they are happening in the studio or on location. (The distinction has to be made because TV now has so scrambled the notion of what is live.) Of course, nowadays almost nothing is broadcast live. But in the early '50s, when almost everything was, there was a kind of humanness that managed to transcend the reproductive apparatus and come through to us watching at home.

Much of that humanness was the result of Murphy's Law. Anything that could go wrong, would go wrong. Gary Moore his pants unzipped. Red Skelton, making a sales pitch for pies made from Pet milk, had to once went into a wild dance bringing a cow out in front to the camera. The cow promptly delivered its own form of editorial comment right in the middle of the commercial. On a Saturday with morning kids' show, the host was overheard to say, just before the insert of a commercial: "I hope that keeps the little bastards happy."

The problems for doing live TV drama were even more immense. Not only did the teleplays have to be written to facilitate the scene changes and the costume changes, but there was always the possibility that a TV camera might blow-out during the broadcast, actors might miss their chalk marks on the floor and be left in shadow, their lines might be flubbed or an actor could go "cold" in front of millions of viewers. Worse yet, a set might collapse or a "corpse" might accidentally be shown crawling off the set. (All these errors did, in fact, happen in one dramatic production or another.)

In addition, there was always the problem of timing. A teleplay might run exactly the required length during rehearsal, but because of the pressures of the actual live broadcast, the actors would often deliver their lines faster. The director would then have to

stretch out the program by either drastically slowing down the closing scenes or, more often, by having the final credits crawl past at the end at an agonizingly slow pace.

But there were unmistakable benefits to doing live TV. The actors performed at peak intensity, and the viewers had that special feeling of "being there". It was daily event programming unlike anything today. The mistakes, the production "errors", only made it all seem human, likeable, risky and exciting. I suspect it's called "the golden age" of TV not only because there was so much creative talent involved, but because the medium was being utilized to do what it does best, and *what only it can do*: transmit live in real-time across vast geographical distances.

Somehow, this unique ability of the TV medium had gotten lost, been forgotten, by the end of the '50s. Or maybe not forgotten, but consciously ruled out by the powers-that-be in the industry. As Erik Barnouw has documented in his books *Tube of Plenty* and *The Sponsor*, advertisers wanted safe, predictable programming that would enshrine consumerism and envy as a way of life. Live TV dramas meant small studio sets, close-ups on faces—with an emphasis on psychological realism and inner exploration. The psychological depth in the dramatic programming tended to make the commercials appear fraudulent. They were proposing, after all, that any problem could be fixed with the purchase of product. So sponsors were basically insecure and unhappy with live broadcasting. They were an important factor in the push towards filming (and later taping) virtually all TV production.

What advertisers preferred was the episodic series, where the same characters and sets would recur week by week. This would ensure not only that production costs would be lower, but that once a safe programming premise had been created (complete with glamorous stars), the episodes could be churned out weekly with little danger of any controversy sneaking in. Moreover, the series could nicely match the commercials, providing a suitable context for them—glamorous sets and people, or simplistic solutions that didn't suggest any need for worry, anxiety, inner depth or political consciousness.

By filming the episodes, not only could they be shot on location (Westerns were popular and non-controversial), they would be guaranteed to be error-free. TV need only adapt the long-standing conventions of classic Hollywood cinema, wherein no human mistakes remain as evidence to reveal the human and technological process of production. And a filmed TV product would also mean that, just like feature

films, TV programs could be distributed around the world to all those countries in the process of setting up their own TV networks.

Well, for these and many other reasons, by the end of the '50s American TV had become largely a filmed product made under the auspices of Hollywood film studios. The whole TV industry had changed to reflect a desire for safe predictability and strict control over all aspects of production. One aspect of programming that, in a way, summarizes this whole ethos is the use of what's called "the sweetening machine"—the apparatus that generates pre-recorded laugh-tracks and applause to augment or "sweeten" (as they say) the sound-track of TV productions.

Not surprisingly, the sweetening machine was invented at the time the Hollywood studios were gearing up to produce the filmed sitcoms and other filmed product that would soon take over the network airwaves. A man named Charlie Douglass, who had been a sound technician at CBS, put together a machine that could reproduce a wide variety of laugh-tracks—everything from a few quiet audience chuckles to uproarious crowds guffawing and applauding wildly.

It was, of course, a timely invention in that most of the new filmed sitcoms would have no studio audience. Here, with Charlie's magic box, the production could be given the ambience of live TV. Better yet, there would be perfect control over this "audience". It would laugh at exactly the right moments, and to just the right degree. All you'd have to do is let Charlie orchestrate the giggles, whoops, groans and bursts of hilarity into a perfectly tune and time sound-track, and your production would seem to be the most crowd-pleasing epitome of entertainment that ever hit the airwaves. Charlie Douglass first approached Desilu Productions in the mid-'50s, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Despite the fact that Charlie kept his machine shrouded in secrecy and under lock and key, other independent laughmen sprang up to rival his position in the industry. Nevertheless, there was plenty of work for all. Canada, too had slavishly followed US TV production style, even though the broadcasting structure here was quite different and did not necessitate such imitation. As filmed and then taped production overtook live broadcasting in Canada, Canadian TV producers, too, wanted to sweeten studio-audience response or replace it where necessary. As Peter Campbell, member of CBC's sound-effects department, puts it: "Until recently, guys like John Pratt and Charlie Douglass from the States would come to Canada and sweeten the shows."

Eventually, a Canadian—Rafael Markowitz (now in California)—entered the busy sweetening scene with his own

machine. Says Campbell, who worked with Markowitz for years, "It took us two-and-a-half years to get what we wanted" in terms of variety of laughs. After all, competition was fierce. Joe Partington, current producer and co-creator of CBC's "Hangin' In", recalls that "We used to let Markowitz record the live audience for 'King of Kensington' in order to add to his repertoire, 'and we always wondered if Canadian laughs were being used for American shows.' In any case, the Canadian TV networks were strictly dependent on these travelling laugh-men who crossed the border with ease. Says Partington: "When you rented (laughs) from outside people, it was a real secret how the machine worked." Douglass or Pratt or Markowitz or whoever was working the sweetening machine would hide it under a table during operation so that CBC personnel wouldn't be able to see how it worked.

But finally, CBC's crew of sound engineers took on the challenge and figured out how to build their own sweetening machine. Nobody I talked to could remember exactly what the historic date of its first use was, but everybody agreed that it was about four or five years ago, during the making of "King of Kensington". According to Joe Partington, most of the laughs and applause were accumulated from studio-audiences for "Wayne & Shuster" and "King of Kensington"—that "they are exclusively Canadian laughs". And people like Tom Wood and Peter Campbell, of CBC's special-effects department, are continuously upgrading the repertoire, adding diversity and nuance to the collection. Says Campbell, "You want to get a special feel, create character to match the situation." This means having a wide range of sounds from a wide range of different-sized audiences. "The machine can respond quite sensitively," says Partington, "generating little touches like 'oohs and ahs'."

For a show like "Hangin' In", which is taped without a studio-audience, the sweetening technician and the associate producer go through the tape during an audio mix and decide precisely where and what kinds of sweetener to add. "You feel like you're directing," says Partington, "making it seem live." The machine has 24 tracks and can hold 6 of the prerecorded laugh/applause cassettes at once, making possible a finely nuanced sound that is different for every show.

For shows that do have studio-audiences, the same process is used. They didn't particularly like the jokes? No sweat. At the audio mix just cut out their lame response and put in some sweetener. Is the applause at the end a little weak? No problem. The repertoire of the sweetening machine can match the dimensions of the room, the size of

the audience, and put into the final sound-track the degree of applause that *should have happened* for this show.

Not surprisingly, the sweetening machine has come to be used even during live broadcasts. By the mid-'70s the US network people were slipping a little sweetener into the Rose Bowl Parade to get that little ripple of applause that should happen as each float goes by. A sweetening technician is now always on hand at the Academy Awards to spice up the production and save-face for anybody who cracks a dumb joke, giving them a small dose of laffs so that the home-audience, at least, doesn't think they're total jerks. In Canada, the sweetening machine helps along the live broadcasting of events like telethons and awards ceremonies (the Junos, the Genies, etc.). "We use it," says one technician, "because it's difficult to mike an audience, especially if there's an orchestra. We may use some of the live response, and then boost it with sweetener."

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In a way, the sweetening machine is a useful metaphor for the institution of television itself—which has more to do with wish-fulfillment than reality. At a critical juncture in its past, the industry abandoned production values that highlighted live reality in all its messy, complex, error-laden but risky and human vitality. In place of that, the industry adopted production conventions that guarantee tight control and "perfection"—indeed, all the illusion-making apparatus of Hollywood itself. The result is that TV offers (not only through its chosen content but also through its style of production) a smoothly-running, error-free, sweetened world in which every problem is easily solved, every mistake is erased and eliminated, every event is controlled and made perfect by whatever means necessary, and human complexity is ironed flat. Rather than examine the real conditions of our lives, exploring in-depth the problems that confront us all, TV has become the rose-coloured glasses for society, or (mixing metaphors) the saccharine solution in which the status quo hangs suspended. By comparison, live reality is harsh, messy and bitter indeed. No wonder so many North Americans choose to spend their time in TV's world rather than work to make the real world sweeter.

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And then of course Quebec happened. Here *The Last Post's* coverage was, I think, both informed and cogent. Bolstered by the good knowledge of Montreal and entirely alienated from the smugness of the Anglo-Saxon elites, the *Post* proved to be an excellent disseminator of informed attitudes about the maelstrom there. It was probably the only part of its work it took with a high degree of seriousness and, I suspect, it is for that it will be remembered. During the week of the War Measures Act we distributed from the back of a truck a special issue of the magazine. The invocation of the WMA was described in bold—even cheeky—

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Patrick McFadden

THE GREEN FIELDS
OF ROMANCE

Well how do you do, your Willie
McBride?
Do you mind if I sit you down by
your graveside,
And rest for a while neath the warm
summer sun?
I been walking all day and I'm
nearly done.
I see by your gravestone you were
once only nineteen
When you joined the great fallen
in 1916.
I hope you died well and I hope you
died clean:
Or young Willie McBride, was it
slow and obscene?

Chorus

Did they beat the drum slowly, did
they play the fife lowly?
Did they sound the Dead March as
they lowered you down?
Did the band play the Last Post and
chorus?
And did the pipes play the flowers of
the forest?

Davey Arthur

SIXTEEN DEAD MEN

O But we talked at large before
The sixteen men were shot,
But who can talk of give and take,
What should be and what not
While those dead men are loitering
there
To stir the boiling pot?
You say that we should still the land
Till Germany's overcome;
But who is there to argue that
Now Pearse is deaf and dumb?
And is their logic to outweath
MacDonagh's bony thumb?
How could you dream they'd listen
That have an ear alone
For those new comrades they have
found,
Lord Edward and Wolfe Tone,
Or meddle with our give and take
That converse bone to bone?

W.B. Yeats

ACT OF UNION

I

To-night, a first movement, a pulse,
As if the rain in bogland gathered
head
To slip and flood: a bog-burst,
A gash breaking open the ferny bed.
Your back is a firm line of eastern
coast
And your arms and legs are thrown
Beyond your gradual hills. I caress
The heaving province where our
past has grown.
I am the tall kingdom over your
shoulder
That you would neither cajole nor
ignore.
Conquest is a lie. I grow older
Conceding your half-independent
shore
Within whose borders now my
legacy
Culminates inexorably.

II

And I am still imperially
Male, leaving you with the pain,
The rending process in the colony,
The battering ram, the boom burst
from within.
The act sprouted an obstinate fifth
column
Whose stance is growing unilateral.
His heart beneath your heart is a
wardrum
Mustering force. His parasitical
And ignorant little fists already
Beat at your borders and I know
they're cocked
At me across the water. No treaty
I foresee will salve completely your
tracked
And stretchmarked body, the big
pain
That leaves you raw, like opened
ground, again.

Seamus Heaney

Nostalgia and Terror

The Fureys and David Arthur:
When You Were Sweet Sixteen
Avalon Records, 1982

Molly Bloom (in Joyce's *Ulysses*) had an excess of love which spilled out beyond her affirmation of herself to Leopold, that half-jew, no-man, every-man. These songs should be heard in that context, but also another context, one within which love is not possible, where gratitude is frozen by bombs, and where fatherhood is negotiated through death. Where are we now, after W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett? The gun firing is meaningless, preserved only by the old photograph which reminds us of the past. The songs evoke lost love, lost fathers, lost jobs, lost wars, a lost Ireland: Yesterday's Wars haunt us.

"The Green Fields of France" is probably the most startling and shocking satire on Irish (and Scottish) lyrical bombast, set not in Ireland, but in the trenches of France at the end of the first World War, turning itself into a pastiche of Irish Rebel Songs (Enoch Kent and that ilk). How does one cut through a continuity of belligerent nostalgia? "The Irish remember every moment of their history: the English none of theirs, except as artifact," as someone said or should have said. But how do we remember? The English sanctify the monuments of imperialism, the Irish remember the consequences of colonialism. The 'generals' of the first and second world war were largely Irish; over one third of the Other Ranks were. And the rest? Largely Welsh, Scottish, Nepalese (the Gurkhas) and other 'Commonwealth'.

Fighting for what? The war to end war, while Roger Casement was negotiating guns with the Germans on behalf of Irish independence. There are memories and memories. The English remember their part in saving 'civilization', the Irish the continuity of duplicity and contempt.

Part of Irish culture has always been dedicated to talking about the unsayable. The pain of knowing that we are all double-agents, Kim Philbys of the imagination. Whose side are you on? POW! Protestant Bastard! Papist! But these voices have largely been literary, or revealed in drunk conversations in pubs in Wexford St. Dublin or immigrant retreats in North America. (Carmel, California—don't you remember well the deconstruction of selective amnesia? No? Then you haven't read Brian Moore).

It is easy to appropriate the nostalgia from here and to take the tourist version of bombs and Joyce's map of Dublin. But what actually happens in Dublin? Does anyone sing any more? What do they sing about? If you have a long memory Nostalgia is the bombs, round the Post Office in 1916. But Ireland is free of bombs, except in Belfast where they crackle off like the dull rumour of another war. The Furey's songs come alive in the context both of the imaginary bombs ("What are you carrying in your pocket? A grenade? But it might go off. Boom!") and the mundane reality of getting by, being made redundant at 20. Yesterday's people, fighting Yesterday's wars, but obviously today's.

The Furey's cut nostalgia down to the present. That war that you thought you were fighting then is *our* war, here, now. We inherit your mistakes, your photographs. When the drums played the Last Post and chorus it was not only for you, but for us. We drum that retreat from your battles.

And "When you were sweet sixteen," and our "Anniversary song," and "Oh Babushka" and meeting and not meeting you at the railway station, all the other nostalgias cut through me like a knife. I am back with Beckett and Joyce and the whole raggle-taggle bunch who will tell me that the Irish are the Jews, that Palestine and Belfast are one and the same thing. And of course it's a lie. "My love is like a Red, Red Rose that's newly sprung in June," but meanwhile my son lies in a green field of France, and "although you died back in 1916, in that fateful heart you are forever 19." I am breeding sons who will be strangers "without even a name, enclosed there forever behind a glass frame."

The Fureys shock us out of our romanticism. War is not nice; sex is war; nostalgia is both a sense of our own histories and violation of our own privileged space; the past lives in our presence. The guns that you hold against my groin exactly replicate the guns that I hold against yours. But yet I worry why neither of us pull the trigger: obviously because "I will love you when you are gone."

The Fureys are about that knife blade that would slit you apart but knowing that other knives have slit other necks like yours. I like your neck. I wouldn't have anyone touch it.

I? You? History? Violence? These poems/songs discourses, are about living on the borderline of experience. Not that romantic blood nonsense of D.H. Lawrence, nor even the equally romantic Sartre/Fanon conception that violence is necessary to our well being. But that absolutely mundane sense that violence strokes our sensuality, that the time of the horror is the time of our present, negotiated now in this love-tryst that flows with your menstrual blood. *Les Sang Des Autres*, as Simone de Beauvoir said in another context. My blood, your blood.

Ioan Davies

the day I got him to propose to me yes first
I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my
mouth and it was leapyear like now yes 16
years ago my God after that long kiss I near
lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of
the mountain yes so we are flowers all a
womans body yes that was one true thing he
said in his life and the sun shines for you to-
day yes that was why I liked him because I
saw he understood or felt what a woman is
and I knew I could always get round him
and I gave him all the pleasure I could lead-
ing him on till he asked me to say yes and I
wouldnt answer first only looked over the
sea and the sky I was thinking of so many
things he didnt know of Mulvey and Mr
Stanhope and Hester and father and old
captain Groves and the sailors washing all
birds fly and I say stoop and pushing up
dishes they called it on the pier and the sen-
try in front of the governors house with the
thing round his white helmet poor devil half
roasted and the Spanish girls laughing in
their shawls and their tall combs and the
auctions in the morning the Greeks and the
Jews and the Arabs and the devil knows
who else from all the ends of Europe and
Duke street and the fowl market all cluck-
ing outside Larby Sharons and the poor
donkeys slipping half asleep and the vague
fellows in the cloaks asleep in the shade on
the steps and the big wheels of the carts of
the bulls and the old castle thousands of
years old yes and those handsome Moors all
in white and turbans like kings asking you
to sit down in their little bit of a shop and
Ronda with the old windows of the posadas
glancing eyes a lattice hid for her lover to
kiss the iron and the wineshops half open at
night and the castanets and the night we
missed the boat at Algeciras the watchman
going about serene with his lamp and O that
awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the
sea crimson sometimes like fire and the
glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the
Alameda gardens yes all the queer little
streets and pink and blue and yellow houses
and the rosegardens and the jessamine and
geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a
girl where I was a Flower of the mountain
yes when I put the rose in my hair like the
Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red
yes and how he kissed me under the
Moorish wall and I thought well as well him
as another and then I asked him with my
eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me
would I yes to say yes my mountain flower
and first I put my arms around him yes and
drew him down to me so he could feel my
breasts all perfume yes and his heart was
going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

James Joyce

SHALL MY SOUL PASS THRO'
OLD IRELAND

In the lonely Brixton prison where a
dying rebel lay,
By his side a priest was standing ere
his soul should pass away
And he faintly murmured, 'father,'
as he clasped him by the hand,
Tell me this before you leave me,
shall my soul pass through
Ireland?
Shall my soul pass through Old Ire-
land, pass through Cork's Old
City grand?
Shall I see the old cathedral where
St. Patrick took his stand?
Shall I see the little chapel where I
pledged my heart and hand?
Tell me father, ere you leave me,
shall my soul pass through
Ireland?

EXPOSURE

Our brains ache, in the merciless
iced winds that knife us . . .
Wearied we keep awake because
the night is silent . . .
Low, drooping flares confuse our
memory of the salient . . .
Worried by silence, sentries
whisper, curious, nervous,
But nothing happens.
Watching, we hear the mad gusts
tugging on the wire,
Like twitching agonies of men
among its brambles.
Northward, incessantly, the
flickering gunnery rumbles,
Far off, like a dull rumour of some
other war.
What are we doing here?
The poignant misery of dawn begins
to grow . . .
We only know war lasts, rain soaks,
and clouds sag stormy.
Dawn massing in the east her
melancholy army
Attacks once more in ranks on
shivering ranks of gray,
But nothing happens.

Wilfred Owen

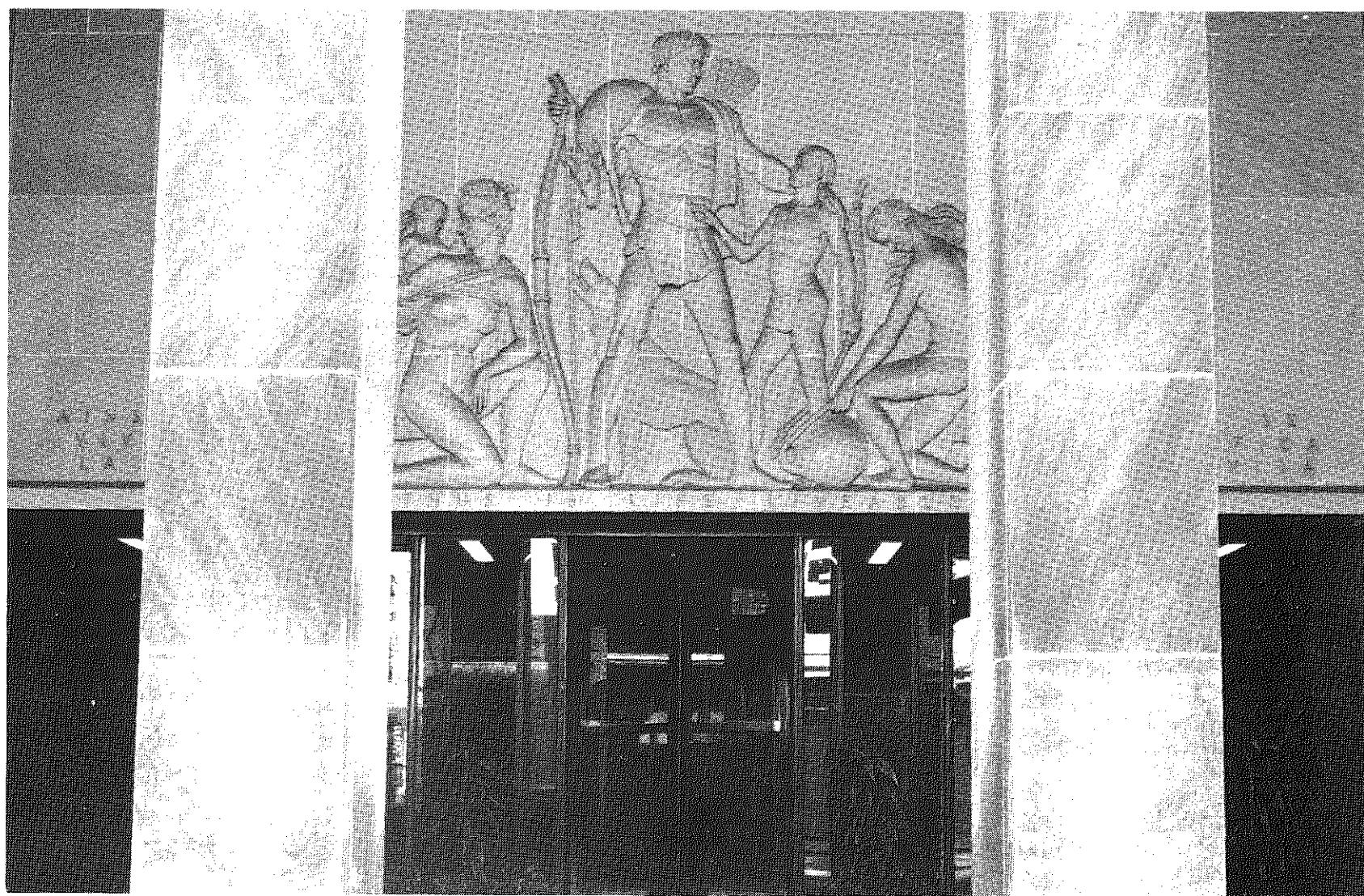
THE TRAPPER'S PLEASURE OF THE TEXT

Geoff Miles



Standing above it all,
he sensed the power
of his position.

The text needs its shadow!
This shadow is a bit of ideology,
a bit of representation, a bit of subject.



The direction of his gaze,
revealed the future.

Every fiction is supported
by a social jargon, a sociolect,
with which it identifies.

OCCUPATION: WRITER

Hubert Aquin

(1963)

Translator's Preface

Profession: écrivain, as the title reads in French, is neither a title or theme, but a name attached to a group whose constituents occupy themselves with writing. The references in this essay to the writing of "variants" allude to its stylistic aspects. Aquin, through the use of neologisms, adding suffixes, using technical and medical terminology, exploits style as a mode, in other words, treats it like a mode, in the production of idioms.

In what is perhaps an old debate, Aquin writes that the blasphemy occupies the place of national heritage, or serves as a national heritage for the Quebecois. The French reads, "tient lieu d'héritage national". The use of puns and word play might be given the same significance: the substitution for an absence. There is a brief essay in which Aquin calls the écrivain maudit, a writer who bristles at every benediction. In the following translation, the title is not only a benediction, but a naming, all too formally for Aquin, of a body of individuals. Aquin does not want to insist that it be a political body. But the writing of variants is, like the blasphemy, almost always the vehicle of political questioning. theme is less important than expression when speaking of the variant, since there is an emphasis on saying what has been said, again, in a different way (a translator's bias, perhaps). Variants seek to avoid recognizing and naming their origin.

What Aquin suggests in speaking of blasphemy is that the idiomatic has its place in a writing which is still anxious. When compared to another essay, written in the previous year, and translated in 1979 as "The Cultural Fatigue of French Canada", by L. Shouldice in Contemporary Quebec Criticism, the present essay appears to test the limits of expression. The idiosyncracies of Aquin's writing style come into full play.

Aquin continued to write novels and articles until his death in 1977. To list them here would be impossible. The four novels he wrote, Prochain Episode (1965), Trou de mémoire (1968), L'Antiphonaire (1969), Neige noire (1974), have been discussed by many critics, English and French. He is less well known as an essayist.

From the time this consular investiture

was put on my passport, I have not ceased committing sacrileges against it, until it reached a point at which I enjoyed cheating with my calling, and even began transforming systematically into an absolute non-writer. While I repeat that I am no longer in word management, it has not escaped my notice that I harboured the hypocritical ambition of surprising my customers by a return no less unexpected than staggering...But the time has come to change professions other than on my passport, and I have had to face up to the fact that, for my interlocutors, my former activities constitute me as a man of letters. A few commissioned texts, an all but irreversible enlistment in the *Société des Auteurs*: this is how little it took to remind me that henceforth - despite my denials and dispersions - I am caught without oil, in a mechanism which throws me back into place. A rather vicious circle, this social-biographical circuit of mine! I have experimented with it, and, distressed, I set about writing again, as a postman delivers letters. The gaze of others makes me feel like a Jew. I bear my Jewish trace like a scar; it is -decidedly! -written across my features. Never have I felt so less a writer, yet I continue to write. And if fortune or my laziness do not throw me out of my social seat as a writer, I intend to have its majesty pay dearly for my partly dead language, my syntactic incarceration and the asphyxiation that threatens me; yes, I plan to take my revenge through glib expressions, on that fine career which opens before me in the manner of a mine that closes over whoever goes in deeper. I am prey to destructive urges against the nasty French language, in all its majesty rated second! Writing kills me. I don't wish to write any longer, nor juggle words words words, nor clearly state the inconceivable, nor premeditate the unfolding of the verbal crime, nor search a dark room for a black cat, especially when there is none to be found...This being said, one might justifiably ask why it is that I now write these easily disproven thoughts. The truth is, I myself hardly know why, tending to consider my conscription to "Parti Pris" as a traffic accident¹. And I certainly have the right to lapse into illogicality once I get free of any semiological mission. In this disintegrated country which resembles a brothel in flames, writing amounts to recitation of ones breviary while seated on a nitroglycerine bomb that is set to go off when the big hand advances five minutes. Each of us is free, and I am convinced I can invoke the civic rights to recognize the right of any citizen, if necessary, to write his breviary whenever he pleases.

There are some who will think I

am in flames like a crepe suzette, and that my non-writing is determined by possible neurotic factors. These sincere readers will not be convinced of the contrary by me, and I remain no less persuaded that, by standing like an antechrist amid the tropical vegetation of words on a white page, I am not the one being tailed, but the agent! I make a conscious choice, I respond in passing to a given historical challenge. In December 1963, Paul Comptois being Lieutenant-Governor of Gallilee² and I being what I am, in this dormant period and confusion-ridden province, solemnly affirm that one fine intellectual work and one novel good for the Governor General's award, invariably purport that literature is a function of our national organism. Now aren't we disorganized, or so it would seem...We might just as well admit that the originality of a writing stands in direct proportion to the ignorance of its readers. there is no originality: written works are transfers (which, it goes without saying, are functional in a society consuming great amounts of leisure, and endowed with pulp, moreover) pressed from effaced countertypes which derive from other *originals* transferred from transfers which are faithful copies of old forgeries with which one need not be acquainted to understand that they were not archetypes, but mere variants. A cruel invariance governs the serial production of variants which we are accustomed to calling original works. History itself transfers. Originality is as impossible there as in literature. Originality does not exist, it is an illusion. Fashion is all there is covering that which differentiates fashion, the film-like veil, the deceptively diaphanous surface, the garment-screen used for covering beings identical in their nakedness. A few trivial details serve to differentiate me from an ill Hungarian who, one May evening, would endeavour to write an article in order to exorcize his constant brain fatigue. About 1913, this man doubtless wore a double-breasted jacket and a false collar; unable to write in front of a small television screen, he doubtless darkened his Austrian brand paper while drinking a German beer in the Cafe Mozart.

These few differences are minor, and

could not hide our sorry resemblance, our implacably similar national syphilis, and the distress at coming to see who we are in a world where exhibiting politeness means putting oneself in parentheses, if not in a jar. Unfortunately, Freud did not psychoanalyze the Hongritude³ of an arrogant Vienna, which was characterized by its will to repress the Hungarians living there, with their minority bad breath, and their music which nobody took the time to differentiate from that of the gypsies - which shows all too clearly the will of the Viennese to view their historical partners only as nomads. In any situation of an ethnifying domination, the lower group seems to be the most musical of the two: the Hungarians, whose musicality was vaunted by their masters, the American blacks, even the French Canadians, who have a gypsy's calling to face

members of the higher group, who in turn make a well behaved audience. The domination of one human group over another, places too much emphasis on the harmless strengths of the lower group: sex, propensity for the arts, natural talents for music and creating ...Don't we French Canadians take an interest in Eskimo Art and the mythology of the American Indians who we keep on reserves? That is the blind compensation of the dominated: that there is a group beneath it which allows it to show its domination without a hint of bad conscience.

Is the important thing that I be

gifted in the arts? No, rather that I know I am gifted in the arts by the very fact that I am dominated, that all my fellow people are dominated and that the dominating like them as gypsies, singing, artistic to the tips of their fingers, naturally inclined to work toward the most deficient social activities. I refuse to write works of art, after years of conditioning in this direction, because I basically refuse the signification taken on by art in an equivocal world. As artist I would play the role attributed to me: that of the dominated artist who has some talent. Now, I refuse this talent, perhaps confusedly, because I simply refuse my domination. I might as well say, should I continue to write the present article, that I am going to strive inwardly for an article which contains everything that should not be found in the article expected from me. By unenthusiastically pursuing this endeavour, I do my best to bring to light my artistic inadequacy, and to prove through my divagation that I am no longer effected by domination, that I have no taste for its historical insignificance, nor its security either, and that I oppose it in every way provided they be shocking. The good French Canadian, promised a brilliant future in the frivolous arts, endeavours all of a sudden to produce a writing dominated by a thematic of refusal to write, a meaningless gesture which could only attain meaning by the simultaneous explosion of every stick of dynamite now rotting in the Province of Quebec's arsenals. There are serious disadvantages brought on by the explosion, one of them being that it causes any historical structure situated along a radius of the shock wave to fly into pieces. Structure must be detected, even in a literary astructure of the Robbe-Grillet type. Astructuring amounts to structuring if it relates to a like sphere of activity, to literature, for example. In my case, if the structure bursts out from the fire in me, it does so not in order to leave room for a literary counter structure, but to leave no room for a literature which, if I were to give way to its charms, would express merely the domination which I have *taken after* for two generations. A lame excuse, one might say, to have pardon for a simple absence of talent...But such an objection, irrefutable because situated on another level, does not pertain to me, for even the poverty of talent here could be considered, true to the line of domination, as a show of bad temper on the part of the dominated, who, though not very certain why, shuns a calling which he believes is personal, but which is historical; in the same manner, the talent of the dominated comes from a desire for artistic revolution, for want of the power to bring about an historical revolution.

By thus disaligning myself from
literature, I do myself a disservice, and what I write is condemned in advance to be a mere unfaithful expression of my refusal to write. Now literary works are characterized by the formal necessity - the urgency - invoked by their authors. Writers are primarily formalists, despite the recurring protestations of non-formalism, in that the forms they use are handmaidens of their existence, and cast authors together in their uniqueness. With the possible exception of aligned literature, the form of the written work comes to be secondary, unimportant and often chosen circumstantially; or, in the present case not chosen and unwanted. Something else is important; for me, a literary *beyond* which is neither a meta-literature, nor a new disguise for our old ambition, but the destruction of an historical conditioning in which I come to be dominated. By rejecting domination I refuse literature, the bread par excellence of the dominated, a symbolic production, of which the dominated are granted the monopoly, which inevitably leads to overproduction. Has it not been remarked that in colonized countries there invariably emerges an overproduction of literature? In the absence of realities symbols are overproduced; understandable, moreover, is that even if colonized peoples were content to produce normally they would still not compensate for an utter unproductiveness. Overproduce or die. Survive or disappear. Surprise or possess nothing: so many vital dilemmas for the dominated. He does live a novel written in advance: the dominated conforms to some nicely ambiguous gestures so that their meaning is lost on him. For example, the dominated shows up as a challenger but does not see to what degree the challenger and his master are complementary, nor does he size up the benevolence shown by the latter in agreeing to play beside him, while giving away for the challenger to claim the match sometimes...All part of the invisible coherence, which if refused, amounts to the complete, irreversible choice of incoherence. Revolution brings about withdrawal from the dialogue between the dominated and dominating: strictly speaking, it is a divagation. The terrorist speaks on his own. Like Hamlet, who imagined Gertrude's lover behind every curtain, the revolutionary chooses to be accused of madness like the sweet prince of rotten kingdom. The revolutionary breaks with the coherence of domination and rashly engages in a monologue interrupted at each word, nurtured as much by hesitation as by the distance it maintains from the dominant reason. Hesitation engenders the monologue; at the theatre, only characters in the throws of the distorting solitude of the revolutionary, or of the alienated, must give monologues. It takes incoherence for there to be true monologues. Incoherence is here a modality of the revolution just as the monologue constitutes its unmistakable sign.

Incoherence corresponds, at least in
this case - of Hamlet - to an irreversible shift away from the old idea of coherence. Hamlet incoheres suddenly. And since he acts outside of all coherence-ridden law, he then ceases to be a man "in the complete sense of the term" and earns this remark made about him by the psychoanalyst André Lussier. Freud, I know, knew himself to be Jewish, and by a transcendentalist will for coherence he overcame this detail as one does myopia to possess no Jewish trace, expand the horizon, see Austrian...The French Canadian who can go no farther, tries to see farther and to lose himself in a non-group, whose dominating position he does not discern, and which generously furnishes him with a coherent non-identity. Literary practice in its *coloniform*⁴ situation expresses an attitude of acceptance. The rituals of literary creation are, moreover, generally recongized for their therapeutic effect: after a more than slow night of ecstasy the dancer lacks strength to answer the colonial sphinx. The dance of words along the horizon of a ritual article reconciles man with his unreality by exhausting him. In our disintegrated country, I refuse the calming that I have too often sought in the stammering ceremony of writing. Once the disintegration has been tasted, I feel a dispassionate longing to participate in the rot of our crudely society; an urge comes over me for communion in both kinds taken over the body of foreigners that gathers mould during the royal proceedings of a twenty-second multilingual inquiry and, by contagion, makes me sweat.

One day, who knows, we might

be given to write sanely; to write, and let it be something other than an exorcism or a dissociating diversion. If, at the end of my cartesian flight, it has been understood that I preach obligatory political engagement for writers, then I am entitled, dear reader, to seek your imposition. I abhor obligatory military service, and, what's more, it prepares for defeat. The same is true of obligatory intellectual service for citizens of age 18 years and over who can live a great passion on the typist's keys. No writer is obliged to align his work with the efficiency of this or that political system, any more than, for that matter, he is not engaged by his maximizing profession to swear an oath of historical fidelity and strive only for an autarkic and posthumous work of art. Jean Simard describes the literary endeavour as the "most exciting of all the adventures: the adventure of our inner world. From book to book the writer pursues within himself an unending prospecting. The entire being is engaged in a determined search; each one after his own truth." (*Le Devoir*, December 7, 1963, p. 11). A better formulation of the inalienable right of the writer to arrange for evenings at home could not be found. The inner world symbolizes the cage which one does not leave, unless to get

another stock of books from the Dominican bookstore, always closed on Sunday, that were written by other writers who valorized their capsule-universes. Profaner that I am, the "inner" adventure evokes the steamy adventure of a conference on disarmament between emissaries of belligerent countries. Or rather: the writer's inner adventure is the migration of the vital yolk beneath the egg's hermetic shell, a viscous adventure, a battle to finish between the abortable yolk and its albuminous sphincter. However poignant it proves to be, his endeavour of euphemisation, the writer who believes he the high sea as he cruises his dames lake, can not get away unpunished from his juridico-dull situation as the inventor of variants in his hesitant country, the scene of mass fever attacks and delayed dementia. The "inner" adventure of French Canada alters even them who choose to specialize in their literary micro-adventure. The altered statutes of Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada and of (Northern!) Ireland, matrilofuacious queen of each province and of unilingual Saint-Jérôme and Québec sur cap à Madeleine, do not provide that it is forbidden to play Mozart's "Turkish march", fixed to one spot, at the height of a political crisis. The revised or exploded statutes (oh, that reminds me...) of Lord Snowdon's sister-in-law do not allow any punitive legislation for those who tend the flowers of style as the nation's pulse presages concussion, if not the fatal haemorrhage of our system. A queen's politeness, this civilly coded silence concerning the crypto-gaelic writer's inner world in times of trouble. What is not strictly forbidden in the letter of the law is implicitly authorized and legitimate. To thus write maxim-ridden pieces with the help of phenomena authenticated by dictionaries is permitted. Writers can therefore feel at ease should their libido bring them to do some knitting. It goes without saying that knitting does not preclude ceramics, for no segregation permits those who penelope on their Smith-Corona to believe they are superior to those with a marked penchant for the kiln. In all the cases of inner adventure taken day in and day out, like the minutes, all is permitted; each one's talent is given free reign. And there can be no doubt that the "inner adventure" which Jean Simard, recently dubbed writer⁵, speaks of, demands, a certain measure of perseverance and courage for the simple reason that it is devoid of strong motivation, and because it allows one to continue the greater work only by sanctifying the duty to write.

The writer does not choose his country
of birth, but the "inner" adventurer is wrong to live there as if living in another country, through a transferal to a mark-time country, in a continual state of de-naturalization. To every word written by the un-habitant writer is designated a coefficient "n" of possible sublime nothingization. To this coefficient can then be added a power which would permit us

to cost the work (its market and resale values) as we do each day with an ordinary share. We do not choose the country of our birth; no matter, it is better to take root and enrich ourselves, by symbiosis, on this soil gone cold over which we have travelled since childhood. More worthwhile for the writer carried along by his inner adventure as others are by foam padding, rather than the cork surface that protected Proust to the end, more worthwhile for him to inhabit, rather than be transported into an artistic and grammatical non-country in which each foreigner enjoys literary privilege. The non-country does not flourish its people. The 1917 model beadle of the Byalorussian mind favours the pursuit of inner adventures - on condition they are codified according to disarming canons. But even if the writer can venture into these parts as he wishes, with breakfast in bed and impeccable hotel xenophobia, this inner microbeadle is still nothing but a coffin decorated like the Place des Arts. In short, the preference is to hate one's country, not to be abstracted from it, while none the less hopeful of expressing it. How is one to express an inadequacy? There is the real problem. Adulterous love of one's country seems even more beautiful to me than abstention in the name of an "engaging in the Work itself and the detailing of self for the sake of the work", in the words of Mr. Simard, cf.: *Devoir*, Saturday, October 26, 1963.

The axis of the native country and

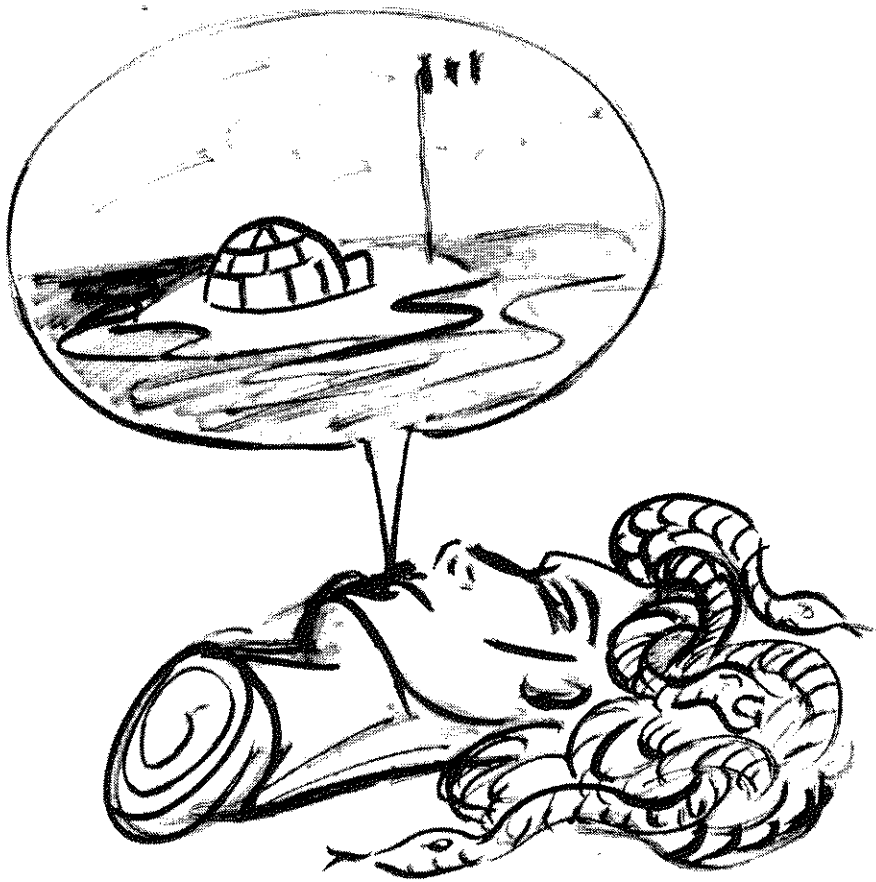
the axis of self awareness intersect stubbornly. I no longer believe in the scriptural privilege which dispenses the writer - engaged exclusively in his work - from inhabiting his country. It is sterile to use one's country in slices of life only, which, through their anthology-like status, neatly establish the uprootedness of the writer. That way the writer ends up furnishing his "inner" adventure with a special status, which amounts to disembowelling it in advance when he isn't soaking himself in a jar of formalin, such as a specimen of the poor *tourte*, a variety of bird going extinct - like us! In a country undergoing ontological gestation, the writer's vocation can not stay unchanged; nor can it be pursued, not even with courage, in accordance to the futile categories of the sublime and the important. The inner adventure that so many writers dream of leading, despite the cyclothymic existence of our group, is a prefabricated work, portable like a typewriter, finished in advance, an enclosure to add to the archives. yet there are many writers who continue to climb, word by word, the Laurentian calvary of the *Oeuvre*, with a capital "O" for obscuration! But will this number make any difference to them in their splendid aberration? The writer, the more so now that he is surrounded by a gangrenous uncertainty, can not have an episcopal status, nor an exemption from reality, nor a release from distress. Syntax, form, the sense of words are also set on fire. all is syncope, and the writer who endeavours to bring to life what kills him, does not write the Stendhalian story of the French Canadian Carbonari, but a work as uncertain and formally unwholesome as the impure work that fulfills its purpose within him and his country. The problem is not whether to be PSQ, RIN, PRQ etc.⁵, to stuff envelopes in a typically disorganized office, but to live in one's country, to die and revive with it. The revolution which operates mysteriously within us,

upsets the old French tongue, bursts the inherited structures which exercise a unilateral hegemony over the spirits by the very rigidity of the writers that respect them. Predictable, calm and organized according to the golden rule, the old idea of the work falls prey to the worst syncope, the likes of which my bygone country has known and dreads, so many necroses which might never be followed by geneses. During these times of trouble, how can the writer end his sentence as was predicted? Everything changes or threatens change: how can somebody who chooses to write, still persevere in his ideal of an unchanged and priority work...unless he condemn himself to the production of a historical monument of some kind? Not in the literary work, or in the collective adventure can anything transcendent be found. To avoid being a witness, or to witness by omitting segments of our life and obsession, is to witness nevertheless. The writing of novels uninfluenced by the intolerable dailyness of collective life, and in an antiseptic French, free of the shock that weakens the ground beneath our feet, is a waste of time. My passport, already expired, reads, Occupation: Writer. Even if I deny it, what is the good of completing some forms to state that I am no longer a writer, at least not the writer I wanted to be when, on September 23, 1958, I completed the questionnaire to obtain a passport? I will not leave my native country again. I wish to stay. I live in my country.

translated by Paul Gibson

Notes

1. The text was published in the journal, *Parti Pris*, in December 1963. (Editor's note, *Blocs Erratiques*) The essay was revised by Aquin for its publication in *Blocs Erratiques* (1977). The remark below concerning "one novel good for the Governor General's Award," refers to the novel *Trou de mémoire*, which won this award. Aquin declined to accept it. -Trans.
2. *Galilee*: i.e. Quebec. Paul Comptois was Lieutenant Governor of Quebec in 1963-64. - Trans.
3. *Hongritude*: coined after the expression of Aimé Césaire, *Négritude*. - Trans.
4. *coloniform*: a term coined by Aquin, which must be understood as an expression of unity, in the same sense as *Comminform countries* is understood. -Trans.
5. *PSQ, RIN, PRQ*: refer to the political bodies, *Parti socialiste du Québec*, the *Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale* (of which Aquin was a member), and the *Parti républicain de Québec*. -Trans.



**FROZEN IMAGES/SINGLE SHOTS:
THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG.**

**AWOKE TO UNFAMILIAR
SMOOTHNESS. PAVED ROAD
AFTER HOURS OF GRAVEL. TREES
DWINDED TO CHARLIE BROWN'S
CHRISTMAS SIZE. LAKES, ROCKS,
LAST CORNER. AHEAD - TALL
SQUARE BUILDINGS, GLASS,
CEMENT, STOPLIGHTS - ISOLATED
URBANIA, FRONTIER TOWN
BUREAUCRACY, YELLOWKNIFE.**

**FADING CONNECTIONS
MURMURING, STUTTERING WHY
CLICK! AND THEY ARE GONE**

Letter From Yellowknife

Andra McCartney

The journal gives rise to connected ideas and thoughts through description of isolated images which appear significant or disturbing. This seems fitting in a place where each person or thing on the tundra becomes framed by space and time. It starts in Yellowknife, the governmental and geographical centre of the Northwest Territories, and moves out to the edge of the sea, of the land, of the Circle, to Tuktoyaktuk.

Yellowknife is interwoven with many conflicting myths. This creates a welter of confusion. Isolated frontier, boom town, government centre, sophisticated city, heart of the territories.

Roadlines disconnected during freeze-up . . . anything or anyone from "outside" (south of 60° latitude) essentially mistrusted . . . including (especially?) Ottawa. Dress signifies "Northernness" -embroidered, fur-trimmed parkas, mukluks, fur mitts, plaid shirts. First question on meeting: "How long have you been in the North?" Credibility rests on the answer.

The impact of economic depression has not been felt as in the rest of Canada. Newspapers have pages of jobs. Qualifications necessary are less than outside, so opportunities for experience and advancement are greater. However, because of the "Hire North" policy, most of these carrots are unavailable to newcomers. But the promise exists that they will be - eventually, if you pay your dues and persevere. The American Dream moves North.

The North is prosperous in the way of the wild west, or Gold Rush. This mystique attracts opportunists, adventurers, gamblers. Young people can find experience and climb career ladders here in a way impossible in the economically crippled South. However positions of responsibility can be occupied by the inept or ethically bankrupt.

The "frontier boom town" atmosphere is most often felt on the streets or in some of the bars. Outside in the winter, it is hard to forget Yellowknife is an isolated Northern town. Unplowed rutted streets make roads and sidewalks hazardous; the wind bites; hair is frozen. People huddle together for rushed conversation - move on. Most vehicles are trucks and taxis. It is a relief to enter a bar and thaw out. Typical is the "Gold Range" saloon (also locally known as the Strange Range). A country and western bar with utilitarian furniture crowding a large room, it is literally jammed with people at midnight. All kinds of people . . . in all stages of inebriation (the hard-drinking Northerner mystique exists also). A stranger walking in might expect the tables to overturn in a B-movie brawl - and he may be right.



... A root, a toot, a tootliotndoot
 SUSPICION'S IN THE AIR
 (COMMIES EVERYWHERE)
 HE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT A
 LOADED MX BESIDE HIM ...
 HE'S IN THE WHITEHOUSE NOW,
 PLAYING ORWELL'S THEME
 AND IT'S TIME WE ALL WOKE UP
 FROM THE AMERICAN DREAM ...

But in some ways the atmosphere of isolation is a tenuous myth. (This does not prevent it from being used by commercial establishments to "explain" outrageous prices.) It is impossible for the North to be isolated as in the past, when the news is now shown several times a day. Cable TV is available in Yellowknife, and pay-TV channels. There is a "Top 40" radio station. Video-cassette rental establishments do a huge business. Residents of the territories are aware of all that happens in the world, though through the eyes of commercial media. The myth of isolation is enlarged in the minds of Yellowknife residents to assert uniqueness in a world defined by North American media standards. It must be believed that this is a place where it is possible to be a rugged individualist.

At the same time, there is a great deal of conformity here. The radical groups expected in the shadow of the Cruise are for the most part quiet and low-profile. A peace benefit last fall sold out. Everyone sat on chairs and applauded in the right places. The (mostly original) music was reminiscent of late 60's folk -with some surprises. The high point was a rendition of "Boogie-woogie Bugle Boy" with lyrics changed to spoof Reagan -and well done. All in all, though, the atmosphere was tame, civilized, reasonable. It seems Yellowknife is too prosperous to have a vocal radical group. No one is hungry enough? Or perhaps the transient nature of the city (few stay more than a couple of years, many stay a few weeks) prevents any cohesion? Or perhaps isolation works in a one-way direction. Commercial media use the air-waves to transmit information and perspectives immediately, and yet local resistance groups do not have the financial resources or political clout to gain access to such widespread dissemination as is available through commercial television. Alternatives - such as personal visits, phone calls, letters - are slower, more expensive or impractical here. Airline flights from the closest contact point (Edmonton) cost about \$400.

The capital city of the Territories is also its cultural centre. As such it hosts "Folk on the Rocks", a festival of Northern music. Also, the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre is now being built; a project familiar to all Canadians through its bizarre TV advertising. Both of these organizations are fraught with the same problems many territorial establishments are: lack of expertise; isolationism. But, as is often the case, these disadvantages are balanced by enthusiasm and energy on the part of some members. Yellowknife seems caught between 'frontier town' and heart of the territory; opposites by definition, tearing the fabric of myths apart.



FIRST DAY IN TUK. FOOD, LUXURY,
SQUASH, STEAMBATH,
WHIRLPOOL, EXHAUSTION.
IRRIDATED MILK AND BLAND
WATER. ENERGETIC PEOPLE -
ATMOSPHERE OF TENSION,
UNCERTAINTY. FLIGHT IN A SMALL
PLANE. SINGLE ROOM.

IMPRESSIONS . . . LIGHTS ALWAYS
ON OUTSIDE. HELICOPTERS LAND
NEAR WINDOW. GIRL WALKING IN
FRONT OF BUS. WE SWERVED
AWAY, SHE FOLLOWED. WE HAD
TO SWERVE AGAIN. WHY DID SHE?

Yellowknife is by far the largest population centre in the Northwest Territories, at around ten thousand people. Most other places have less than a thousand people. Tuktoyaktuk is a small settlement on the Beaufort Sea, within the Arctic Circle. Perhaps not typical of the rest of the Northwest Territories, but very different from Yellowknife. I arrive by Twin Otter from Inuvik. The size of the plane emphasizes the tininess of this community in the vastness of northern tundra. There are no trees, no mountains, few buildings, much snow. We drive past the town - small wooden houses, skidoos, trucks. The air terminal, post office are trailers. The Bay is the only store. The church is heated by a wood stove. Then out to the oil camps. They look like space stations. Huge, interconnected metal modules, standing on stilts on the frozen ground, isolated from the land, self-sufficient entities. Inside is luxury. Carpets, plants, armchairs, saunas, jacuzzi, stereo room, maid service, stocked snack bars. The galley serves meals with choice of four entrees.

There is little contact with the hamlet. The council has asked for the oil companies to prevent their employees from coming into town. This is to minimize the effect of the powerful technological culture on one which has traditionally been tied close to the land. But these restrictions cannot prevent the inroads of white culture. Looking out across the ice, the inhabitants of Tuk hamlet see the sprawling oil camps. And these are just the most recent manifestations. Missionaries came to the North long ago. Ask an Inuit now what their traditional music is like - he will probably look at you in confusion. Most do not remember. The missionaries denounced Inuit music as ungodly. So to be safe the Inuit stopped playing all forms of traditional music. On Inuit programming broadcast on CBC North, there is a great deal of Scottish jigging music. This is the contribution of the whalers. There were many possibilities for cultural exchange when the whaling ships were stuck in the ice for years.

AT OUR FIRST DANCE HERE, AT
THE BEGINNING EVERYONE SAT
AROUND RESTLESSLY. THEN
"SATISFACTION" BY THE STONES
CAME ON. EVERYONE GOT UP AND
DANCED, STOMPED THEIR FEET.
SANG ALONG. IT WAS EERIE.

WE'RE THE WRONG COLOUR. IF A
IF A WHITE GUY DOESN'T COME
INTO WORK, HE'S PUT ON THE
NEXT PLANE OUT. BUT A NATIVE
CAN DO IT EIGHT, TEN TIMES
WITH JUST WARNINGS. THEY GET
SUBSIDIZED HOUSING,
SUBSIDIZED HEATING, TIME OFF
TO GO HUNTING ...

VAST SNOWNESS TREELESS
HUGE ORANGE SUN DISAPPEARS
MONTH OF DARK SILENCE.

The Hudson's Bay traders supplied guns to replace harpoons and the peoples' whole way of life changed from nomadic hunting to trapping for southern markets.

More recently, television, radio and telephone have further changed life in the settlements. Telephone allows communication (even with Northwestel's sporadic service) across distances and in a short time. CBC radio is used for messages to family members and has Inuktitut programming. Locally popular music is also played - Scottish jigs, country and western ballads, and "Top 40" music. Motown music is extremely popular, with Michael Jackson achieving almost heroic status. The link between these forms of music is that they are all very kinesthetically oriented. The people love to sing along and dance. There is recorded music at every social occasion - (dry) dances, volleyball and floor hockey games, card games, different get-togethers of any kind. But the sound is never a background. When the music starts a volleyball game is transformed. Before the serve, people on the court sway. Even the ball seems to move in time; people's movements become more measured and graceful. Spirits are lifted.

The medium which seems to have had the greatest effect on the changing life up here is television. CBC has been available for about fifteen years in some places and is now widespread. Recent further southern development has brought satellite stations - HBO, the Movie Channel, USA Network, the Sports Channel, etc. - to the North during the last few years. Though the Native Communications Society are trying to provide more native programming with a recently received grant, most of what is shown depicts an utterly different "reality". Having little or no direct experience of southern life, it is easy to believe the dream sold on television exists down there.

The people want what is offered, and have come to rely on the oil companies and support services for employment to provide the money to buy. And in this region, the oil companies may not be around much longer. Once more the Inuk's choices will be narrowed. A recent view (of a book about Dome Petroleum) spoke of the oil companies' story as a modern myth (similar to previous myths about whalers or Northern explorers), depicted with "the macho charm of a twentieth century war without bullets, the romance of technology forced to its limits in a harsh climate, logistics turned lyrical. But war without weapons is not necessarily war without victims."

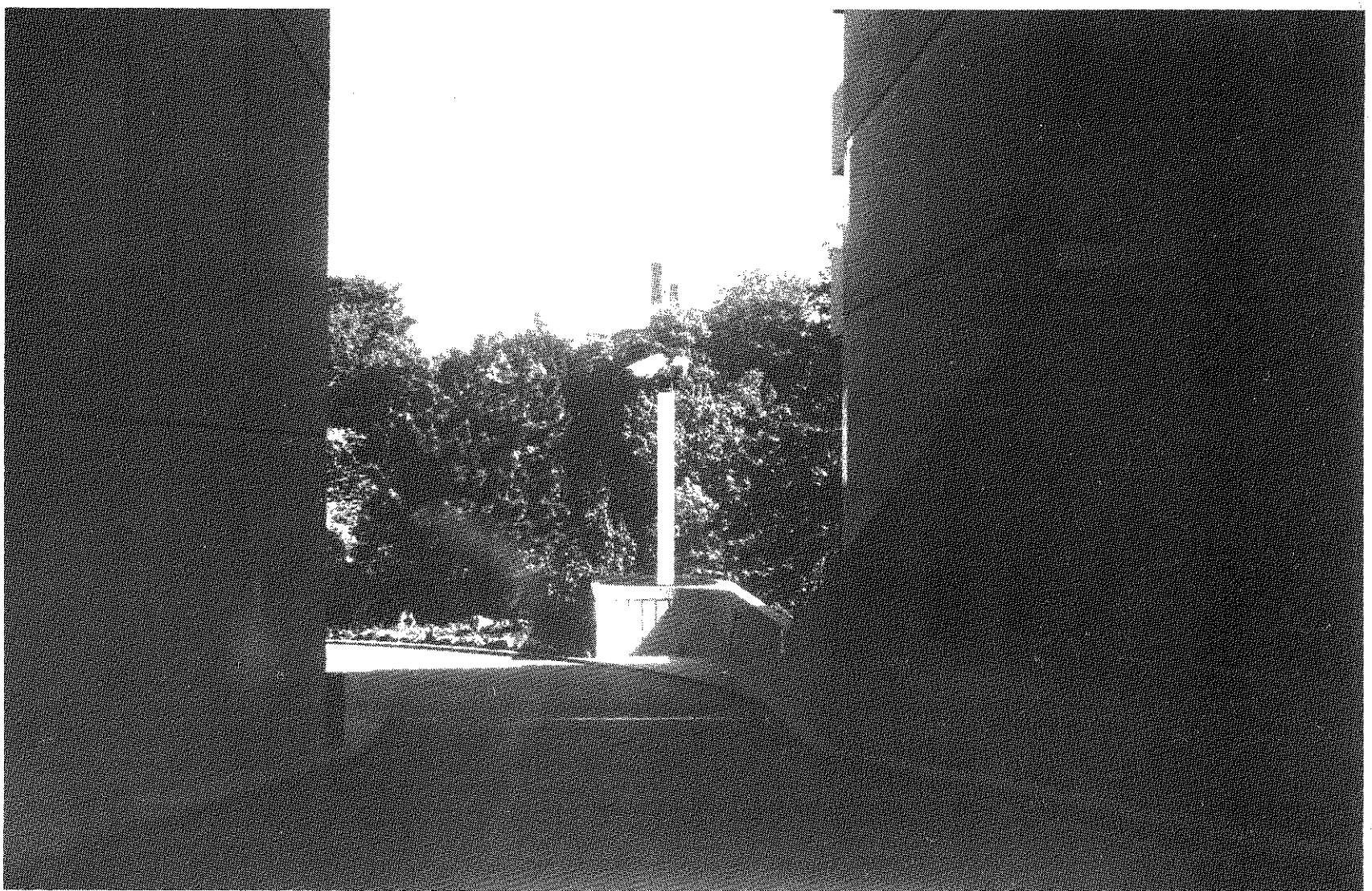
These victims are not only huddled over the video games or in front of the T.V. set, they are physically dying, too. Tuktoyaktuk (800 people) has had two murders, one castration and seven suicides in the past nine months. Other Delta communities, though less affected, have similar problems. Some people talk of the suicides as a type of subculture - but one which negates life completely? Feeling there are no choices left? It's hard to explain.

For I too am an outsider in this place. But I feel the effect of all these mythologies, living here. I am isolated - mail takes weeks, phone calls expensive. I have made sense of isolated images and sounds through conversations with Northern residents and travellers, oilmen, natives, government employees, transient workers. There is much happening here, and little enough written. I've done no more than scrape the surface. The iceberg is still there, and like the frozen miles of tundra, barely touched.



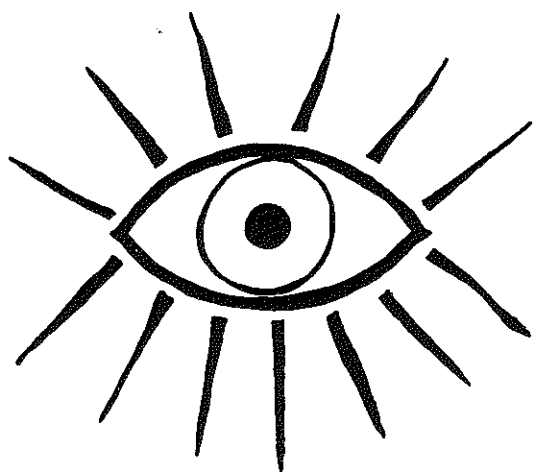
A quick survey
strengthened his earlier
convictions.

All official institutions of language
are repeating machines:
schools, sports, advertising,
popular songs, news.



It was his identity that counted,
an ability to choose his own direction,
his freedom to use what stood before him.

All continually repeat the same structure,
the same meaning, often the same words;
the stereotype is a political fact,
the major figure of ideology.



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Opening Up

When Roland Barthes (1915-1980) was 42 years old, in 1957, his famous essays on seeing, hearing, thinking and living 'the modern world' were published in French as *Mythologies*. It was not until 1972 (under the same title) that a first selection was published in English. A second selection—called *The Eiffel Tower and other Mythologies*—was published in English in 1979. By the time of the first English selection, Barthes had qualified his earlier work in very significant ways. Two essays in that crucial year of our history—1968 ("L'effet du reel", translated as "The reality effect" in *French Literary Theory Today*, ed. T. Todorov, Cambridge, England, 1983, II:2, and "Texte, Théorie du", translated as "Theory of the text" in various collections) advance and change the project and politics of *Mythologies*. This is most clearly spelled out in a text Barthes wished to call "La mythologie aujourd'hui" but which became published as "Change the object itself" (translated in *Image-Music-Text*, ed. S. Heath, Fontana, 1977). Any renewal of the work of doing mythologies cannot then simply replicate what Barthes was doing in 1950s, so my writing here is a call for renewal, for re-making our senses new, with a different *Mythologies* done differently.

Reading In and Out

We live, work, love, and move through worlds that confront us as always-already-there, as natural, neutral, universal and obvious. The critical impulse, still necessary if not sufficient, we can take from *Mythologies* is one which recognises the cognitive and emotional work done by social forms. We may not like them but we always take these forms (as obstacle or enjoyment) as *there*, to be walked around, like, in that important familiar sense, the door that always sticks, the key that needs that extra turn, the stair that always creaks. We negotiate ourselves in terms of them. This is, in so many important ways, necessary—there are always other senses to move to, other tasks at hand, projects that hurry us on. Indeed one major problem with the forms is the way they attract and distract us from other, seemingly more simple pursuits. In the face of so much abundance, how churlish it seems to raise complaints!

Barthes' greatest donation, and it is a gift, was to make us pause, to look again, to reconsider, to *re-read* what we normally glancingly "take in" and then move on *from*. He enjoins us (and we can, I am arguing, join with him) to ask *how* it is that this and that come to work for us in the ways that they do. But the later essays qualify the original mythologizing by questioning the centredness of the "logics" at the heart of the mythic, the dream of science/lust for certainty that underpins so much of the structuralist and semiological *analyses*. Barthes is saying now, showing how, we should not ask oversearchingly "Why?", nor even too scientifically "What?" of the social forms, but *how* is it that we continuously take so much for granted? Because that taken-for-granted, apparently located "out" and the "over" *there*, the taken for

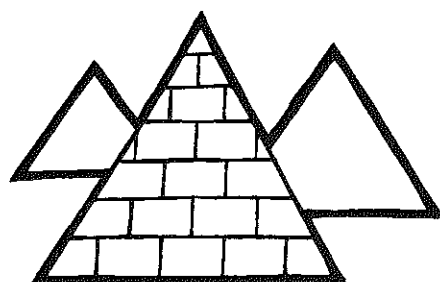
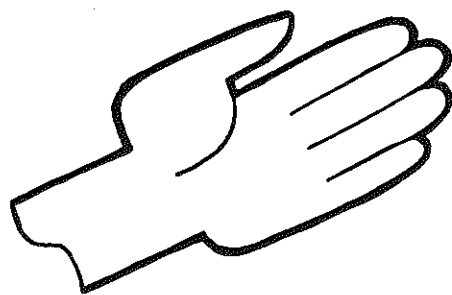
granted, in fact involves the image we construct of ourselves. In confirming our sense of what and how we are, it allows us to forget how we might be different.

The change from the demythologizing of the 1950s (which Barthes considered by the mid 1960s to have become itself a mythology) can best be indexed, it seems to me, by use of the now fashionable description of how we actively make sense of social forms—*reading*. Demythologizing consists in *reading off* the way some form works through *reading in* some scheme of how it is constructed and constrained to mean what it does. In this positive moment, myth is viewed as a type of language which conveys in the descriptors, normative, evaluative and imperative directions. This, as Barthes later clarified, does two rather unprogressive things: it leaves the world as it is, and it leaves the analyst out of the depiction. If demythologizing reads the world of the forms as text(s), his later theory of the texts (perversely) denies the existence of a meta-language, and seeks an understanding of the world as textuality. This is where we are now.

I am Writing

I am in/formed by these social forms that seem so neutral, natural, universal and Obvious. Barthes' criticism of simply demythologizing—not because it was "wrong" but because it was partial—registers a set of questions which critical work (theoretical and practical) remains largely silent about. These are questions of morality and motivation. In his writing about being an intellectual and an academic (recall how he ended up, albeit describing himself as the "joker in the pack", at the Collège de France, scandalously lecturing on "my semiology") Barthes depicts the ways in which he was constructed and constrained in power, not because of what he taught, but because of how teaching and learning works within lines of force. What regulates educational (and many social forms of communication—and are there, really, any other *kind* of social forms?) practices are the formal qualities of the encouraged, proper, correct forms of expression—centrally those of writing, and speaking about writing. These forms all turn and return to that age old distinction of Good/Bad, invented (as Nietzsche explains of Virtue in general) not by those struggling to become, but by those who argue they already possess Goodness which is, as *they* say, next to Godliness, of course!

Against these powers of the *discursion* (to invent a word), he suggested, bashfully, the lightening, baffling, turning of those powers by *excursion*. What is significant in the shift from reading the world of forms as text, to struggling with their contradictions as textuality, is the *re*-placing of the struggling subject as one who is "caught up" already. Barthes, by a long detour and hard work, rediscovered what is precisely revolutionary in Marx's project of socialism (which would redefine such terms as "social control" and "socialization") which is the rekindly of the necessary fusion of the subjective and objective worlds to temper the practices of simultaneously changing circumstances and selves. Any form of action, engagement,



commitment or project which wishes to hold still one or other way of understanding our social being will reproduce some of the very constraining features that the original impulse sought to transform. Objectivism. Subjectivism.

Questions about the morality of form(s) pervade Barthes' writings. Writing becomes a metaphor—hence, as always, dangerously informative—for living. With writing, language is always previous; with living, social forms are always previous. With writing, the dialogic, rhetorical and depicting struggle is always to stay sufficiently on the ground of the forms and norms that name and endow a practice as that kind of writing/publication, and yet to make (or, more often, re-make) it new enough to open to—that is, emphatically, to be able to be open to, that “other” writing which we call reading. “Forms”? That range of conditioned practices, relations and forces of production, modes of making public, sets of senses and sensibilities, through which social living is lived—thought, sedimented, fragmented. “Norms”? That range of *conditions* for those practices, relations, etc. The moral questions here are legion and legendary—they are often in danger of being taken for granted, i.e. repressively forgotten. What do forms make possible and what do they make difficult/impossible? Yes, and of course that too needs saying, they are positive: they make possible, encourage, facilitate, empower all of us in some ways (and, perhaps, some of us in all ways—on this I am agnostic). But they make impossible, discourage, deny, dilute, disempower all of us in others.

I am Written

The key questions then become How does this form work (locally and globally) to empower/deny the subject who is written—socially formed. Secondly, how do sets of social forms (e.g. in a major institutional practice like education or like writing-publishing) carry this normalization forward, catching up these traces of a certain social identity to make *that* an effective presentation of that social individual, i.e. that kind of person, as we say. Doing mythologies, now, seems to me to revive specific attention to the three Cs—Constraint, Contradiction, Construction—and I want to sketch a motivated methodology for doing that kind of mythologies. The three moments I depict here are (1) militant negativism, (2) making a judgement, and (3) affirmation of potential. They are also (simultaneously) bodily statements of engagement by the analyst/activist: the second glance (re-reading), the search, and the encounter. Just as there is an interrogative morality to ask for forms, so too is there a differential morality to find in the human capacities displaced into silence by those forms, or condensed into certain satisfactions, ubiquitous abundance.

The second glance ‘deranges’ (makes strange) the taken for granted. Attending for the first time, perhaps, we realise (and it is a bodily state) that certain patterns are there, relational sets: the natural way we have to go from some to another place; the

neutral seeming forms through which we conduct exchanges; the universal features of a sense of responsibility, rage, love, as gendered; the Obviousness that surrounds us like (and the metaphor is very material) the very air we breathe. We look again, we start to enquire. Operating with the motivated morality I have described we try to find the features of power and the modalities of control that are embodied in what these forms are and above all how they operate. We make our first strike against naturalness by finding the socially constructed specific features of these forms as historical: how did they come into being, change operate, stabilise, switch meanings. This is a necessarily *thick* description from which we have a sufficiently adequate sense of the texture of social relations we have shown. This militant negativism (Marx: “Doubt everything”) makes central what the dominant theories and practices cannot bear to hear (their notation cannot register): those forms of social difference which are neither abstracted as totalizing institutions (citizens, voters, consumers, everyone and thus no-one) nor terrifyingly concrete as individualizing practices (the unit-subject fixed, scheduled and called upon).

The search engages the differential features of the form, in order to make a judgement. It is here where the major shift from mythologizing is greatest. The second glance and the search might be misread as what has been called the concrete analysis of the concrete situation by Lenin. But largely typical of Lenin, and certainly typical of Leninism/Boshevism, the analyst remains outside *and* brings his (as *historically* it nearly always has) analysis to bear, to add to, to illuminate the “what is”, that the analysands—the people/situational context—cannot by definition already know, or know only in a kind of 5-out-of-10-could-try-harder intellectualist grading! Typically these analyses are in fact abstracted analyses of phenomenal situations. “Making a judgement” means registering not what people already know (for they know far more than intellectuals judge them to know) but how their knowing has illuminated the historical shapefulness, the contemporary weight, and the flexible contradictions of the social forms. Through that illumination, that historical experience as it rolls, crashes and breaks against the powered forms that constrain it, the forms in their current moment may be judged: how they impact, restrain, how they are contradictory, and what work *can* be done within, and what work *has* to be done without, them.

In a responding comment concerning pastoral poetic writing (in 1977, in the book of interviews with him by New Left Review, *Politics and Letters*, p. 307) Raymond Williams offers a clarification:

... I think that one has to distinguish two kinds of judgement, which, however, it is never possible finally to separate. There is the one level at which we say that a specific form was historically productive and therefore historically valuable—in that sense it was a major contribution to human culture.

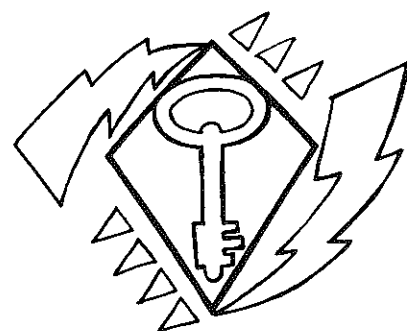
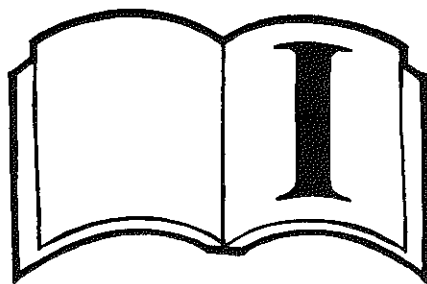
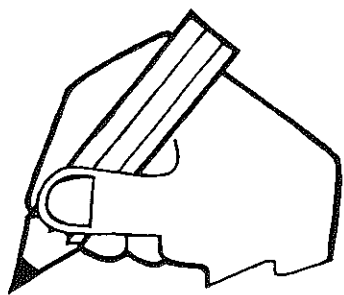
But we must also be able to say, in a distinct but connected way, that it was a disastrously powerful contribution. In the same way one can acknowledge the productive capacity of bourgeois society, or its political institutions, and yet distance oneself from them as creations which not only later become, but in a important sense in the very mode of their constitution always were, blocks on human freedom or even human progress. The power of achievement is not a self-sufficient value. If you cannot make the first judgement, then all history becomes a current morality, and there ceases to be any history. If you cannot make the second, I do not know what an affiliation to the working class would be for me.

This is where we are now.

Because I now see (and it took a lot of unlearning, and of course my seeing is not the same as either showing clearly, or being able to see from where others' seeing, saying and showing have enabled me to know what I do) this illumination, engagement, struggle from the third place (that of social difference) simultaneously against the dyadic other two (totalizing institutions/individualizing practices, *alias* the ancient dualism of Society/Self, *aka* as Objectivity/Subjectivity: It Is/I Am, etc., playing at a theatre near you) to be the only real foundations for and toward a different sense of sociality, this phase of judgement is also that of being positively negative.

This positivity is different from the positivity enshrined (and the religious term is highly appropriate) in the forms being analysed. Like Benjamin's flashes of light and moments of danger, these positivities do not simply expose the secular hells upon which all the much vaunted miracles of our times and places actually rest, but reveals the sources of this different illumination. It is a different pragmatics, a historical pragmatics that enforces a historicity at the centre of what is otherwise an endlessly present stasis-analysis, that cyclically rediscovers that (a) capitalism is not a moral system, that State forms are not motivated and skewed; (b) that cultural forms have disabling as much as enabling consequences. Rudely, but not crudely, to such effervescent moralities (that curiously leaves their proponents smiling!) a correct response would be “So . . . What's new!” This different pragmatics draws attention to the divergent uses of forms/products/objects that goes on despite the symbolic universalization of their exchange-value, their commodification. It brings back, by showing where there is is language for saying, a different subjectivity formed through the ways that historical experiences clash, roll and rock against the organised set of social expressions. It shows, sharply, that the forms which name also make claims, but that these claims need not (quite/all the time) fix those named. Out back of the real, the symbolic is always being worked, the imaginary is always being played, the forms are being turned.

This pragmatics registers a different potential for sociality because it announces a social *organization* (and no word is more in need of caring consideration just now) that cannot be, within the terms of a current morality or an encouraging rhetoric, be totalised. The way the forms impact upon and are illuminated by groups socially differentiated by time and place,



by gender, ethnicity, class, language, age, occupation, sexual preference, is to register the limitations of the claims and the contradictions in the naming attempted by these seemingly neutral, natural, universal and Obvious forms. Just as this formation is questioned, so too is the socialization thus embodied.

The encountering of this difference is already an affirmation of potential. This encounter—a social numeration of a qualitatively different sort is involved—recognises that there are within the differentially subordinated resources, means, capacities that are actually turning, deflecting, reworking dominant social forms. This involves articulating the traces—shreds of a language, hints of a collective symbology, that registers precisely what the forms deny, forms of knowledge and forms of cultural relations that operate below a level of normalised visibility. What is necessary? What is possible?

Both/And, not Either/Or

Logic chopping and concept shuffling are the commonplace features of much education. The one thing we can say about the body of intellectuals and academics is that characteristically they are rarely embodied in their work, *they are not there*. This is pervasive—writing, speaking, teaching, commenting: they map, contour, gloss the Other, gracefully or mechanically, *they are not there*. That they are not there means they are not caught up in the depictions they offer. This authority—claim (disguised in an enforced, normalised form of writing) grounds the persistent use of dichotomies along with schema of such cleansed methodological instruments that they can only reflect the brilliance of their originators.

I think what we have to do—this “we” being located individuals like myself within the apparatus of education—is to start examining *where we are*. How do “our” neutral, natural, universal and Obvious forms operate, what is their differential impact, how are we embodied in them, what do they encourage and what do they deny? This is all the more urgent because education is also a “carrier” wave for other forms—forms which I now see as centrally constraining (they hurt as much as they help)—such as modes of talking together (conference, seminar, colloquium, symposium—the challenge being with the “workshop”), making public (the journal, the occasional paper, the book, etc.). Groups that challenge dominant forms have tended to make use of what seem technical and neutral *means* to further their desirable ends. Significantly the main challenges to modes of communication (and modes of language) have come from social groups of doubling difference—those defined by gender, eth-

nicity, or language—along with local/community forms of activity of groups defined by class. The dominant “Left” Parties, Sects and the institutions of The Labour Movement have generally, at least in their national and international practices, adopted these inherited forms of talking together and making public. For ten years now I have felt, and had told to me, experiences of denial, disempowerment, dilution and dismay in the face of these routinised practices beyond and within academic life.

Doing Mythologies

Mythologies is done, a lot of the time, quietly; sometimes, loudly and visibly, in what we might call languages of action; in second-glancing, sometimes because this looking-again is enforced, at *how things get done*. The famous popular response to certain long-winded justifications for the current state of things is “Seems So!” but this does not entail commitment to strategic belief, rather it is a working response, entailing a kind of tactical seriousness. The affirmative movement I have described is a double one: first, there is a pervasive “not yet” of hopes, aspirations, beliefs and desires which current social forms cannot relate to, even though they place some of them on the agenda! Secondly, there is an important way in which the shifts in mythologies Barthes sketched out from the mid-1960s point to a different understanding of ontology and epistemology (being and knowing) in their suggestion that what social forms “really” are can never be discovered by a clinical, brilliant exposé of their motivated operation (their General Immorality in all and every claim to be neutral, natural, universal and Obvious)—nor yet can be it “shown” by drawing up a recipe of different institutions, a species of Left Moralism that is extremely elitist. Instead, what Barthes is suggesting is that what social forms “really” are can only be found in how they are lived—within, against, without—not at the level of their abstract coding, nor yet in their concrete structuration, but in their how-it-feels-like texture. His terms in the later writings point to this, as I have tried to by centralising Contradiction, and by making my third term “affirmation”. But he also suggested something else, or several features of how intellectual and academic work could be done differently.

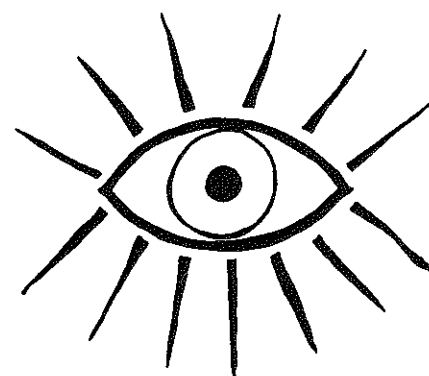
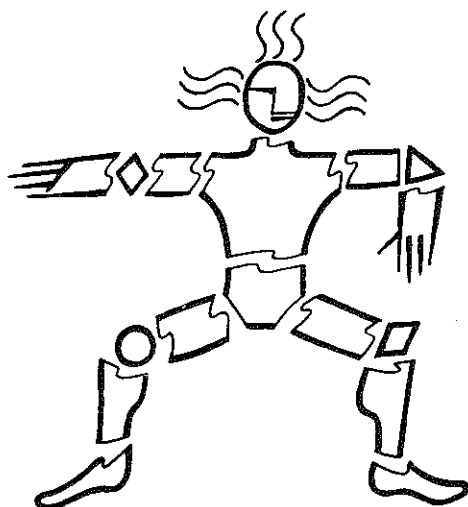
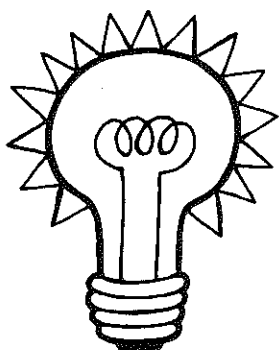
Instead of The Master (typically as it was and predominantly is) acting as analyst to his analysand students and their problems—the higher level of the teaching paradigm in schooling which expects/demands obedience in return for knowledge—Barthes does one major inversion. He was the analysand and his seminar students the analysts—what did *they* make of his digressions (in speech) and fragmentation (in writing)? I want to close by making a second inversion: social forms should be seen as providing us with questions, not answers: questions as to how they operate which we cannot answer alone, but which

need to be reformulated in terms of the historical experience of the pragmatics of use, exchange, contradiction and refusal of those differentiated groups. Whilst I agree that one necessary form of explanation is tautological—replacing the problem in the context of its origination and tracing the dynamic trajectory, explains how things are what they are—this is insufficient. It removes one form of puzzlement—“Ah, *that* is way . . .”; but represses another—“Then, how does this work, how am I caught up in/by it . . .?”. Here the shift of Barthes (although the traces are present in his earliest book, *Writing Degree Zero*) is toward a phenomenology. This needs supplementation by a pragmatics. If the phenomenological tells us about the interactive exchanges of situated communications, the pragmatics tells us about the productive uses of differential meaning-making.

Thus the cultural forms of education can be seen to involve different moments of productivity: a structuration of space, time and text (what is taught, how it is taught, how “correct” transmissions are assessed, and the social evaluation of this final certification) embodying practices of knowledge production: making available, making public, making meaningful. This last of the fused moments is the site of particularly complicated contradictions around constraint (hence the view of education as reproduction) and construction (thus the minority view of education as positively productive). It seems to me that a form can both be phenomenologically productive/reproductive *and* pragmatically trivial/tedious—that is what I take many educational exchange-performances to be about.

Generalizing from this it means that we cannot read/ignore the silences as if they were self-explanatory (apathy, deference, contentment, containment, etc.); rather they are unsaid (but often showable if a second glance is given) of a pragmatics which refuses what is provided, or uses it differently. Such a view also changes our orientation to where the point of production actually is to be found.

Finally, then, I am saying that doing mythologies involves what the early work “left out”—how (with particular this-sidedness) do social forms *mean* (how do States state?!). In *that* intertextuality, differential, historical experience rocking and rolling against regulated expressions, we find the resources for a different social scape, affirming thereby the human capacities denied, the desires “not yet” accomplishable, and also, as importantly, the degrees (for it is variable) to which the dominant forms *do not dominate*. Thereby, and never alone, always with others, we shall have begun to change the object(ive) itself, in changing our senses of our selves, who we are and who we might become.



MIM HEAD ASKS PRESIDENT REAGAN FOR ENFORCEMENT



TELEVISION VIOLENCE

NATIONAL COALITION

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Book Music and MP3 Found Increasingly Violent
Sexual Violence Predominant

For release: Tuesday, Jan. 10, 1984
Contact: Dr. Thomas Ratzfeld, Genfr., 8 Phil Gellis Project Director, (202-467-0515)
Contact: Dr. Bruce Hopewell, Washington Office Director, (202-467-0515)

AN ORDINANCE
of the
CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
relating to the Board of Public Works and the Board of Public Safety

Section 1. That Section 10 of the City of Minneapolis be and is hereby amended to read as follows:

**PORNOGRAPHY IS NOT
A VICTIMLESS CRIME...**

VIOLENT FILMS LINKED TO SEXUAL ASSAULTS

[illegible]

hate programming" into our homes. There followed a denunciation of most music videos, TV sports, *Dynasty* ("frequent emotional violence"), punk band names and war toys. "MTV and other violent TV networks are out to guarantee that the second television generation will be more violent than the first, which turned out to be the most violent generation of Americans on record." So that explains the sixties.

Judy Reisman, recent recipient of an \$800,000 grant from the US Justice Department to study the link between pornography and violence, gave an illustrated lecture that was condescending, preachy and confused. She spoke of her work in a five million dollar programme through the American University on juvenile delinquency, which aims "to classify, neurophysiologically, all the untrue images that surround us. We need to know how these are subconsciously perceived by us, since humans are wired biologically." She went on to speculate that the "sexual underpinning" of much pornography seems to be "male against male," and was the cause of considerable violence, sexual abuse and crime. Reisman then showed ads with children in them—some of which she said she got from the FBI—and warned how they present kids as "sexual, seductive, sensual creatures, capable of consent We don't know whether this is true, but we do know that sadism creeps in, and this is of concern to the state."

Dr. Wendy Stock showed slides from the New York WAP show. The programme had noted that Stock was from SUNY Stony Brook and West Palm Beach. She is also Director of the Human Sexuality Center in Lake Worth, Florida. A discussion of detective magazines, *Hustler* and ads led Stock to the conclusion that "men are taught that no means yes." Stock then revealed that Al Goldstein, "the leader of the pro-porn forces" was planning to disrupt this conference by rushing in and taking off all his clothes. We looked around apprehensively, but apparently Al had stayed home.

Everett Koop, the US Surgeon General, gave the most polished New Right speech I've heard. Tarted up in a red bow tie, Koop announced that violence was now "an epidemic threatening millions of decent families. We all recognize it. We all know what it looks like. And we all know its victims." We learned that the epidemic began (no surprise) in 1965 and, like a cancer, takes several forms. Apparently, suicide is one. The "Kitty Genovese Syndrome" another. Child Abuse. Incest. Murder. Terrorism.

Most Americans at the conference added "and Canada" to the ends of their sentences. Koop didn't bother: "We used to be a proud and fearless people in this country. Now we feel weak and victimized." The solution? Mass injections of Depo-provera perhaps? More ketchup in school lunches? Koop's answers lay in "pro-active law enforcement" and the unspecified work of the Center for the Study of Anti-social and Violent Behavior and the President's Task Force on People Affected by Crime.

Most of the afternoon was given over to papers on the victims of pornography, and predictably enough these tended to be children. Florence Rush talked about "debriefing men who molest children." In the profession, that usually means drug or electroshock therapy or a lobotomy—all "therapies" currently in use on the bodies of sex offenders. Ann Wolberg Burgess from the Boston Department of Health announced that she would show slides of child porn and then "speak for the victims." Speak she did. Sexual abuse of children was defined as "any sexual contact with children (including by other children) regardless of consent." That out of the way, Burgess then did a reading of draw-

ings by kids who had been "victims of psychological violence" (that's sex by the way). A boy had drawn breasts on another boy: "Note the gender confusion—a product of sexual victimization." A picture of a muscle car elicited this: "Here's a healthy drawing by a normal boy." And in a drawing of a boy with a hardon we were asked to "note the clear sexual anxiety in the genital area." Burgess is another recipient of Justice Department funds—in this case, \$840,000 that will provide law enforcement agencies with the 'scientific' means to recognize sexually precocious children before they turn to a life of violence and crime.

Superintendent Special Agent Ken Lanning from the FBI Academy gave a presentation so skillful it had obviously been practiced in shopping malls and church basements across the continent. Before beginning his slide show culled from police raids he apologized: "I wish I didn't have slides to show you, but then you wouldn't be convinced." Convinced of what, officer? Convinced that "children are weak, vulnerable victims stalked by hunters and torturers." That "your child can be making pornography without your ever knowing about it." That that nice man down the block . . . That "if you're a single mother, one of them could marry you in order to gain access to your kids." That "this might look to you like an innocent family snapshot, but it's part of an insidious worldwide phenomenon linked by countercultural networks and electronic bulletin boards." That *Show Me!* is in many pedophiles' collections. But Lanning didn't stop at Child Pornography. There's also something called Child Erotica; that's anything—a pair of sneakers, a diary, a ticket stub—collected by a Child Abuser.

Other cops showed slides of chopped up bodies in plastic bags. Death Squads? No, Sex Offenders, and the only way to stop these criminals is to get to them before they commit the crimes. There followed calls for international agencies to gather data.

Andrea Dworkin was next. She talked about chopped up bodies too, about how "we know that men like hurting women," about how "pornography is terrorism." If nothing else, Dworkin is an electrifying orator. She got a standing ovation.

And on and on. More slides, more gasps from the audience, more women's groups calling for more laws. More cops. More prosecuting attorneys. More hip social scientists.

What is to be gained for feminism by sitting on panels with the FBI and the medical profession? Publicity, most obviously. And the illusion of power and legitimation. This was not achieved without some struggle at the Toronto conference. At the bottom of the agenda handed out at the door was this note: "out of mutual respect for one another's sense of values, all of the participants have been asked to avoid raising potentially divisive issues, such as abortion and homosexuality." Many of the women who spoke disobeyed this directive, and after Koop's address a group of about twenty took the stage, including speakers McKinnon, Stock, Dworkin and Maude Barlow, former Prime Minister Trudeau's feminist advisor. A statement was read in English and French condemning the opprobrium heaped on lesbianism and abortion and the failure to situate pornography within the context of women's subordinate place in society. Other women had protested the high price of admission in the morning and were about to be thrown out by the organizers when CBC and 60 Minutes turned on their cameras. They were then invited to enter for only \$10.

These interventions were hailed as victories in the Toronto feminist press. It was argued that feminism had made such a conference possible in the first place, and that

Innocent Victims.

women's concerns had prevailed. Andrea Dworkin, Susan Cole wrote in *Broadside*, had "come down from the mountain" and "made those who really don't want to listen cock their ears."

Now there's a sick fantasy. My press packet had included pictures of "concerned leaders" meeting with Reagan, lists of anti-social TV shows, an appeal to women to wear dresses, WAP xeroxes of *Playboy* cartoons, pictures of Mr. T (without Nancy), denunciations of Brian De Palma, brochures from organizations with names like Citizens for Decency Through Law and Morality in Media, Inc. A vision of the liberation of women can be glimpsed through this mishmash?

Sure, in the short term, the anti-porn movement might well attract women—and men—who are unfamiliar with explicit sexual representations and who otherwise have no interest in feminism. In fact, much of the problem seems to be the photographic image itself, in all its presumed verisimilitude. That leads me to wonder what kinds of ethical dilemmas the sex industry will pose when it discovers how to interface biofeedback with robotics and holography. To be more specific, what will happen to my fantasies of being raped once my body gets plugged more directly into the integrated circuit? As our relations to power become increasingly mediated by high technologies, what kinds of sexual representations will become possible—or "desirable"?

For their part, the cops are after three things: more money, more interagency cooperation, and more statutory authority. On the question of child porn in particular (which is usually defined in the broadest possible terms), many US jurisdictions already have task forces comprised of state, local and national police; postal officials; local and state attorneys general; and welfare officers. These bureaucracies are lobbying for legislation that will raise the age from 16 to 18 under which children cannot be depicted in sexual conduct (including "exhibitionism"); and to include child porn violations under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act. This last allows the US Justice Department to require any person or organization to turn over any material deemed relevant to an investigation underway. There has already been speculation in the gay press that Reagan's various commissions on organized crime will be able to dismantle many gay institutions on the pretext of going after "mob-controlled" pornography. Moreover, the recent history of judicial decisions on obscenity, in Canada at least, suggests that the bench hasn't the least interest in encouraging the emancipation of women or youth, but an out and out fascination with controlling sex in and of itself, particularly the practices of marginals.

As for the New Right, their own wide-ranging agenda is by now well documented and all too familiar. Its most threatening aspect, for this discussion, is the move to suppress all non-marital, non-procreative sex. In a sexist society, that inexorably means control over women's bodies and sexual expression. If anti-porn feminists can be used, like temperance advocates, to legitimize this struggle, so much the better. It seems to me that people who try to disentangle anti-porn politics from the agenda of the right are labouring under a huge illusion. It can't be done. We might just as well try to invent a feminist reading of *Sudden Impact*, the "Dirty Harriet" movie in which Sondra Locke, with Clint Eastwood's blessing, shoots off the balls of five men who gang raped her and her sister. The point is that feminism is here inserted into a law-and-order discourse. Not that that's any different from the other way round.

Another example. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women met

recently in Ottawa to form policy to be used in the upcoming elections. It turns out that the newsstand in their hotel sells skin mags. A press conference is called, the spectre of the corrupted child is raised, and demands are made for the removal of the offending publications, and for anti-porn planks in the platforms of the three major parties. This comes at a time when the Supreme Court of Canada is deliberating two challenges to the Ontario Censor Board (which has the authority to cut or ban virtually all films and videos shown in Canada) on the grounds that its existence is a violation of free speech guaranteed in the recently-enacted Charter of Rights. Now, how would we go about distinguishing these two "kinds" of censorship? And how do such demands challenge the image of women as hapless victims?

At bottom, of course, censorship will do little to inhibit what is by all accounts a flourishing industry. It is often noted by its opponents that porn is a six billion dollar business. Just what's the problem here? Profit? Then what about fashion, automobiles or arms, which dwarf the sex industry? We can be assured that commercial restrictions on the sex industry will be resisted every step of the way, as they are in every other sector of the economy. In short, in a society that so privileges the ideology of a free market, arguments for censorship ought to be met with considerable suspicion.

So what other agenda is there in the struggle to rid this society of sexually explicit images? First, the control of sexual practices, particularly among women, young people and marginals. Second, the elimination of the few gains that have been made by the sexual liberation movements of the past 15 years. Lastly, the refusal of the generalized and widespread demands for autonomy everywhere in the world today. An anti-porn politics, and cultural feminism in general, does nothing to challenge the power of the state, or indeed the predominant assumptions about the nature of men's and women's sexualities.

Beyond questions of gender and sexuality, what about violence itself, and its representations? What does it mean for the Surgeon-General of the United States to talk about eliminating violence? Suppose we thought that was a good idea. What would be appropriate targets? Men? Terrorism? The police? Competitive sports? Hurricanes? SM? What do we do with the experience of archaic ecological societies, where violence was understood to have a time and place?

I don't see any of these questions being raised within the anti-porn movement. Nor do I see that movement addressing in an honest way the complex issues around sex, desire and pleasure that have been articulated by the sexual fringe. Finally, I don't see how it is possible—in theory or practice—for that movement to work toward the sexual, social or economic liberation of women.

The anti-porn roadshow now touring this continent is intimately linked with the most repressive elements of the modern state. It's no coincidence that porn and "violence" are likened to crime and sickness, for the mammoth apparatuses understood to control these transgressions are already in place. You want laws? Fine. And how about a little psychosurgery while we're at it?

The fight over pornography is taking place on precisely the terrain staked out by the radical sexual liberation movements of the past two decades. If we abandon those visions, we stand to lose far more than the possibility of a sexually healthy and diverse society. We stand to lose our very autonomy. The right understands this. But does the anti-porn movement?

MTV Monitoring Results

Songs alphabetically within each category. V = Violence, I = Intermediate, NV = Non-violent, PS = Protocol.

• V Sexually Related Violence	Southside Johnny & The Jukes <i>Trash It Up</i> Miramax/ATCO
• V Sexual Sexual Violence	Golden Earring <i>Twilight Zone</i> Polygram
• V Educational Function	Duran Duran <i>Union of the Snake</i> Capitol
	Cheap Trick <i>The Way of the World</i> CBS
	Planet P <i>Why Me</i> Geffen
	Pat Benatar <i>You Better Run</i>
	Night Ranger <i>You Can Still Rock</i> (I)
• V Rick Springfield <i>Affair of the Heart</i> RCA	
• V AC/DC <i>Back in Black</i> Atlantic	EBN OZN <i>A E I O U, Somewhere</i>
• V The Pretenders <i>Back on the Chain Gang</i> Warner	Quiet Riot <i>Cum on Feel the Noise</i>
• V Michael Jackson <i>Beat It</i> CBS	After The Fire <i>Der Kommissar</i> CP
• V Robert Plant <i>Big Log</i> Atlantic	Men At Work <i>Down Under</i> CBS
• V Michael Jackson <i>Billie Jean</i> CBS	
• V Talking Heads <i>Burning Down the House</i> Sire/Warner	
• V John Waite <i>Change</i> Chrysalis	Hall & Oates <i>Family Man</i> RCA
• V John Cougar <i>Crumblin' Down</i> Riva/Polygram	Phil Collins <i>I Don't Care Anymore</i>
• V Neil Young <i>Trans</i> Chrysalis	Phil Collins <i>In the Air Tonight</i>

No to Immodest Fashions!

Shirley, before her death, was a famous model. She was known for her modish fashions, which were a mix of the latest and the best. She was a true fashionista, and her death was a great loss to the fashion world. Her death was a result of a heart attack, which was caused by a combination of factors, including her diet and her lifestyle. Her death was a warning to all of us to take care of our health and to live a balanced life.

Since White Snow White is sent into forest to be killed on orders from her stepmother, the wicked Queen. The hunter spares Snow White at last, but she is still alive and gives her a poisoned apple, causing her to fall into a deep sleep. Prince Charming kisses her and breaks the spell, and she awakens. Prince Charming falls to her death, and she is left alone. She is then rescued by a prince, and they live happily ever after. The story is a classic, and it has been adapted many times. It is a story of a young girl who is persecuted by her stepmother and is eventually rescued by a prince. It is a story of love, courage, and triumph over adversity.

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Citizens for Decency through Law, Inc.
P.O. Box 219
Pittsford, NY 14534

Dear Sirs:
I am enclosing a copy of the report of the Citizens for Decency through Law, Inc. regarding the anti-porn movement. I hope you will find it interesting and informative. I am sure you will agree that the anti-porn movement is a threat to the freedom of expression and the rights of women. I am sure you will agree that the anti-porn movement is a threat to the freedom of expression and the rights of women. I am sure you will agree that the anti-porn movement is a threat to the freedom of expression and the rights of women.

Yours truly,
John J. Mearns
President, Citizens for Decency through Law, Inc.



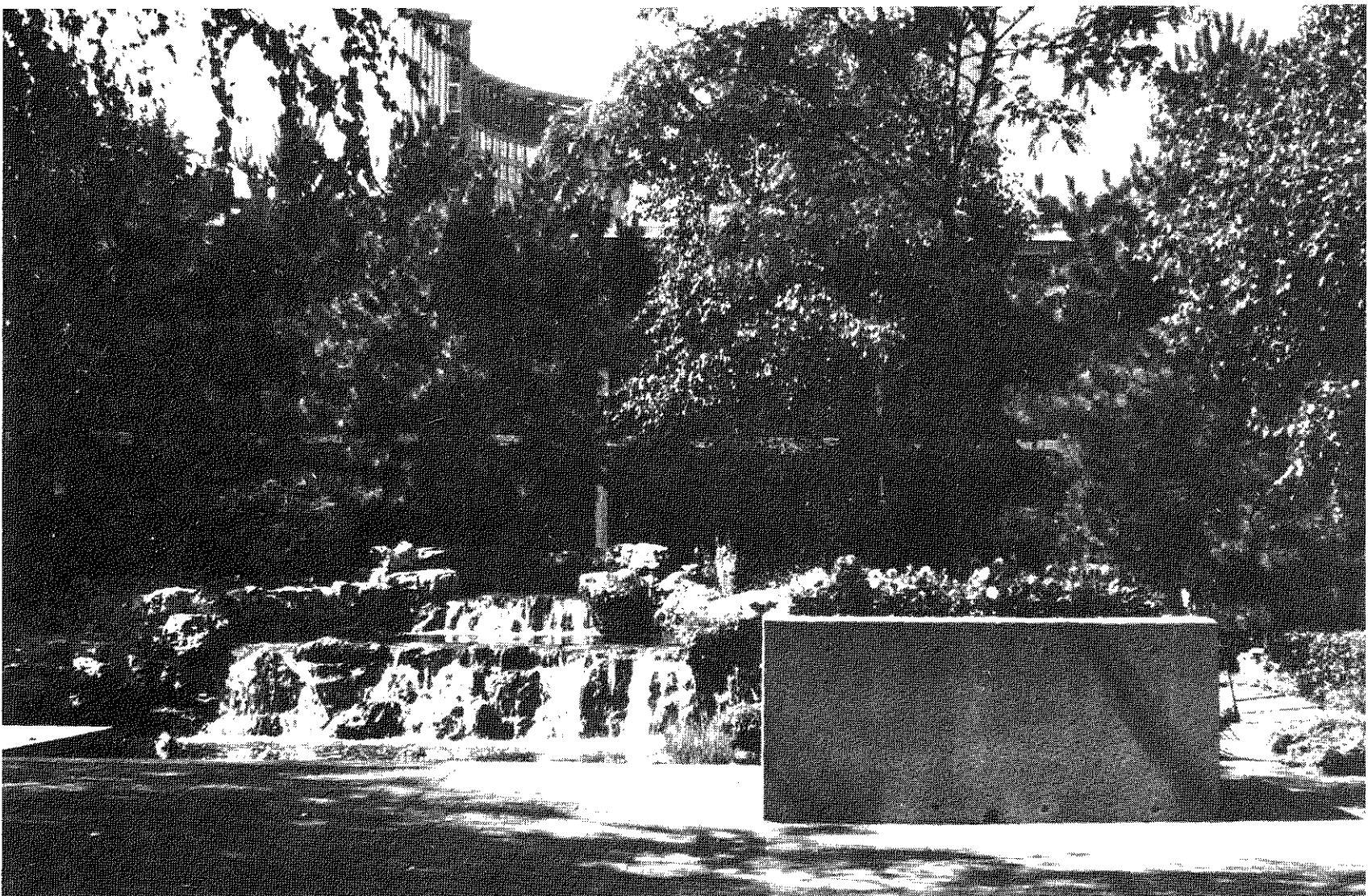
The Trapper had stumbled upon it
but too suddenly to be by chance,
almost by pre-destination,

There are two realisms:
The first deciphers the "real"
(What is demonstrated by not seen);



He had a strong sense of intuition.
Even as a child he could find things,
that others could not find.

The second speaks "reality"
(What is seen but not demonstrated);



It was this innate ability to see,
to read the signs decisively in a moment,
that made the Trapper Legend.

The novel,
which can mix these two realisms,
adds to the intelligible of the "real"
the hallucinatory tail of "reality".



Marc Raboy

“Radio must be changed from a means of distribution to a means of communication”, Bertolt Brecht wrote in 1932, when the medium was barely a dozen years old. By that time, its form was already established as a one-way transmitter of messages to mass audiences whose only power lay in their control of the switch. Whether commercial or state monopoly, radio was indeed a reflection of political and cultural power relations, and a tool for maintaining them, everywhere in the world.

Brecht's own countryfolk were among the first to try to invent an emancipatory form of radio practice by taking radio-phonic control into their own hands. During the revolution of 1918 German workers occupied radio studios, and illegal radio broadcasts by worker groups persisted throughout the Weimar Republic.

From the *Arbeterradiobund* of Weimar to the *radios libres* of France, Belgium, West Germany and Italy in the 1970s, radio has been used as a means of social and political intervention in western Europe. At the same time, from Algeria to Latin America, from Viet Nam to Afghanistan, radio has been an important weapon in revolutionary struggles against colonial powers. In North and South America, meanwhile, “community” radio occupies a critical, although marginal, space at the edge of the cultural colossus.

More than 500 contemporary practitioners of these different types of oppositional radios met at a remarkable conference in Montreal last August (1983), to discover they had one great unifying quality: use of the medium as a means of opposing domination, albeit of various forms and degrees. The conference was organized under the sign of “community”—a particularly North American designation, which everyone recognized was not necessarily appropriate to all the experiences represented at Montreal. In fact, if anything, there was a tacit recognition of a kind of solidarity that transcends socio-cultural context but

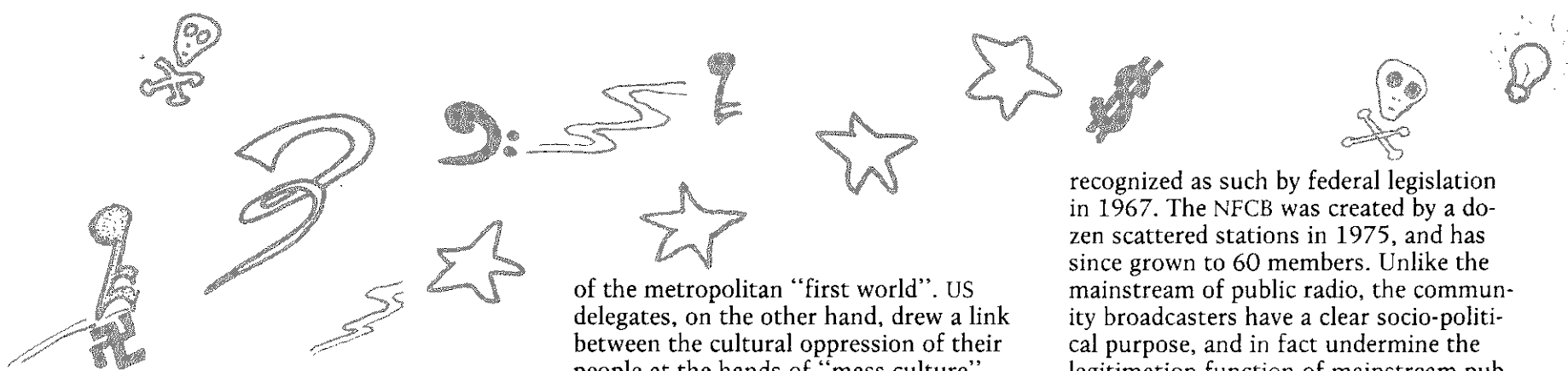
which can not yet be named. What ties these experiences together is the way each of them uses radio as part of a process of human emancipation.

Where did these radios come from and where are they headed in 1984?

Revolutionary Radio

The use of radio as a means of propaganda and ideological support for armed struggle is the oldest, clearest and least ambiguous kind of ‘alternative’ radio. During the Second World War, radio was an important propaganda and counter-propaganda tool of both sides, and also a tool of resistance. After the war, when the CIA began regular monitoring of “clandestine stations” throughout the world, virtually every imaginable revolutionary guerilla group, of left and right, had its radio. Some of the examples to turn up on the CIA monitors in the 1940s and '50s: the Irgun, the IRA, Slovakian anti-communist nationalists, Spanish Republicans in exile, Basque separatists, Kurdish rebels.

illustration by Peter Dako



Frantz Fanon detailed the important psychological role of radio in the Algerian war of liberation: Up until the start of fighting in 1954, radio was considered a tool of colonialism, to the point where lack of ownership of a radio was a mark of resistance among upper-class native Algerians. Then, one day in 1956, leaflets appeared in Algiers announcing the launching of "la Voix de l'Algerie", the Voice of Algeria. Suddenly the situation was reversed, and soon the colonial authorities had to outlaw the sale and purchase of radio stations.

Radio enjoyed a special place in the Cuban Revolution. No less than nine clandestine radios broadcast to Cuba between six anti-Castro and three revolutionary, including the famous Radio Rebelde, set up by Che Guevara in the Sierra Maestra in February, 1958. Guerilla radio has since been a regular fact of Latin American struggles. In Nicaragua, Radio Sandino used mobile transmitters to communicate with guerilla forces and throw the Somoza guard off balance.

Today, the tradition is continued in the Morazan mountains of El Salvador, where the Faribundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) broadcasts Radio Venceremos. Radio Venceremos began regular broadcasts from FMLN-controlled territory January 10, 1981, after a year of sporadic "people's revolutionary radio" broadcasting in the capital. It has been on and off the air since then, depending on the fortunes of war, and is a prime target of government repression. During the 1982 elections, when the army was unable to contain its activities, United States vessels offshore began jamming Radio Venceremos' broadcasts.

Radio Venceremos is a classical "revolutionary" radio. As the voice of an armed rebel movement, it conveys vital information and does political education, with a view towards the communicational needs of the revolution. The problem with this type of radio is that the revolutionary context severely limits the possibility of democratic participation, and lends itself too easily to institutionalisation as "party radio" after the revolution . . .



At first glance, you couldn't get much farther from the revolutionary radios of third world national liberation struggles than the "community" radios of North America. While the revolutionary radios are seen as support systems for political struggles, community radios are attempts at cultural struggle. The distinction was made sharply at the Montreal conference. Latin American delegates insisted on the "abyss" separating the voiceless peasants of their countries and the urban populace

of the metropolitan "first world". US delegates, on the other hand, drew a link between the cultural oppression of their people at the hands of "mass culture" and the military repression which is current in many third-world countries. A lot of time was spent concerned with guilt: trying to inflict it or trying to deal with it, until it was pointed out that suffering and struggle could not be quantified. One intervener insisted that four deaths in Poland could be as important in the struggle for democracy as 100,000 starving in the sub-sahara, while another added that the same arms profiteers are exploiting and was threatening people everywhere . . .

"Community" radio is practiced in many parts of Latin America, for example in Bolivia, which in spite of its desperate poverty has a well-developed, structured community radio system existing alongside state and commercial systems. Since the 1950s, radio has been used by Bolivian miners in the course of their struggles and many mining towns have for varying periods sustained decentralised, autonomous, self-managed radios in the face of military dictatorship.

A clearly different type of community radio is practiced in North America. In Canada, community radio takes the form of minority cultural development. Community radio is a (provincially) state-sanctioned alternative in Quebec, where in some parts of the territory it constitutes the main local station. Under the sign of community, autonomous radio has found its way into over a dozen Inuit and dozens of Indian settlements of the Quebec and Canadian north. It is also present on several college campuses and in two cities of the English Canadian south (Vancouver and Kitchener).

The American situation is different once again. Almost all radio in the US is of course private/commercial. Since the 1950s, when the Federal Communications Commission decided to open some FM channels for non-profit, educational radio, "public" radio has taken a significant spot in the spectrum. US "public" radio is unlike any other; it has no direct connection to the state, as the term implies in the general western context. One out of every eight radio stations in the US is "public", or non-profit (1,000/8,000), but nearly 3/4 of these (700) are found on college campuses. The others are grouped in two organisations, National Public Radio (240 stations) and the National Federation of Community Broadcasters (60). It is the latter and tiniest group, representing less than 1% of all radio stations in the US, that presents a most instructive example of "community" radio.

Unlike the other public stations, community radio stations in the US have no institutional affiliation. They are independent and see themselves as social animation tools of community development, serving media-poor publics—various minorities, poor people, women, etc. The community radio stations are not only an alternative to commercial broadcasting but also to public radio, the official alternative to the commercial system that was

recognized as such by federal legislation in 1967. The NFCB was created by a dozen scattered stations in 1975, and has since grown to 60 members. Unlike the mainstream of public radio, the community broadcasters have a clear socio-political purpose, and in fact undermine the legitimization function of mainstream public radio. This is indeed, in the US context, radical radio. These radios are financed by listeners, foundations and government subsidies for which they are eligible under funding programs for public radio.

US community radio dates from the founding in 1949 of KPFA in Berkeley, on the basis of anarchist/pacifist principles. This listener-sponsored station is today one of the mainstays of the 5-station Pacifica Foundation, which has been under sharp attack from the right since the election of Ronald Reagan. After a right-wing organization, Accuracy In Media, accused Pacifica of broadcasting "filth, racism and communism" in 1981, a *National Enquirer* expose screamed "Your Tax Dollars Support Red Broadcasters". A right-wing lobby, the American Legal Foundation, has been seeking to get the FCC to refuse renewal of Pacifica's Washington station's license. The media have become public battleground in Reagan's America, pitting groups like the right-wing Coalition for Better Television against the left-leaning National Citizens' Committee on Broadcasting. The government is trying to break down the 60-year-old idea that broadcasting is a "public trust" (even though it has always been entrusted to private interests!), through measures like deregulation. In this context, community radio is an involved political player.

The Pacifica group and other NFCB members say they are seeking to move people and change their consciousness. This purpose is an equalizer between radios otherwise as different as Pacifica's Berkeley KPFA, El Salvador's Radio Venceremos and the urban guerrilla radios of western Europe. It represents the "political" stream of the radio movement worldwide, alongside the "cultural" stream whose purpose it is to create a space for alternative forms of cultural expression, forms too unorthodox or unprofitable to find room on mainstream airwaves. Both streams contain emancipatory aspects. Only in very rare cases, usually at specific exemplary moments, do they merge.



Radio developed as a state monopoly in most of the western world*. As a result of the monopoly situation, radio became either a high culture medium, as in the United Kingdom, or a political extension of the state, as in France. By the mid-

* The US is the notable exception. Canada was on its way to adopting the US model when our federal fathers panicked and created the Canadian Broadcasting Compromise in 1932.



1960s, dissatisfaction with both types of "public" monopolies led to illegal "private" initiatives to create alternatives.

The first break in the European radio monopolies came with the setting up of the English offshore pirate station Radio Caroline in 1964. Its target was innocent enough: the stuffiness of the BBC. Soon there were a dozen stations broadcasting from floating offshore bases. They were never "political" as such. The BBC eventually took this action-critique seriously enough to completely change its program style, but only after legislation had crushed the pirate station movement in 1967.

The commercial broadcasting lobby in Great Britain was more successful, and in 1972 the BBC monopoly was broken with the creation of "private" broadcasting and the Independent Broadcasting Authority. Today, there is a raging debate in Britain over the shape and form of a new entity: "local" broadcasting. A blue-ribbon committee charged with reviewing the British broadcasting system recommended in 1977 the creation of a Local Broadcasting Authority, under which local radio would be independent of both BBC and IBA. The recommendation has not been realized, and a popular movement has since developed in support of the demand for non-commercial, non-governmental local community radio, politically independent of both capital and state.

The primary struggle in this case is over the political control structure of the radio, and the assumption is that this will lead to a certain kind of presumably different content. It inevitably does, but the content is widely variable, as the French and Italian situations, for example, show.

On the European continent, commercial radio developed with "peripheral" stations based in small principalities like Luxembourg and Monaco, beaming their signals to large, lucrative markets like France. This satisfied a certain consumer need for an alternative to the highly politicized French state broadcasting system... until a certain May '68.

In the wake of the May upheavals, an entire new set of alternative needs were identified: social, political, cultural and ideological. These needs had nothing to do with commercial interests and could in no way be accommodated within the official system. By the mid-1970s, a vast trans-rational movement of illegal, clandestine radios had developed, most strongly in France, Belgium, Italy and the German Federal Republic.

In Italy, radio began to be used as a political tool in 1975 by organized extreme-left and alternative movement groups (gays, women, ecologists) determined to build something different and autonomous of the official ideological apparatus and the Italian state. The illegal radios were severely repressed at first, but nevertheless, some 300 were broadcasting by the time of the 1976 legislative elections, no doubt influencing (or reflecting?? it's never quite clear...) the gains of the left in those elections. In a climate of political

crisis, Italy authorised the free radios, so long as they remained "local" and did not interfere directly with the state monopoly, RAI. This first European "deregulation" as it were, was to become the prototype of a new problem: the opening of the airwaves invited private entrepreneurs to invade a space hitherto restricted to the state and the outlaws. Soon Italy's alternative radios—and the "public service"—were marginalised as 3,000 commercial stations filled the air.

The French free radios of the mid-to-late 1970s saw themselves as media of social and political intervention. The first to transmit regularly was the Paris-based ecologists' Radio Verte, which went on the air in 1977, and was soon followed up by stations like Radio Lorraine-coeur-d'acier, set up by steelworkers in Longwy, and Radio Verte Fessenheim, set up by activists opposing nuclear installations in Alsace. By September 1977, there was a first free radio federation, l'Association pour la liberation des ondes.

Throughout the Giscard regime, police and guerrilla broadcasters played cat and mouse, and strong repressive legislation was brought in in 1978. Soon after, the Socialist Party identified the media issue as a key source of political dissension in France and set up Radio Riposte. When Francois Mitterrand was elected President in May 1981, one of his first gestures was to amnesty several dozen people facing charges of violating the state broadcasting monopoly—one of whom was himself, arrested in a raid on Radio Riposte studios while he was on the air. In the first year of Mitterrand's regime, the radio issue was never far from the forefront, as free radio initiatives mushroomed and a government reform of the broadcasting system moved to co-opt it.

In Belgium, clandestine radios appeared in 1978, then began to emerge from hiding and flout the state monopoly openly. When police tried to raid the first permanent "animation radio", Radio Louvain-La-Neuve, hundreds of students spontaneously turned out and physically prevented them from carrying out the action.

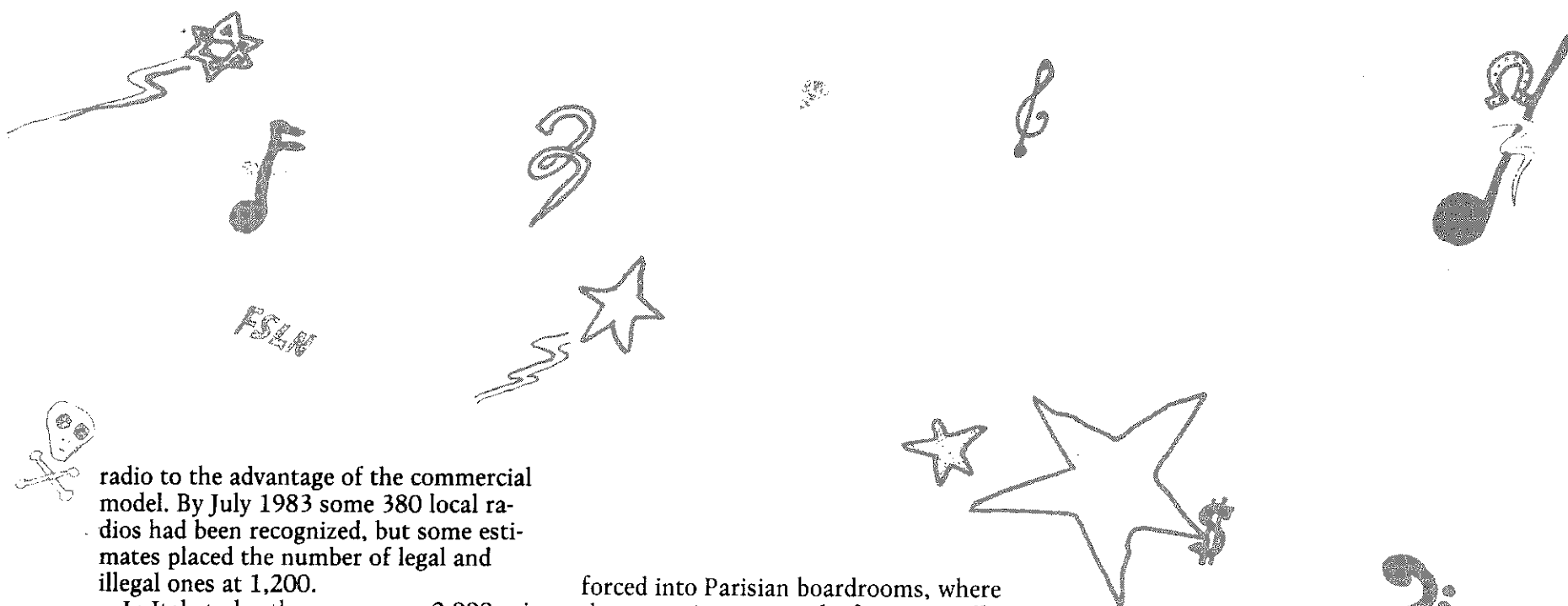
In Belgium too, the government moved in 1981 to regularise the radio situation, wary, as were the French, to avoid an "Italian" situation. The tremendous paradox that has since emerged in most of western Europe, has the state playing the role of guarantor of non-commercial "difference" and defender against the tendency of an uncontrolled marketplace to favour commercial offerings. (From where we sit, it is tempting to refer to this situation as "canadianisation" of the air...)

The exception is West Germany. Here, radical radio continues to exhibit its sharpest contradictions. In the Federal Republic of Germany, independent, non-commercial radio is still illegal. Free stations—most of them launched by political movements in the 1970s, beginning in Berlin in 1975—are persecuted by police and authorities in a situation which is the most repressive in western Europe. The German radios, consequently, are still all "political", in the tradition of the early French, Belgian and Italian *radios libres*. In Germany, it is a criminal act to listen to illegal stations, and listeners are liable to have their offending radio sets confiscated.

The Politics of Radio

Media are a reflection of a political context. The political context of the 1980s is not that of the 1970s. Challenged by the free radio movement, the governments of western Europe have moved to legitimize their situation. Conveniently, this political thaw comes at a time when the geopolitical/technological context of broadcasting is rapidly evolving, making the erstwhile state monopolies no longer useful. For example, it no longer makes sense for a government to maintain strict control over channels and frequencies in an era where direct broadcast satellites and fibre optic cable have multiplied available programming. Also, as the Belgian and Italian situations show, the pressure to open up the commercial possibilities of the radio spectrum are too great for governments—even social democratic governments—facing the conservative winds of deregulation.

In Belgium, the first wave of "animation" radios was soon followed by a second group of more commercial, entertainment-oriented ones. Soon there were two radio associations: the Association pour la liberation des ondes (ALO), grouping local, independent, non-profit, self-financing radios opposed to advertising or political subordination; and the Groupement des radios independantes de Belgique (GRIB), whose members were more mass-culture oriented, pro-advertising, and professional. For two years, while the Belgian state monopoly exercised tolerance, the commercial radios took the upper hand. The ALO was soon demanding regulation. In September 1981, a new law recognized independent local radio in Belgium. The legislative framework is supposed to aid "expressive" radio over commercial ones, but the marketplace has marginalised alternative



radio to the advantage of the commercial model. By July 1983 some 380 local radios had been recognized, but some estimates placed the number of legal and illegal ones at 1,200.

In Italy today there are some 2,000 private and concentrates on more-or-less official politics. Radical radio in Italy is found at the local level, where about 200 independent stations of "democratic expression" are currently broadcasting. Democratic radio in Italy means radio with public/audience participation in programming, relying heavily on studio-to-telephone hookups. Since 1981, about 150 of these "democratic" radios are organized in the Association for Democratic Information Broadcasting (LEID). Many of these radios are cooperatively owned. For example, Radio Popolare in Milan has some 12,000 member/owners who control and finance the station.

The political contradictions and frustrations of radical radio are perhaps rawest in France. Here, before May 10, 1981, the situation was at least clear: community radio was an enemy of the state and behaved as such. The unofficial radios were all radios of social and political intervention. Since May 10, radio has also become a movement of cultural expression, in addition to the commercial entrepreneurs, a new type of left-cultural radio "freak" has taken to the air. These broadcasters try to explore new forms of radiophonic language—as opposed to the culturally derivative commercial radios. But only the "intervention" radios are really concerned about the social impact of what they are doing.

An estimated 80,000 people are involved in local radio in France. There are several federations, the most important of which is the Federation nationale des radios libres (300 member stations). The FNRL groups "social expression and communication" radios, that seek financial and political independence and support civic participation. Smaller federations are more "professionalist", and the really commercial operations are not interested in the federations and their negotiations which so far has been hostile with the government—to advertising, which it sees as inviting an Italian/American type situation.

The debate on advertising in France is typical of the type of contradiction inherent in the radio question: both commercial and left cultural/political stations want to be able to sell advertising, the first to make money and the latter to be self-sufficient. The government is opposed to advertising to protect the public interest against American-style commercialism . . . The free radios have been

forced into Parisian boardrooms, where they negotiate protocols, frequency allocations and guidelines for advertising with socialist functionaries. The radical radios have been bureaucratized, and some of the most radical, the most innovative, the most collectivist, have been refused legal status. The irony is thus that now, despite the legalisation and new legitimacy of alternative radio, the exclusion of some of them means there are still outlaw "radio libres" . . .



On the road to legitimacy, the "free radios" of Europe have taken a big step closer to their North American colleagues. In 1979, a group of French researchers decried the fact that in Quebec, they found "community" media closely tied to the state, through various legislative/financial mechanisms (Barbier-Bouvet et al). Today, this is becoming increasingly the case in Europe as well. Does this necessarily mean that the emancipatory potential of the medium must be undermined?

The organisers of the Montreal conference, in an attempt to infuse some content to the notion of "community-oriented radio", came up with the following set of characteristics: "democratic, free of any institutional dependency, locally-owned, based on alternative, autonomous participatory practice . . .". Under this umbrella, they found that different contexts led to different traditions and different meanings.

Thus, "community" radio is peculiarly North American, appealing to the sense of belonging fostered by the geographically limited and self-managed communities typical of New England towns and Quebecois villages. "Popular" radio, on the other hand, is more meaningful to the movements of Africa, Latin America and Mediterranean Europe, and refers to political opposition and struggle against the political authority incarnated in traditional radio. "Free" radio, thirdly, connotes the struggle to occupy a free-speech space outside the authoritarian structure

of state radio monopolies. In Anglo-Saxon cultures, "pirate", "alternative", "sidewalk", and "participatory" radios are all terms used to name the democratic impulse in radio.

Radio thus takes on a different emancipatory focus in different social and political contexts: as human and cultural expression, as social and political intervention, as community-building, as tool of revolutionary struggle. Rather than look for a common thread in these diverse experiences, perhaps it may be most useful to simply marvel that in the present global context people are managing to resist the dominating tendency of mass communication at all. . .

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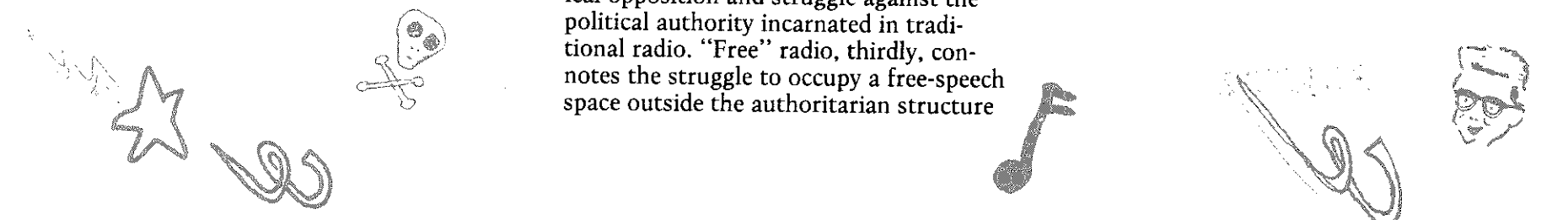
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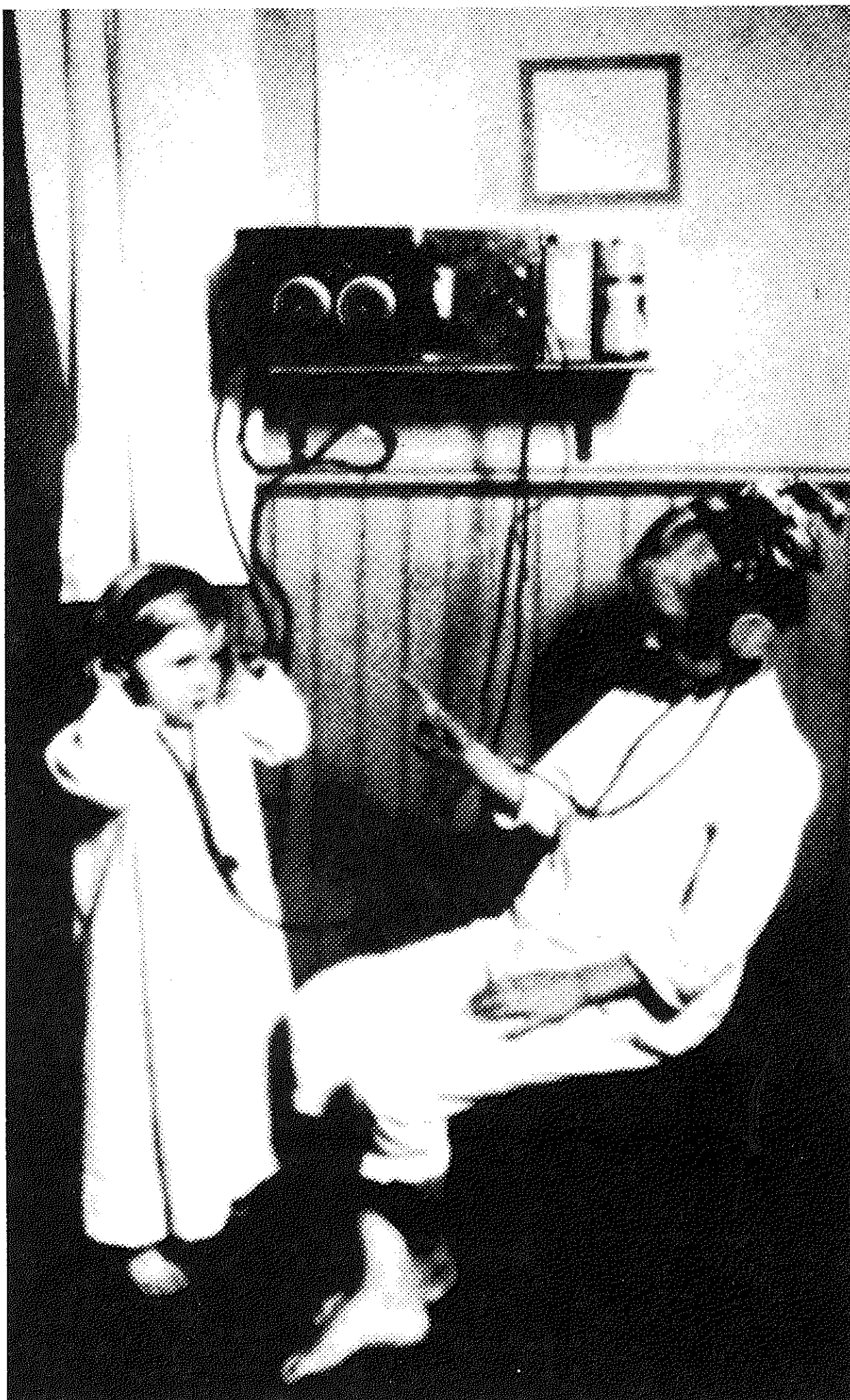
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C ONTRADICTING M EDIA

TOWARDS A POLITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF LISTENING

Jody Berland



THE

number of human hours, days, weeks spent listening to the radio is phenomenal. The number of radios purchased, possessed, listened to in Canada is phenomenal. It wouldn't be Canada without radio. Despite noises made with the introduction of TV, radio did not disappear between 1950 and 1960 (though of course it changed). If anything its constant presence became more constant, since the transistor (and free-ways) appeared at about the same time. Radio hasn't gone away. What did disappear, to a correspondingly phenomenal degree, was critical attention to radio.

Compare the number of publications on tv or film in your local bookstore to those on radio and the culture of sound technology. The last major research projects on radio content and listening habits were conducted in the 1940s. Only in the last two or three years is this absence beginning to register.

This "renaissance" of interest in broadcast sound can be attributed, to a small degree, to the emergence of alternative forms of radio broadcasting, which themselves owe their genesis to major shifts and consolidations in the international and local structurings of technology, economics, power, and cultural production. Though alternative radio takes as many forms as there are cultural and political locations, these different forms of opposition articulate their strategies in relation to a common force: the global network of telecommunications whose musical arms have with unprecedented rapidity entered and transformed every social and cultural community in the world. It is said of music that it disdains all boundaries of language and location. If that can be argued, we are

indebted for both its proof and its counter-proof to the global explorations of the music industry. These explorations both transform boundaries and create the felt necessity for their rearticulation. Whether the "global village" towards which these powerful corporations drive us marks the end or the beginning of *autonomous* difference depends on a complex interaction of technology, power, and politics within which music plays a very central and unique role. Knowing how the struggle progresses means learning how to listen.

My own attentiveness to radio is logical enough, since I am a musician with a professional interest in media and politics. Also I am Canadian, and (even worse) a Canadian woman, which explains a certain paranoid ear for the discourses of power effected by technology, technological processes, mediated social relationships. At the same time, as I am completely inside of these, I am completely at the margin. But

this logic would never have followed its apparently inevitable course were it not for the influence of CKLN, a new campus-based alternative community FM station in Toronto. There I was one evening, sitting in the kitchen, reading Anthony Giddens of all things and listening to CKLN. Giddens was playing some fancy tricks with the terms "mob" and "mass" culture and I had just listened to about half an hour of uninterrupted music when I suddenly realized that what I was hearing was a totally different form of cultural/technological communication. I was being constituted as a member of a listening public in a way I hadn't experienced before (though similar stations in Australia first introduced me to such possibilities); most notably because the form of broadcasting had nothing to do with the usual injunction to recognize/desire/purchase the record whose commodity form corresponded to what I was hearing. I didn't always know whose they were, for one thing; and the different relationship between me and the music corresponded to a different relationship between pieces of music, which "made sense" of them in a different way. I forgot to be annoyed by the absence of immediate author-information. I wasn't listening to advertisements; I was listening to *radio*.

STRUCTURE, SPACE, TIME

Radio is an alteration of space and a structuring of time. It extends space if you're making music; shrinks it if you're listening. It both joins people together and reaches them where they are lonely, which may be why it was embraced so vigorously by Canadians from the beginning. Its centrality is clearly related to the geographic scale of the country. Though if we recognize considerations other than the physiological, we have to say that in other respects Canada is a very small country, and that its smallness has had as determinant an impact on the development of its broadcasting as its largeness. Radio redefines space and structures time not only in its acoustic movement over distances but also in its format. Murray Schafer has argued that the joining of geographically and philosophically unrelated items in radio achieves an "irrationality of electroacoustic juxtapositioning" which we should refuse to take for granted.² Though Schafer has done as much as anyone to analyse the experiential effects of what he calls the "schizophonia" of modern sound technology and its splitting of sound from source, we can go farther by recognizing that the principles of juxtaposition which dominate ordinary radio programming are as "rational", i.e. motivated, as they are irrational, i.e. static.

Radio achieves this rational irrationality by its ability to place together sound messages which are disparate in terms of their location of origin, their cultural purpose, and their form, in order to create a continuous enveloping rhythm of sound and information. The rhythm's "reason" isn't about insight, originality, history, logic, or emancipation. It's about the market. Since the continuous rhythm of sound is more powerful than any single item enveloped in its progression, the reception of particular items is substantially determined by the larger discourse of radio programming, which teaches us addiction and forgetfulness. In commercial radio, the pleasures of location and identity, of specific recognitions or discoveries, are sacrificed to the (real) pleasures of the media's "boundless hospitality", which defends itself against anarchy by being totalitarian in its mode of address and in its structuring of program, genre, and rhythm. The tempo of events, information, pleasure, and interruption, with its prescribed balance of familiar and unfamiliar, is determined by economics, market research, and convention, before the DJ ever gets there. Music is meted out by measure to reward the listener. The carefully managed rapidity and predictability of pattern maintains what might be called a community of listeners who identify with its generic classifications (Top 40, country, "easy listening", big band, classical, "new music", etc., all rigorously carved up by market research and broadcast regulation) and who share a certain locus of informed style.

Because of increased mobility, transience, fracturing of urban space via transportation, shopping centres, centralization and marginalization, conditions which radio restructures but is simultaneously inseparable from, this listening community rarely exists today without radio having first brought it together. Imagine how different radio would be if there were real urban planning. The listening community is predominantly constituted, at least by ordinary radio, on the basis of a paradoxical and abstract relationship to depression, if I can use this precariously psychological term. We listen to radio, or rather, hear radio without always having to listen too closely (and in fact *hear* less and less) to keep from being depressed or isolated, to feel connected to something, to enfold ourselves in its envelope of pleasure, information, power; while the absence of any spontaneous or innovative event, or of any specific (vs. abstract) intimacy, contributes ultimately precisely to depression, which after all is merely a sideways description of powerlessness, of being prevented in various ways from achieving anything spontaneous or innovative, of having or living a new idea.²

But this can be re-presented in economic terms, by locating the actual development of radio language in relation to the developing structural integration of the various sections of the communications industries.

THE PLAY OF TECHNOLOGY: ENTER ECONOMY, CENTRE STAGE

Radio entered the marketplace in the 1920's, the same decade in which American entertainment capital began the sweeping process of concentration and integration which now dominates the international production and dissemination of music. The first station networks were established in that decade, and linked, via corporate ownership, to the production of radios, records, record players, music publishing, and film. The entertainment monopolies have triumphed through a process of continuous centralization and integration of all the stages of music production and dissemination; their imperatives of growth have marked the development of music technology and its communicative discourses from the beginning of broadcasting history.

Commercial broadcasting has become the dominant mode of promotion for musical commodities, i.e. records, and is totally dependent on the strategies of those record companies for its musical programming. DJs and local programmers have become a substantively irrelevant embellishment, and the medium of radio a totally instrumentalized form of communication. Record company profit is in turn dependent on the airtime acquired through various infamous strategies (though most communities have their own exceptions to point to). The profitability of record production contributes to the continuous *economic* centralization, which itself depends on exploiting the "strategical margins" of independent labels and innovative trends. But such centralization of profit also contributes to *symbolic centralization*, whereby the dynamics of technical innovation led by the big companies create more and more sophisticated sound production values, through which listeners learn to judge musical value. The changing modes of musical performance are, if not determined, certainly mediated by the evolving strategies of the big companies, who monopolize the development of new technologies and the marketing of music as a whole. In terms of the dominant discourse, there are only thirty "real" musical acts in the world. The rest are shadows, or so it would seem, flabby imitations, or marginal testimonies to the mythology of boundless hospitality by means of which the industrial powers weave their web.

Of course this is not the whole story, since behind this bland mask of boundlessness is the productivity of music itself, which is always also a social productivity. The traces of this are audible in the ruptures of rock, in black music, third world or womens' musics, the "experiments" with space of new music, in all the spaces where location names itself and makes itself heard. The history of communications technology is not only that of the discourses of power, but also of opposition and difference, and of the interaction of these. At certain times the cultural productivity of making music becomes also an oppositional expression of new social formations and values. To work out when such cultural productivity becomes oppositional practice, it is important to understand more precisely how cultural domination works, and how it creates not only its own structures of imprisoned desire but also its own alternatives and oppositions.

American broadcasting has been officially private (with notable exceptions) since the 1927 Radio Act, a government decision of characteristically heroic self-denial which empowered the newly formed Federal Communications Commission to licence and regulate radio communications "as public convenience, interest, or necessity requires."³ 1927 was also the year that NBC and CBS took control of programming and production. Obviously "public interest" offers a controversial framework for broadcast regulations, as indeed it has been in Canada since the federal government bestirred itself to create an alternative public broadcasting system in the 1930s. The American interpretation of "public interest" represented a clear victory for private interest and thus, explicitly, for direct broadcast advertising. The consequent strategical imperatives were imposed on broadcasters uniformly. They entailed the maximization of audience size in order to increase advertising revenue, and this meant both a continuous standardization of musical styles/forms and an increasing reliance on the mass-produced recorded music of the big companies. Such music, while cheaper, was produced through increasingly sophisticated processes, which encouraged the entrenchment of powerful implicit values of what constitutes "good" music. This control of technology is the real motor of symbolic centralization, rewarding listeners with continuous pleasure and thus continued confidence in the freedom of our pleased ears.

But most of us, like our comrades in the "developing" nations, don't need to be reminded of what "free speech" really means in terms of American communications policy. As its horizons expand, we can enjoy wonderful things from Cuba, Warsaw, Liverpool, Kingston, Harlem, Nigeria, or Kamloops, B.C. We are in a particularly advantageous position to celebrate what McLuhan called the "global village". This privilege, like the Trojan horse, introduces the power dynamics of the technological conquering of space, and this has also been the case since broadcasting began.

MUSIC IN/OUT OF CANADA

Canada - the space, the people, the airwaves - has had to deal far longer with the cultural and economic effects of the American communications empire than most other countries. We're not unique with respect to this challenge; but because the problem is a much older one here, it takes a different form. When the world hears African music, which it increasingly seems to want to do, our immanent recognition forms part of the pleasure and experience of listening to what is heard as African music. (Or, as music whose producers have heard African music and wanted to join in, which is also increasingly the case.) African-ness can be heard. The music fills a specific symbolic and social space, that which is constructed as African-icity. Our hearing it is part of an international technological network by which African-ness, to us a symbolic of pre-industrial culture, is itself affected. As the tools of that network

edge their way into the various centres of African music (which itself has never been a single style or discourse), they transform its social organization and, to some extent, its form. Africans themselves have, in response, begun to mobilize their own music production through various strategies of technological appropriation: cassette tapes and broadcasting policy in those countries, like many others, have become central to campaigns for cultural self-production. What we hear as "African" is increasingly inflected with the strategical language of such resistance/appropriation.

The same phenomenological representativeness marks American music, in a completely different sense. Its power signals not only the entrepreneurial prowess of the "big 5" of the music industries, but also the symbolic powers attached to American formulations of the modern, the free, and the fun. American and African music articulate different kinds of aspirations for listeners in various locations. This difference is also a relationship, again not only economic, but also in terms of symbolized value systems struggling over formulations of the modern, the free, and the fun. Of course it is people who actually struggle, not symbolic systems. In all this global symbolic warfare, this "creative" tension between centre and articulate margins, where do we stand?

When you hear Canadian music, its Canadian-ness doesn't often reach out and grab you as the first note sounds. It becomes an issue, so to speak, after the fact. This is part of how we are constituted as listeners. We may know that Rough Trade or Joni Mitchell or Burton Cummings or Ann Murray are Canadian, but we mainly know this factually, not musically. To ask whether the music we listen to is knowable musically as Canadian raises a number of questions which in themselves have been dubiously productive. Here I place native and Quebecois music in brackets. In any case, hearing "prairies" or "Toronto" as a climactic aura framing the voice may be an externally informed part of the experience of listening, but it is part of it nonetheless. We still claim what we want of it as ours. What arises more readily as an immanent question from our historical experience as listeners concerns what we hear and how we hear what we hear. How we hear what we hear has, from the moment there was a listening "we", been predominantly from the radio. Because of this fact, and the specific patterns it implies, how we hear what we hear has been a question as long as we have heard it, and so this question is part of what we have always heard, though we haven't always heard it musically.

This historical centrality of radio to Canadian cultural experience is a function of geography, which was given, and of intention, which was made, and which took form, not long after American radio had firmly taken root, as a conscious strategy of public purpose in the name of national unity. Following the trail of the CNR, the CBC developed a radically different approach to broadcasting and specifically to music broadcasting. This is a rich and fascinating history of cultural self-defense (mediated by colonial elitism) which remains largely unwritten. For some decades, the CBC was the single most influential support system for the production and dissemination of Canadian music. Composers and historians maintain that without CBC radio there would not have developed a community of music producers able to conceive of the possibility of making music.⁴ The CBC organized, produced, and broadcast across the country a range of musical performances, from new operas to a prize-winning pipe band of CNR employees, from big bands to Irish folk songs, from commissioned compositions for radio and film documentaries and dramas to national talent-hunt singing contests.⁵

No doubt it was an inspiring moment, that bringing together of so many voices under the protective rubric of the nation. Listeners congregated in rural living rooms and wrote letters about being truly thrilled by the sound of the bells ringing out from the Ottawa hill-top. . . . In retrospect it may seem like so much state-funded maple syrup. But clearly something was happening in Canada in the 1940s and 50s. Regions and communities had their voices and their voices could be heard. The CBC provided a space for this to happen in, if not a context for the larger implications to cohere in a political sense. They proved that when people themselves produce such complex sociality, the juxtaposition of sounds and messages starts to become intelligible (rather than "coherent", a term that implies singularity). The provision of resources for expressive social communication, and the making of such communication in a continually new and different way, rather than simply the making of new things to fill solidified frames; these are the bases of "value", if such a concept can be retrieved with respect to radio.

The CBC, however, could not grow to accommodate its own resources. Instead it was gradually transformed by a narrowing concept of public interest, with its related notions of "quality", and, equally important, by its growing vulnerability to commercial pressures and decreasing protection from the Canadian state.⁶ These pressures led to the consolidation of broadcasting conventions in which music broadcasting in urban centres (especially the more "serious" FM) has become largely as predictable and dead as it is predictable and transient on the private stations. The fertile interdependency of music production and broadcasting, which had found articulation in changing musical thinking, has mostly given way to the triumph of the economic and formal interdependency of broadcasting and pre-recorded music. A former CBC music producer argues that this change has worked to discourage imagination, to decrease the producer's control over the final broadcast format, and to sever the relationship between host and musician. The effects of the transformed mode of musical packaging are passed on to the listener,

to whom the daily spate of music becomes simply a component of the familiar daily environment. Music on radio ceases to matter. Against such an attitude it is all the more difficult for the radio producer of imagination and originality to make his

own demands on the time and special attention of his potential audience The will to create, to experiment in imaginative and significant radiophonic forms, indeed to provide musical services as only radio can, seemed to be far less influential than formerly.⁷

It is no wonder, to add an apparent aside, that increased content quotas are treated with such aversion by the Canadian public. (Though significantly this is more true with respect to TV.) To suggest further restriction and regulation of the present petrified frameworks of broadcasting is bound to invite opposition in this context; not only because of the systematic training of cultural value through which American modernization effects its strategies, though this is important; but further, because "content" remains an empty formula for evoking public sympathy as long as the more essential "content" of media discourse - its unending, unbreakable flow - continues to reproduce itself through productive and regulatory processes which allow little participation other than consumptive choice (coke or pepsi?). The public chooses "freedom of choice". A militant defense of illusory freedom points to the absence of the real thing. So what else is new?

RECLAIMING THE DISCOURSE

I said earlier that the recent emergence of alternative broadcasting is tied to major shifts in the international and local structuration of technology, economics, power, and cultural production. While this structuration works internationally, its local forms vary, as do strategies of local mobilization and cultural opposition. For many years "alternative" broadcasting in Canada took the form of a national public network (demanded and fought for by Canadians) whose mandate was to broadcast on behalf of a national community whose identity it simultaneously sought to build. That mandate could only have been fulfilled by allowing a far more complex and multiple concept of "public" than the dual imperatives of national (cultural) defense and the economy of dependency have permitted. The failure of the CBC joins with the simultaneous effects of a more universal colonization of musical resources, which make cultural opposition at once more international and more local. The "margins" reassert their power and find mutual recognition. The potential strength of CKLN is that it can exemplify and reinforce this dialectic of internationalism and localism; both are strengthened as it participates in the evolution of cultural self-determination within, and between, the various musical communities in Toronto.

As the station's manager explained to me, CKLN has no difficulty fulfilling Canadian content requirements because they like to play local music. A resource can be a catalyst: after a year of broadcasting, their library now contains two hundred and fifty local cassette tapes. Without CKLN (I speak from experience!) many of these would not have been made. Many won't be heard elsewhere. The more complex and open the musical thinking of the station's programmers, the more autonomous, and "significant" as communication, can be the musical thinking that goes into making these tapes. It is not so much the individual authorship of music which is important within the programming discourse of the station, but the control and creative use of the medium as it mediates our musicality and our sociality. This can only evolve through an interaction between the station and the community, between listening and playing, and between music and other issues and activities.

The programs in which local tapes appear are not ordinarily organized around Canadian-ness, though there are special programs on local music (as on women's music, Reggae, blues, imported music, experimental music, jazz; musical "location" is a funny thing). Most frequently they are woven into a fabric of music discourse which draws connections in many different directions. Nowhere else would you hear the particular combinations and threads connecting those pieces of music. The juxtapositions cutting across time or space pull different sound thoughts together, as (for instance) when I heard The Birthday Party follow Janis Joplin, and suddenly recognized something about the voices of west-coast angst, or when I heard a series of pieces by the end of which I Really Heard the guitar. Such eventfulness can change as it responds to - is produced by - the community which is also the listening public. This process of enfranchisement has political effects, evident in the production of "documentary" talks on social issues in which the music intervenes, not (reduced) as illustration, not (inflated) as propaganda, but as a separate-but-equal moment of musically embodied expressive response to a politicized world. The station's evolving strategies of mediation make possible the development of a political phenomenology of listening, without which no emancipatory strategy in sound is possible.



NOTES

This article has been revised from a talk given in Guelph for the Borderlines/C.S.A.A./Communications session on "Emancipatory Cultural Practices" during the Learned Societies. I would like to acknowledge the helpful contributions of Anton Leo (CKLN), John Twomey (Radio and TV, Ryerson), M. Raboy, A. Berland, and other friends, who, like all friends, cannot be held responsible if I have misused them.

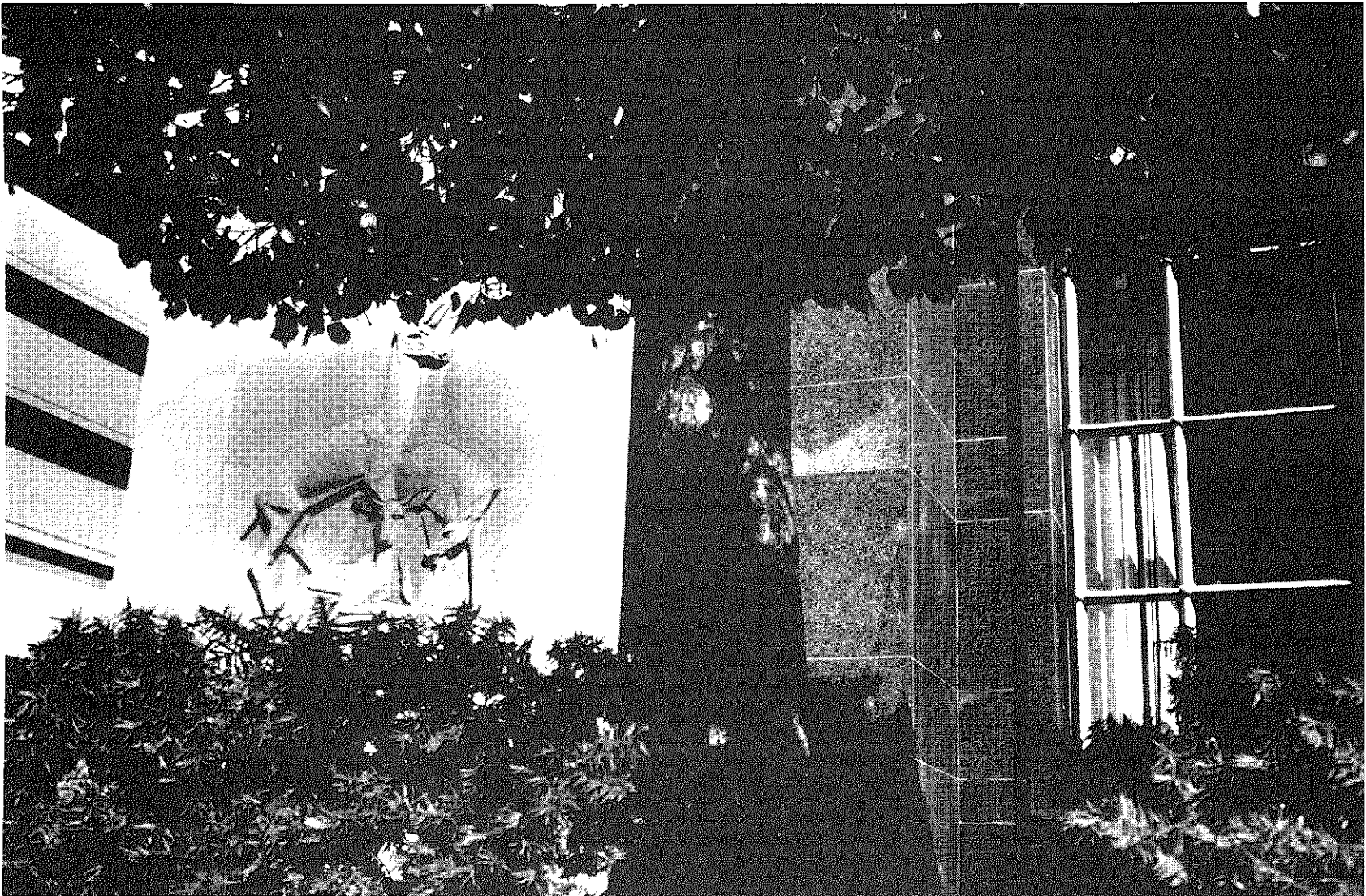
1. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* (Toronto, 1977), p. 94
2. I am indebted here to Keith Talbot (National Public Radio, U.S.A.) who confesses his own depression and thinks himself out of it in *Radio Renaissance*, N.Y., 1983
3. Frank Peers, *The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951* (Toronto, 1969), p. 12
4. cf. The Canadian League of Composers, Briefs to the C.R.T.C. and to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee; Clifford Ford, *The History of Canadian Music* (Agincourt, 1982); Keith MacMillan, "Broadcasting", *The Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, etc.
5. MacMillan, "Broadcasting".
6. See Dallas Smythe, *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness, and Canada* (New Jersey (!), 1981) for an analysis of the "fate" of the CBC, also Peers (1969) and E.A. Weir, *The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada* (Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1965).
7. MacMillan, *ibid.*

Some recent publications and resources on radio:

- ear Magazine (New Wilderness Foundation, N.Y.): *Radio*. Vol. 8, No. 5, 1984.
- Giansante, Louis (ed.) *Radio Renaissance: Producers and Artists of the 1980's*. Media Studies Program, New School for Social Research (N.Y.), 1983
- Local Radio Workshop *Nothing Local About It: London's Local Radio*. Comedia Publishing Group with Local Radio Workshop, London, 1983. (See Comedia catalogue for other publications on media)
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- Relay: *The Other Magazine about the Airwaves*. 2a St. Pauls Road, London N1.
- Wilson, Alexander "Self-Serve Radio: a conversation with a pirate", *Fuse* April 1983

Other relevant publications:

- Blaukopf, K. (ed.) *The Phonogram in Cultural Communication*. Report on a Research Project Undertaken by Mediawelt. Springer-Verlag, Wien/N.Y. 1982
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- Twomey, John *Canadian Broadcasting History Resources in English: Critical Mass or Mess?* Ryerson Radio/TV Dept, Toronto
- Wallis, Roger and Krister Malm, *Big Sounds from Small Peoples: The music industry in small countries*. Constable, London, 1984



The game was easy,
posing,
no real threat to the trapper.

The language I speak "within myself"
is not of my time;
it is prey, by nature,
to ideological suspicion.



Whatever he wanted was there.
It was new, exciting,
yet somehow, natural.

The new is not a fashion
it is a value,
the basis of all criticism.

JUNCTURES

An open letter addressing the issues and state of affairs within cultural journals; we solicit opinions, critiques and submissions.

Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory

ONE of the many ironies of North American intellectual life in the 1980s is the way it has moved to institutionalize the previously marginal body of French post-structuralist and/or deconstructive theory. It's a migratory institutionalization, where established leaders and self-conscripted students gather and move through punishingly intense conferences, lectures, and writings with a focussed attention more appropriate to life in the intellectual and social institutions which this theory is meant to deconstruct. It's a one-way choreography of knowledge, which empowers the voices of the previously disenfranchised. No doubt a defensive practice, but one which has some unfortunate results. It defends itself through a thick wall of fascination. Is this Hollywood, then, hypnotized by its key performers? No, obviously not—the collected bodies peer suspiciously at selected signifiers and decry their villainous historicity, ruminating on their total loss of meaning, extricating themselves from commitment to them. It is as though this ostensible Death of Meaning in culture of all forms propels its livelier priests into a series of encyclopedic wakes. There, freed from the tired/vivacious contexts of daily life, distanced from the discourses of Official constraints, in a spell of privileged concentration, they may celebrate this death, these recurrent deaths, as occasions for their own hypnotic speculation (while waiting for their own rebirth as guardians of the Long Wait).

The theory itself springs from an uneasy but fruitful confrontation between thought, power, institutions, and the thinker, which French theorists (of a very particular thought, power, and place) have brought to the centre of critical theoretical work. The uneasiness of this project is intensified in its encounter with the locations of practitioners in other social and intellectual contexts. The encounter between European and Canadian traditions precipitates a series of reflections and strategies that inevitably raise questions about theory, practice, and place. It is not surprising that there should come into being a Canadian journal dedicated to making sense of these intellectual confrontations, while imposing its own imprimatur of nationalism on its "reading" of the others' discourse. This exercise could easily become an occasion for saying that what these theorists are saying is either not worth saying or has been said better by us because we are here. *The Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* seems to have avoided either of these traps. It reminds us that there is writing outside of Canada which is relevant to us, and that the critical strategies and intentions of much of this theory can force a renewed perception of our own writing—and our own histories, and lives—and of how they have helped to form how and what we think. These encounters with theoretical projects originating in other cultures but resonating

in our own, point to ways of unearthing the very grammar of our thought. Through a very particular appropriation of this plentitude, *CJPST* has endowed Canadian Writing with a cosmos.

Thus George Grant has been described by Arthur Kroker as "the Canadian Nietzsche" (more recently, in his *Technology and the Canadian Mind*, revised to "Nietzschean on history but a Christian thinker of the fatalist kind on the history of justice"). But if Grant is the Nietzsche of Canada, why read Grant? With what voice, what place and time, are we in dialogue? *CJPST* always puzzles us in this way, forcing us to question why *these* European, American, or Canadian theorists are chosen. What are they doing there? What are we doing here? And why does the Journal present itself to us with such authoritative urgency that we feel it *must* be read before the bills are paid, the letters answered? What has Kroker put together this time? Kroker? Well, that's it: the question can't be avoided. Whose words has he inhabited now? What is the urgency of his provocation/solace? Because the strength and weakness of *CJPST* is that this is Kroker's journal, his personal vision of theory and culture and Canada. And so we remain beholden to him, he who finds us each in turn and then dumps those whose language becomes inappropriate to his grand design; it is Kroker who masterminds the series of "dialogic" sessions from year to year at gatherings of Learned people in Toronto, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Vancouver, Montreal; it is Kroker who proves himself each time the master of nihilistic cannibalization of other peoples' voices and texts, so that in the end there is no dialogue, but rather the triumph of the Event, experienced in the name of the Other with whom we work and spin and have no being.

CJPST has become, since Issue 4, the journal of the sign, the celebration of the metaphor where nothing is real, not even thought or action. *CJPST* presents us with Elvis Presley on its cover, a brutal pink; a dual image, young and old. What sense are asked to make of this? The image of the old imposes on us. The kingdom of signs destroys us, as it destroyed him. VD. Dope. Death. The Mirror Image of Production swamps us in its nihilism. Now it is Boy George, and Michael Jackson, who prove that the social is truly, finally, dead. Again the power of the image valorizes the discourse. But whose image? What discourse? There is no discourse if we assume that we are all dead, and the culture a spectacle for the narcissistically terminated. In spite of Kroker's plea to understand the humanistic against the technologically rational, there is no space in which we can begin to understand this place, this life, this country. Behind the intransigent object, only emptiness is permitted; even ethics has disappeared from the object-laden scene, having bowed out some time since in search of the authoritative/absent Other. In search for this, we are left only with the hemorrhage of self.

CJPST invites us, in *Beyond Dependency* (Vol. VII, No. 3) and

Quebec (VI, Nos 1/c), to contemplate ourselves in relation to those Others who stand as the marginalia of our own structures. (Soon even feminism will find a place in these pages). But what does such contemplation produce? Manifestoes from Quebec sit beside articles for whom the issues raised in the manifestoes do not even exist (with the exception of Ray Morrow's piece on Rioux/Crean, Tom Naylor's on Canadian dependency). We feel as though the voice of living, *social* people has been ignored in favour of the seductive nihilism of having no voice, as though what is posited as ours is finally an echo, a shadow of Baudrillard's imploded imagination, appropriated so benevolently to the space left by the ostensible absence of any voice.

Of course this absence, this death of meaningful practice which we supposedly inhabit without recognition, is an intellectual *product*, sprung from an imagination which tends to celebrate its own productivity and to disdain the rest. In that imagination we will never be where our own principles or actions or thoughts or desires lead us; never join with the others who allow us to be social; never indeed recognize ourselves in our particular differences and strengths as women, men, French, English, black, white, or green—no, we will be forever imprisoned in the netherlands of technology/language, spectators to the choreography of others, trapped in language, trapped in the structures and sign-systems that impose themselves on us.

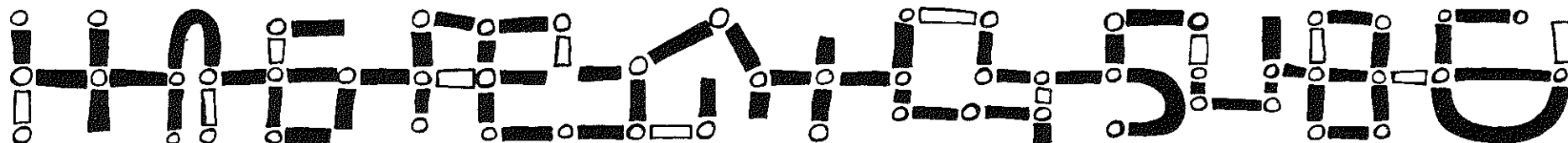
But the families with whom we live, the jobs or sexuality that we negotiate, the ethnicity or religion which we cherish and fight for and against, the institutions that form us and which we fight for and against, the bodies through which we move, the songs which we dance to, the battles we struggle to win, the prisons (real and imaginary) we inhabit—these are not part of the Canada of Kroker's journal. They exist in spite of his categorizations and take form apart from his theory, which then is no theory at all. *CJPST* has apparently finished with the real world we try to come to terms with in theory and in practice; with the enthusiasm of the boy prodigy grown articulate, it casts us adrift on a sea of negations. Which plank would you choose? Is it, in fact, moving at all? By foreclosing the debate, except to a loyal few, Kroker has doubly liberated us. The nihilism of his dialogue already finds an elaborated eruption from other voices, who know already the perils of the zero-sum text, who have encountered those enclosures in other places and who, seeing them now with better eyes, know they must and can be moved beyond.

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published triannually—Annual
Subscription Rates: Individuals,
\$15.00; Students, \$10.00; Institutions,
\$25.00. Please add \$3.00 extra per year
for postage outside of Canada.



Journal of Popular culture
Journal of Canadian Culture

ONE sense of popular culture is bound up with a feeling that it is *mass* culture or even the *mass media*. If the Media are American, there is little point from this perspective in studying Canadian popular culture at all because it must be a spin-off of American culture. Thus even the *study* of Canadian Popular Culture becomes a branch-plant activity: all it can do is replicate studies done elsewhere. Thus we learn nothing about ourselves, but in a manner similar to Hollywood movies located in Toronto, simply see ourselves as a carbon-copy of *them*. We have stopped doing this with literature or even music: we learn to think about growth, identity, comparison.

Obviously popular culture does have elements which are imported, but the imports can be either technological or, ideological or experiential. The media are not intrinsically *technologically* American, George Grant notwithstanding, though they may become ideologically American if we are prepared to accept hegemonic paramountcy. If we accept that technology is necessarily imperial and hence necessarily incapable of being transcended by people in their own forms then we fall into the ultimate pessimism of intellect which sweeps everything from vacuum cleaners to nuclear weapons into the same bag, a position which is as fundamentally silly as seeing *all* technology as beneficial. The equation that popular culture = mass culture = capitalist control of technology = false consciousness is one that dominates most thinking on popular culture. The major fallacy of this equation is that it assumes that the mass media implies thought control, that if everybody watches *Dallas* or sees commercials they necessarily believe or perhaps even become these products. Mass Culture assumes a false community, a superficial unity of people: on the other hand, the study of popular culture assumes what E.P. Thompson once termed the "stubbornness of being." It is not simply that people are manipulated by the mass media but that also the media are used by people, almost as they choose, from a location which operates on separate rules and experiences from the one-dimensionality of the media.

The study of Canadian popular culture should not emphasize the structural relationships of capital, media, technology, and then impute a consciousness to the inert masses (for a study based on such premises would simply return to pleas for reorganizing relationships between those structures). It should rather take popular culture as the making sense of daily life in terms of the appropriation of whatever symbols and strategies the people have at hand. Only then can we begin to discuss the 'effects' of the media on popular action.

There is, of course, a major problem in saying that popular culture is simply what *any* defined group of a society does, thinks, reads, feels. Such ethnographic

eclecticism, however noble its democratic (or sectional) sentiments, ends up writing and doing research for the sake of being eclectic. An example of such an exercise is found in the USA with the vast output surrounding the work of the Popular Culture Association, where it appears that popular culture is simply the studying of anything that relates to the culture, past, present or future, that might be common to groups great or small or to the appropriation of those elements by individual authors. Hence *everything* is popular culture, but in another sense nothing, because none of the major theoretical issues are ever discussed. The study of popular culture becomes an exercise in intellectual slumming: academics may come out of their closets and declare that hockey or baseball or stripping or *Star Wars* or the occult or Mark Twain or even *Jane Eyre* can be dabbled around with but by avoiding any moral judgements or political analysis—popular culture is *fun*: let's turn the study of it into an industry, a sort of Disneyland of the literary imagination.

But perhaps the Association's work and publications should be taken a little more seriously than what this dismissal implies. After all, not only has the PCA published occasional pieces on Canadian culture in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, but it has also commenced publication of the *Journal of Canadian Culture* which establishes an intervention in Canadian culture and research which makes a series of assumptions about the Culture of Canadians which should not be taken lightly.

The working assumption of the PCA's work is eclecticism: essays on hockey, or film, or Huck Finn, or the importance of the ballad in W.H. Auden's poetry sit side-by-side, as surely they should. But the PCA's dig into cultural archaeological excavation displays little sense of knowing whether connectedness is important except as theme. My copies of *JPC* contain little that allows me to put that culture into any context. It is a supermarket version of what culture is about, as if theoretical or political connections are unimportant. The *JPC* is little more than an archive: it offers me nothing that I cannot normally get in a library or a shopping mall. It does nothing except record what appears to be there; it has no opinion, no connectedness, no self-reflection, and also, in a bizarre way, it is devoid of any sense of choice.

The *JPC* has not chosen to discuss other journals which deal with popular culture, as if those journals were in a sense queering its pitch. This is particularly disastrous when viewing Canadian culture, because in no society has its culture been so discussed in print. The first issue of the *Journal of Canadian Culture* completely ignores the long, serious debate on Canadian Culture that has taken place in journals like the *Canadian Forum*, *Saturday Night*, *Canadian Dimension*, the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, *Canadian Studies*, *Queen's Quarterly* (though Giles Pronovost provides a cook's tour of Quebec cultural nationalism). Instead it

injects itself into a debate at no fixed point. It is possible that the impact on Canadian discourse will be profound—that people will stop thinking about their culture and instead lean back and contemplate it in its rich fullness—but that is doubtful. The chances are that the PCA's intervention in Canadian Culture will be read as yet another American appropriation, suitable only for Americans who wish to experience other cultures as the *Erzatz*. As with the Hollywood moments and the British view of the Orient, or male versions of chauvinism, the *Journal of Canadian Culture* will be slotted into American views of what they want to know about Canada. (A similar phenomenon is displayed in the latest issue of *Yale French Studies*, devoted to Quebec literature.)

That is why the absence of theory or politics is so unfortunate about the PCA's venture into Canadian Culture. Theory and Politics imply discourse: the PCA's journal invites no discourse. But, then, the PCA never invited discourse. Even the short-lived attempt to include Stuart Hall from Britain's Birmingham Centre as an advisory editor ended in non-committal disaster, and it is instructive to see what the *J of PC* does when it addresses popular culture in the rest of the world. Take, for example, Vol. X, No. 4 (1977), subtitled "Popular Culture Around the World," which included some 20 pieces, over half on Europe (mainly France and Germany) and the rest from India, China, USSR, Argentina, Yiddish literature, and the USA (on Nazi stereotypes). What immediately strikes one about such a collection is why are they all there together? The obvious answer is that the world is an arena to be plundered for any material that strikes the editor's fancy. On closer inspection one notes a certain preference for understanding how or why other nations view Americans the way they do, or 'use' American popular cultural forms in peculiar ways. Popular culture in the rest of the world is not approached for its intrinsic interest and certainly not to discover any alternative way of viewing American popular culture but rather to confirm the predominance of American hegemony. The rest of the world is searched out for examples of American clonism, for horrible stereotyping of Americans by foreigners or for providing evidence of *real* unAmerican activity (the essay on China in this particular issue is on the contemporary Chinese hero as developed from Zhdanovism). Popular culture is the secular religion of the intellectual: his task is to search the world for Huck Finn or Rocket Robin Hood wherever he may be found.

Of course, Americans may study their own culture in any way that they choose, and they may, if they wish, call ad-hocery theory; they may define popular culture as "all aspects of life that are not academic or creative in the narrowest and most esoteric sense" (blurb for the *Abstracts of Popular Culture*); and they may even choose to ignore any set of theories that are uncomfortable: but when the PCA takes on world culture in order to appropriate it, we

who are in that world have a right to ask for what reasons and to what ends we are being appropriated. The PCA model of cultural research is therefore interesting not because of any intrinsic theoretical or methodological contribution to studying ourselves but as a penetration of quite distinctive alien values. It should be examined as such.

What might be a more appropriate point of departure is suggested by many other authors—Canadian, French, American, British, German—all of whom adhere, more or less, to what might be called the humanist-historicist version of neo-Marxist theory. The central issue in studying popular culture as action must surely be to specify what kinds of actions *matter*. And *that* invariably leads us back to considering both the social structures and technologies and also to the dominating ideologies and hegemonies. The study of popular culture is both a study of the genesis of reactions to institutions, values, ideologies and also of the interpretations (and perhaps appropriations) of those reactions by the existing hegemonic orders. Popular culture is thus a dynamic study: we act by playing out the contradictions. As Simon Frith has noted of rock music:

One of the reasons why rock has been the most vital form of popular culture in the last twenty years is that it has expressed so clearly the struggle involved: Rock has been used simultaneously as a source of self-indulgence and individual escape, and of solidarity and active dissatisfaction.

If one takes this view of the importance of the study of popular culture, then the issue becomes not simply how to construct an ethnographic map which would do justice to all the discrete groups that are found in any country, but to specify which are strategically important, not simply in terms of themselves as genre, but in terms of their relationship to people's sense of their own liberation.

Ioan Davies

The Journal of Canadian Culture is published by the Bowling Green University Popular Press, Bowling Green, OH, USA 43403. A year's subscription is \$12.50.

FOUCAULT REMEMBERED BY SURPRISE

Those of us who attended the seminars Foucault gave at the Summer Institute for Semiotics and Structural Studies in June of 1982 will perhaps remember his admission that, for him, surprise was foremost among the feelings produced by the material that he had been discussing. In fact, at this time, Foucault proposed that the spiritual, philosophic and monastic writings of late antiquity (primarily those of Seneca, Epictetus, Galen and Cassian) would not be so interesting if they did not appear so "silly." It is probably not incorrect to view this as supplying a singularly apt intimation of Foucault's methodology, provided one follows Foucault's books, that is, his archaeologies, along the pragmatic dimension they occupy. For it is the question of what one can do with a book, and what others have done with books—a question which thereby exceeds the Book—that interested Foucault, as well as contemporaries such as Deleuze and Lyotard.

It is in this respect that one can glimpse what the important term "archaeology" designated in Foucault's work. More than a metaphor for what it means to write or re-write history, it names the space (and not the 'depth') given to the practice of using history to live and think in our times. So many have been disappointed who wanted to read into Foucault a memorialization of madness, criminality, delinquency and sexual pathology, where there was only a selection of marginalia; and those who wanted to glean from his politics the sense of a system were confronted with a silent movement deconstructing any politics conducted on the stage of reason. In short, the archaeology of knowledge is a set of questions that no longer bears upon what will count as objectivity or science, but upon a map of the present produced, in a sense, by surprises, which makes truth into a politically charged record of what it omits to say.

The sad and untimely end to Foucault's life and career came as three new books were nearing publication: *Le Souci de Soi*, *L'Usage des Plaisirs*, and *Les Aveux de la Chair*. Departing from the familiar periodization of the previous works, these books examine in large part the composition of ascetic manuals and the conduct of spiritual direction which culminated with the Stoic and Christian practitioners (doctors and writers) of late antiquity. Foucault's is a new appraisal of what we take to be the hermeneutical articulation of the anxious, dualist self of Christian culture. His work in this area can be expected to have an ambivalent, or at least a fractured relationship to previous historical accounts, since it brings into play not the conditions of unity or filiation of ideas and practices (for example, between stoic, Christian and psychoanalytic techniques), but the disparities that make them exclusive of one another. It seems that for Foucault, psychoanalytic, and finally, archaeological research underscored these disparities since each starts from the assumption that knowledge is strange, that it obeys laws that put into question the position of the novelist, doctor, critic or historian as one who is authorized to exercise inventiveness, representational discourse and the divulging of secrets. For this reason it is interesting that, along with Freud's work, Foucault's stories are written as if all their secrets always bear upon that 'present' which we take to be most public.

Along with Lacan, Foucault had earlier shown that the type of authority which had been 'medicalized' in the 19th century was just as much of a metaphor as madness. Thus although it was to Freud's credit to have recognized the metaphoricality of madness, namely, that it was resistant to the judgements of normality made about it in the previous century, it remained to specify the strange protocols of psychiatry, and the link between the

formation of clinical procedures and a certain political reality that required the designation of madness as 'mental illness.' Contrary to what has often been claimed, Foucault was not concerned with a deep proximity between madness and reason, but with how the question of their relationship was decisively transformed by the 19th century's codification of the effects of social dysfunction and disorder. Since the madman now had a complicity with something underlying his illness, since he was supposed to inwardly know something about its truth, he could now free himself from his unbound freedom only so long as he accepted, in the name of therapeutic utility, the need to control his deviant proclivities and sublimate his creative excesses. Thus, although Freud was able to challenge the romantic myth of the "gentle constraints" of nature's economy (while remaining a liberal), he did so at the price of introducing the doctor's authority directly and politically into the decision about what is good or bad for individuals.

In his later work (beginning with *Discipline and Punish*) Foucault shows how what we now call 'social work' became a relay in a generalized tactics of power. It is well known that police methods, surveillance, procedures of internal and national security, are all reinforced as a function of a specializing and colonizing capitalism. For his part, however, Foucault emphasized that this disciplinary power needed to enforce a continuity between a "perpetual penalty" operating through the supervision of illegality (or the quasi-criminal realm of delinquency) and the role of "exercise" in training, work and education. It is under these conditions, and no longer under the old pastoral forms, that the machinery of 'liberalism,' still in the name of the curing of souls, operates in helping professions, correctional institutions and schooling.

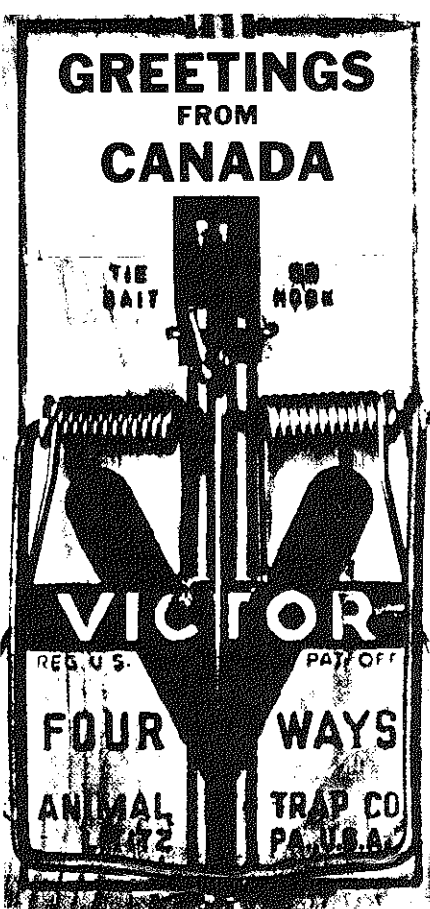
One consequence that Foucault continued to draw from this is that the present-day political practice of liberating one's desire cannot be considered the same as a rejection of power, any more than the negative sanctions of a moral code can be said to represent power. Instead this politics is caught up in the "injunction to talk about sex" which, for the first time in the Christian world, becomes obligatory for truth, and not simply for the expiation of sins. He claimed that power in modern society attaches itself to the problem of how one is supposed to become the subject of his own actions, and ever more cynically enforces ties one is supposed to have in relation to his body, identity and individuality. Moreover, power cannot be said to coincide with the repressive operations of the state since it does not directly care about "who sleeps with whom"—it is more cynical than that—which means it is just as likely to encourage the pathologies of 'sex' to insert themselves in the consumption of therapy and the medicalization of one's body.

Perhaps the kind of analysis that Foucault displaced most forcefully is the one conducted by consensual models of society that have tried to analyze power. The formation of knowledge about individuals and their factors of life and well-being, despite the claims of liberalism resting on certain historical assumptions, has really been governed by the conditions under which strategies of power have been invested and been made more expedient. It is in this political direction that Foucault has questioned the "right to speak history" authenticated, as it is, by truth's putative normality. For him, truth was and is not normal, and this was most singularly demonstrated by his politics of the historical field which was held in the grip of such a "surprise."

Rich Welland

Reviews

mousetrap by Bernard R.J. Michaleski



For whatever the crises and contradictions in the US economy, the American information monopoly has rapidly come to be recognized in the last decade as an even greater threat—because far more insidious—than American (nuclear) imperialism

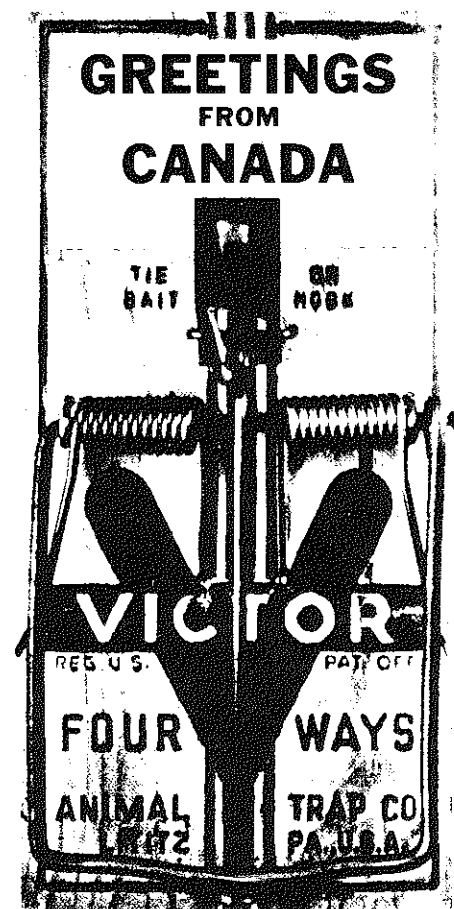
Two Nations by Susan Crean and Marcel Rioux
(Toronto, James Lorimer, 1983)

This fine and stimulating short book has the originality of being a collaboration between a Quebec nationalist and a Canadian one, both of whom here jointly defend what I suppose must be called a "sovereignty-association" relationship between the "two nations". Marcel Rioux is of course one of the most eminent Quebec sociologists and the author of many important studies on Quebec, while Susan Crean, an editor of *This Magazine*, represents that "English" Canadian nationalism (our language problem here is obviously a significant symptom) which emerged only after Quebec nationalism and in response to (although not against) this last. Among the many asymmetries in this relationship is the fact that while Quebec nationalism emerged in opposition to anglophone Canada, "Canadian" nationalism emerged in opposition to the United States. The book has much less to say about the next and latest turn of the screw, namely the revolt of the Western provinces against Ontario; yet the authors sum up this whole exceedingly complex situation as follows: "The Quebec-Canada, two-nations, two languages tension represents a cultural contradiction; the regions versus Ottawa a political one; and Canada-US relations primarily an economic one" (140). This volume focuses essentially on culture, and indeed expresses an interesting and original New World variant on what has now come to be called British "culturalism" (Raymond Williams, E.P. Thomson, Stuart Hall). The culturalism eloquently expressed here surely originates in Quebec and owes much to Rioux's earlier work: if it is more convincing than its UK analogue (which stressed the autonomy of working class and youth cultures), perhaps that is because the Quebec experience is one of cultural imperialism and domination, a situation in which the function of an embattled culture is far more visible and dramatic.

I am not sure how appropriate it is for this book to be reviewed by an American, even an anti-establishment one, with some personal experience of and much warm sympathy for both of these nations. A few years ago I interviewed a number of political leaders of all tendencies in Quebec, and was astounded to discover that, with a single exception (Pierre Vallières), none of them (including PQ government officials) was seriously worried about what would happen to an independent Quebec if released into the force field of its enormous neighbour to the South. It is therefore encouraging to see that in the Quebec chapters of the present work this alarming indifference has been corrected; the stress here is not merely on cultural imperialism (following the pioneering White Papers on that subject prepared by the PQ government), but on US cultural imperialism, very specifically including the whole area of media control and the American monopoly on the new information technology. With this section, therefore, a study of what might otherwise have seemed to outsiders an exceptional and historically unique situation (Canada) at once becomes a central exhibit in a world-wide drama of crucial concern to every other country in the world (not excluding Europe). For

whatever the crises and contradictions of the US economy, the American information monopoly has rapidly come to be recognized in the last decade as an even greater threat—because far more insidious—than American (nuclear) militarism. While the authors also carefully document American economic penetration of the older kind in Canada, it is perhaps somewhat oversimplified of them to describe this particular menace (in the passage quoted above) as a merely "economic" one: here, indeed, cultural and economic domination are united in a new and historically original form of imperialism.

All of which leads us to yet another form of that omnipresent contemporary dilemma: what effective forms of political resistance can be invented in the multinational era? The author of *Two Nations* underscores the much more universal paradox that, as with Gaullism, the first form of recent Canadian resistance to US preponderance came from the Right and was inspired by an older kind of nationalism (or patriotism): the ill-fated Diefenbaker attempt, followed by the ignominious Arrow cancellation. They also emphasize the essentially business ideology of the Liberal Party, both in and outside of Quebec, and that party's complacent commitment to "integration" with US financial and business interests. I mess, however, any really adequate discussion of the achievements and failures (or ideological ambiguities) of the Parti Québécois itself, an analysis that would certainly seem to impose itself centrally in this context. Whatever the reasons for this omission, I suspect that one of them has to do with the conflation of culture and politics that underpins the book's positions. I am myself very sympathetic to the notion of a cultural politics as that form of political activity historically suited to the uniqueness of this latest moment of multinational capitalism. On the other hand, I must confess that the conclusions of this valuable volume seem weak and disappointing to me: a call for a respect for autonomous cultures from which any consideration of concrete political strategies (and tactics) seems to have evaporated. In one sense, of course, the realignment of the cultural politics of both nations—Canada and Quebec—against the United States would seem to be a productive one, which could overcome many of the older differences and tensions between them. But that could happen, surely, only under special circumstances—that is to say, in



the framework of a general transformation of the Canadian socio-economic system. We are talking, in other words, about socialism; yet the authors' discussion of *autogestion* and other popular New Left visions of democratic socialism scarcely reflects any of the confusions and disappointments of the current French experiment (while gratuitous references to the "state capitalism" of the Soviet Union betoken an "even-handed" nod to American anti-communist prejudices which seems singularly inappropriate in a work which seeks to identify the principal adversary). I don't mean to suggest that any of the rest of us have gone much further than Crean and Rioux in attempting to reinvent the most effective left politics for our own time; indeed, even this final disappointment is a stimulating and salutary one, and does not detract from the great interest of this valuable and readable book.

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It slams the door on too much which I hold precious as political resources. All that work which has shown resoundingly how things and people could be different by exposing the signified, represented nature of the world against naturalism, or religious and secular Doxa, from the montage of Eisenstein, through the staging of Brecht, to the dancing, musical, festive, humorous politics of popular cultural forms

Towards 2000. by Raymond Williams (London, Chatto & Windus, 1983)

Writing of the situation of the writer in 1947 in **What is literature?** Jean Paul Sartre argued: "A clear-sighted view of the darkest possible situation is in itself already an optimistic act. It implies, in effect, that the situation can be thought about, that is, that we are not lost in a dark forest and that, on the contrary, we can break away from it, at least in spirit, and take up our resolutions in the face of it, even if these resolutions are hopeless." Some of this clearly informs Raymond Williams writing in the shadows of the late 1970s and 1980s - from the opening quotations: "Dyma ni yn awr ar daith ein gobaith (here we are now on the journey of our hope). Morgan John Rhys" Y Cylchgrawn Cymraeg, 1795

"... Who holds that if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the worst. Thomas Hardy," in *Tenebris*, 1895 through to the closing part of the book. He concludes his first part, "**Towards 2000**": "My main hope is that there can be some sharing of this process of consideration, reconsideration and revision of outlook. This could be important beyond the book itself. I conclude it with an essay on 'Resources for a Journey of Hope': an examining but also a deliberately encouraging argument. From what began in 1959, as an idea of the long revolution, there is an intended and hopeful movement towards 2000." (p. 21)

The reference to 1959 is to his book **The Long Revolution** (1961) which has as its third part his essay "Britain in the Sixties", the main sections of which are reprinted as Part Two of this book; Part Three is "The Analysis Reconsidered" and Part Four is "The Analysis Extended". Here, in Williams' own estimation: "The pivotal essay is on 'the culture of nations': in part a conscious revision of the perspective of the 1959 essay, in part a challenge to the controlling 'national' forms through which most of us still try to think." But, as he goes on, to argue the "damaging" "isolating perspective" of the "national" perspective "cannot be corrected by any simple move from 'national' to 'international' forms". Thus the next chapter examines the international features "East-West, North-South", and the part concludes with "War: The Last Enemy".

It is a typically honest, courageous action for Raymond Williams to republish a prospective analysis, on the edge of the decade it discusses, some 24 years later. It still reads well, as it did to me then. I have written elsewhere of how Raymond Williams *the historian* is an unacknowledged figure, favourably comparing "**Britain in the Sixties**" with the superficial, "easy simplicity" of the closing pages of E.J. Hobsbawm's **Industry and Empire**. The "reconsiderations" in Part Three are, in the main, consolidations of the strengths of Williams' earlier analysis; they are in and of themselves resources and strengths. I happened to be chairing a discussion - on peasants - in London, England,

the Friday after that dark, dark Thursday 13th May 1979 when the Thatcher government was elected. Two of the speakers were Raymond Williams and Eric Hobsbawm. The contrasts in their reactions to the previous day's events were striking: Williams, troubled, but not distraught; Hobsbawm speaking of "betrayal" by the working class. I mean to point here to the way that the resources of Williams' writing have been resources for a hope.

The strengths of the current writing relate in part to this *calm* (a keyword) hopefulness. A key passage, for me, is the following: "There are times, in the depth of the current crisis, when the image materialises of a cluttered room in which somebody is trying to think, while there is a fan-dance going on in one corner and a military band blasting away in the other. It is not the ordinary enjoyments of life that are diverting serious concern, as at times, in a natural human rhythm, they must and should. It is a systematic cacophony which may indeed not be bright enough to know that it is jamming and drowning the important signals, but which is nevertheless, and so far successfully, doing just that." Out of this book come crucial prescriptive suggestions with regard to the necessary and sufficient forms for socialist politics in our time - regarding production (pp. 98f), socialist democracy (pp. 164f), culture and technology (p. 151), the general interest (p. 164), the socialist movement (p. 174), a variable socialism regarding social identities and effective self-governing societies (p. 199), and more diffused recommendations regarding "internationalism" and "peace" in the concluding chapters of Part Four. I entirely endorse his points regarding the latter: "To build peace, now more than ever, it is necessary to build more than peace. To refuse nuclear weapons, we have to refuse much more than nuclear weapons. Unless the refusals can be connected with such building, unless protest can be connected with and surpassed by significant practical construction, our strength will be insufficient. It is then in making hope practical, rather than despair convincing, that the ways of peace can be entered." I would wager that the last sentence will be quoted in 2073 - if there is a 2073, in the way that I and others turn to that wondrous text of William Morris, **Communism** (1893).

In what ways, then, is hope made practical in **Towards 2000**? There is, first, the calmness (although I shall critically qualify this in a moment) which conveys also a *refusal* of trendiness, of expecting sudden triumphs and miraculous solutions; but this is, in the better sense, principled and serious. With one remarkable exception - to which I shall also return - it is a book which has marked the writing of other socialists and communists of Williams' generation. There is, second, the recognitions that have always been a feature of his writing - of hope and strength, yes, but also of pervasive, complex, obstinate difficulties too. More specifically - I want to say "theoretically" but check myself, these are historical experiences and understandings of millions of ordinary women and men after all - there are the twin emphases of much of Williams' other work: (1) relations of production (and, I would stress, social

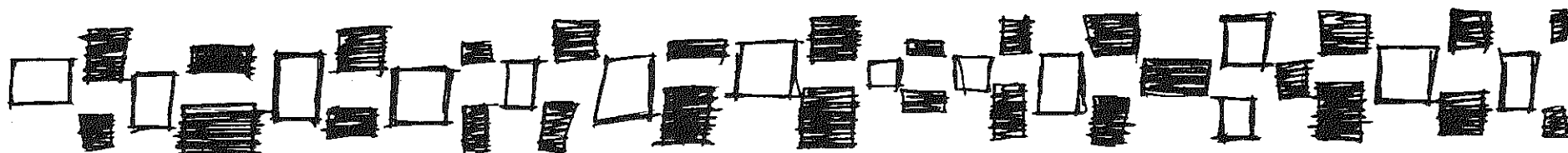
forms) are not to be thought as (a) secondary, (b) superstructural, (c) derivative from, or (d) caused by, forces of production (pp. 84f), and this entails rethinking the whole strategic theory involved in the *Very Idea of The Mode of Production* (pp. 226-227). (2): "There is only one good way out of all this. A practical and possible general interest, which really does include all reasonable particular interests, has to be inquired into, found, negotiated, agreed, constructed (p. 165). We have to begin again with people and build new political forms" and other passages which carry forward the energy of **The Long Revolution** through such staging posts as the excellent essay "Beyond actually existing socialism" in Williams' **Problems in materialism and culture**.

Third, there is the new questioning and examining in relation to actually existing capitalism (my term, not his), through the book, but especially in Part Four. Fourth - bringing to bear on an alienated politics, the detailed work on cultural production - is a major change which follows from seeing human social life not as "society as production" but as "society as a way of life", there cannot then be any "reasonable contrast between emotions and rational intelligence" (p. 266). In sum: "The central element is the shift from 'production to 'livelihood': from an alienated generality to direct and practical ways of life."

But the book does not "work" for me - for that person who described (and I stand by that judgement) **Politics and Letters** as *magnificent*; who has compared Williams with Barthes in terms of the significance of them both as intellectuals and resources for our struggles, as teachers, as writers, as socialists, as people. Why? The "edge" is not there - not the edge of rancour and bile, not the "cutting edge" of theory (more wounding than useful, quite often) but the edge where historical experience struggles within-and-against the forms that deny it (Williams himself is admirably clear on this, for example in **Modern Tragedy**. (Verso, revised edition, 1979, pages 15, 65, 74). I have to admit to this even though I thus find myself in company I do not like to keep (Denis Donoghue "Examples" **London Review of Books** 6(2), 2-15, February 1984, pp. 22-24).

For another review of **Towards 2000** and **Writing in Society**, see Maureen (no kin) Corrigan "Raymond Williams: Only Connect" **Village Voice** May 29, 1984, p. 47.

I find, amongst these negative features, first, a curious trope in the rhetoric of the text: there are sudden sentences or passages which register an exposure and irritation of comfortable, passive, neutralising dominant concepts. Thus, we are reminded, urgently, that industrialism entails capitalism (p. 84) or that existing representative political systems are bourgeois democracies (p. 120), but - in both cases - the preceding 20 or so pages had precisely not used these analytical terms that register important experiences. Second, there is the welcome (after such an extended absence) registration of some of the facts of gender. Whilst an advance on phrases used in 1959 ("Millions of wage-earners and their wives..." reprinted here p. 56), the renderings are ambiguous (contrast pages 85-91 and p. 170; and con-



sider the placing of feminism in relation to peace and ecological movements, p. 248f). Third, and this is an extraordinary charge, given at who it is directed, that a profound weakness of the book turns around the discussions of cultural production (pp. 128-152; 177-199), but it is true for me. It is within that discussion that the one moment of rancour occurs. What is being condensed in the following happens to include - as a kind of ill-tempered concordance - a refusal of a profound character: "There is also a pseudo-radical practice, in which the negative structures of post-modernist art are attached to a nominal revolutionary or liberationist radicalism, though all they can do in the end is undermine this, turning it back to the confusions of late-bourgeois subjectivism." The next page speaks of "the reduced and distorted shapes of the modernist and post-modernist representations." (This is not a new theme, see also *Politics and Letters*, passingly, and his brief mentions of "late bourgeois modernism" and "a bourgeois vanguardism", *New Society*, 5 January 1984 p. 18). This I cannot take to be either principled or serious. It slams the door on too much which I hold precious as political resources. All that work which has shown resoundingly how things and people could be different by exposing the signified, represented nature of the world against naturalisms, or religious and secular Doxa, from the montage of Eisenstein, through the staging of Brecht, to the dancing, musical, festive, humorous politics of popular cultural forms. Socialist modernism - a project always in the making - is a serious, principled negation and an exuberant, affirmative "festival of the oppressed".

Do I make too much of a few sentences? Yes and no. No, because it was Raymond Williams who taught me (and thousands of others) that art, literature, criticism are terms of anti-socialist specialisation and bourgeois control. No, because the glaring absence of this book is education taken in its widest meaning, to which Williams again (and in the same *Long Revolution*) directed our attention. Yes, finally, and in the end I affirm clearly, because in times of massive distraction, pain, despair and worse, we need a calm consideration, a reminding and remembering that socialism requires *mutual and co-operative social practices* (as distinct from the dominant bourgeois idea of individual practice, p. 167).

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The Sexual Fix by Stephen Heath (New York, Schocken, 1984)

The Sexual Fix is a strange work which gets curiouse and curiouse as you re-read it. Even though it is clearly, even to the only half-awake reader, an adaptation of Michel Foucault's mischievously inspired speculations about sexuality, the man himself is never once mentioned. He is the ghost at the banquet. But he is a ghost with a pervasive power, for the second curious thing about the book is its scepticism, not to say hostility, towards Freud and all his works, which is similar to Foucault's critique of psychoanalysis. Freud, it seems, was both the discoverer of the subversive workings of desire and its arch re-codifier.

Now Stephen Heath was one of those enthusiasts in the mid-1970s who in the pages of the theoretical journal *Screen* and elsewhere enjoined us to address ourselves to the insights of Lacan's 'recovery' of Freud. Lacan has since died, however, and so apparently has much of the enthusiasm for this cause. Since Heath's book first appeared Foucault has departed the scene, and I doubt if we shall have to wait very long the likely crumbling of his legacy.

There is of course nothing wrong in people changing their mind, but what is strange is that Heath's apostasy is another silence in the book. So though patently *The Sexual Fix* offers us an excursion into sexual theory, the two thinkers who have been most central to our recent thinking about the sexual, Freud and Foucault, are either minimized in the book, or ignored. Is this how all great thinkers fall; not with an uproar but with silence and a yawn?

If you can forget all that, Heath's book does offer a lively account of the overhauling significance assigned to the sexual over the past two hundred years, a significance which fixes us into our sexuality, which sees the human and sexual as identical, and which searches for the truth of our being in sex. These themes are illustrated through wide-ranging and intelligent discussions of a variety of writers, from 19th century sexual writers, through Freud and Lawrence, to modern pornographers. No one could doubt Heath's liveliness of mind or sensitivity to cultural phenomena, but I for one was left with a deep sense of disappointment and dissatisfaction.

As I have suggested, Foucault said much of this some years ago, and a number of recent (especially feminist) historians have explored, sometimes substantiating, sometimes challenging, his arguments. Peter Gay's recent odyssey into the 'bourgeois experience', despite its conceptual inadequacies, has at least exhaustively padded out our knowledge of the contradictions of our moral codes, simultaneously inciting sexuality and tightly regulating it. What we urgently need is a sharper debate on the implications, for theory and political practice, of the main argument put forward by Foucault and his supporters: that 'sexuality' is an historical apparatus that is deeply implicated in the play of power.

1. Peter Gay: *The bourgeois experience: Victoria to Freud*. Volume 1, Education of the senses. New York, London, Oxford U.P., 1984 (reviewed by J. Weeks, *The Body Politic*, No.104, July 1984).

Several issues immediately come to mind. Firstly, if sexuality is an historical construction, what weight are we to ascribe to its effects. Stephen Heath argues that: "Sexuality is without the importance ascribed to it in our contemporary society (Western capitalism); it is without that importance because it does not exist as such, because there is no such thing as sexuality." There is a strange non sequitur here. We may agree that sexuality should not have the importance assigned to it in Western culture, but the importance is that a contemporary construction of reality exists; it inflects our individual and collective responses, it shapes social policy, moral agitation and scientific intervention. There is such a thing as sexuality in our culture because the belief in its importance is inscribed in a vast array of social institutions. It cannot simply be wished away as a will o' the wisp. Sexuality is a material force. We may challenge its hegemony, rail against its power, opt out of its incessant claims. But we cannot forget it, ignore it, or pretend it does not exist.

Secondly, if sexuality is an apparatus of power, what are the best ways of challenging it? In particular, what is the place of the radical sexual movements and the call of sexual freedom against it? Heath implies that the ambition for 'sexual liberation' is complicit with the forms of power because it derives its term and form from it. We can all now readily concede that there was something profoundly authoritarian about the identification of quantitative sex with qualitative change in the 'era of permissiveness'. At the same time, as we all know, there is genuine sexual antagonism and female subordination, continuing oppression of minority sexual tastes and real personal misery. The New Right can pass over these in its pursuit of an apple pie authoritarianism. How can the Left oppose the appropriation of the sexual question by the Right if it denies the need for sexual freedom? To challenge the simple, essentialist alternatives of repression versus liberation is not the same as denying the need to find concrete steps towards achieving sexual change.

Thirdly, if sexuality is historically constructed, and not a good in itself, if it does not carry its own truth, what criteria are we to use in distinguishing between different manifestations of sexual desire; not only heterosexuality and homosexuality, but paedophilia, s-m, pornography . . . and incest, coprophilia, fetishism . . . and rape, necrophilia and so on. In a culture where there are genuine differences of value and political commitment, as well as cynical manipulation of prejudice, who is to decide what constitutes appropriate behaviour? Foucault's work radically breaks the connection between analysis and ethics, so that there can be no direct reading off of political positions from any history of sexuality. This makes it all the more incumbent on us to develop political positions which can cope with the diversity of desires and the pluralism of choice that face us as sexual - and political - subjects.

I know many feminists and socialists who believe that blanket hysteria against pornography ignores the absolute necessity to make distinctions in discussing sexuality

Heath's own solution, unfortunately, is to adopt what seems surprisingly like conventional moral attitudes, with a touch of contemporary radical feminism thrown in for modernity. At one point in his concluding dialogue with himself he weighs in with a heavy moralistic tone to suggest that no moralist could possibly support pornography. Perhaps not, but I know many feminists and socialists who believe that blanket hysteria against pornography ignores the absolute necessity to make distinctions in discussing sexuality. The same point could be made with reference to the almost equally heated questions of the mid-80s concerning intergenerational sex and the sexual ritualization of power in s-m. Contemporary sexual politics is still dominated by a morality of acts. We need to move towards a politics concerned with the quality of relationships within which real, if subtle, distinctions can be properly made. These are crucial issues which a book on 'the sexual fix' should seek to deal with. Heath moves from theoretical deconstruction to sexual conservatism with scarcely a glancing look at the dilemmas confronting sexual radicalism today. The result, inevitably, is a disappointment.

Jeffrey Week's last book was *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (London, Longman, 1981)

Sex & Love



New thoughts on old contradictions

Edited by
Sue Cartledge & Joanna Ryan

Why this new attention to the politics of sex? In part it is the result of the insistence of those feminists, gays and lesbians who never abandoned the seemingly thankless task of raising sexual issues within the left

Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality edited by Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1983)

Once upon a time political writing on sex and sexuality was thinly scattered through a few feminist journals and the occasional book. Today that is changing, and now even publishing houses long considered bastions of the male left and its preoccupation with political economy, have started to produce collections of essays on sex. Recently three such books have been published - only one of them by a feminist press.

During the seventies, those who enjoyed the privilege of dominant sexual practices and sexual relationships, including the straight male left, considered writing on sexuality to be the domain only of those who suffered from these arrangements - feminists, gays and lesbians. Why this new attention to the politics of sex? In part it is the result of the insistence of those feminists, gays and lesbians who never abandoned the seemingly thankless task of raising sexual issues within the left. But I suspect that this new interest is more a response to the obvious political successes of the new right in mobilizing itself in opposition to the supposed demise of the family, the ostentatious rise in homosexuality, and lippy feminists demanding equal rights in the workplace and the right to reproductive self-determination. In short the new right has raised sex as a main plank in their seductive platform.

The left today is far from enjoying the mass appeal it once had. In its struggle to regain its credibility and strength it will also have to make sexual and gender issues a crucial part of its own politics. The publication of these three books signals a shift in this direction. Hopefully they will encourage less lip service and more real inquiry by socialists.

Powers of Desire, the Monthly Review contribution, is a huge and necessarily pricey collection of mainly already-published pieces. Some of the articles: Ann Snitow's classic on mass market romance, Amber Hollibaugh and Cherrie Moraga's on sexual silences in feminism and Deirdre English's on "the fear that feminism will free men first" are important and provocative pieces. But because it is such an inclusive collection that tackles historical as well as contemporary issues, the book as a whole is too eclectic to pursue a single theme. If you haven't read much American feminist writing on sex, this is a good reader, but because the bulk of the articles have already appeared, the collection treads water rather than moves our analysis forward.

The Left and the Erotic, published by Lawrence and Wishart in London, England, is a curious collection of essays, some of which address the book's intent to examine the connections and barriers between sexual politics and the politics of the left. Most of the essays fall rather wide of that mark. The introduction by Eileen Phillips, and Elizabeth Wilson's piece on the new romanticism, almost make the book worth picking up, but much of the rest of the book is a mish-mash of how badly the left has dealt with sexual issues and how difficult that has made political life for feminists and gays.

The Left and the Erotic edited by Eileen Phillips (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1983)

Elizabeth Wilson's encounter with the American lesbian movement at the contentious 1982 Barnard conference on sexuality sparked an which traces both conventional and outlaw sexuality to their roots in the romantic tradition. She makes a valuable point in her critique of both early feminist and contemporary views on sex. She argues that both views - one that sees sex as the "bestial appetite of the male" and elevates celibacy and love to a "higher state" and the more contemporary view of sex as "self expression, self fulfillment and release" - reflect more or less the same attitude to sex: "Both see sex as functional and appetitional; the difference lies only in what should be done about it." She doesn't delve into this point, more's the pity, as it signals a critique of the assumptions underlying much contemporary writing especially American, on sex.

Eileen Phillips' introduction is an attempt to find the points of connection between the libertarian politics of feminism and the liberatory politics of the revolutionary left. Unfortunately she slides around the issue and ends up with little more than the rather weak conclusion: "We have with the socialist tradition practices and understandings which can help us as well as hinder us. ... We have also the need to transform our visions and our strategies so as to address a politics of freedom which does not relegate the personal and the sexual to a space where angels fear to tread and fools rush in."

On the way to this conclusion she does make some valuable points. Her first is that the current political debate on sexuality has hindered our analysis: "We remain caught in the noose of negative critiques of sexual relations, only able to speak the violence and degradation; we are silenced about the excitements or compulsions or delights of sensual experience." I would go farther and argue that the litany of sexual danger and abuse which we hear in the public debates (especially in the USA, the Canadian feminist movement is much further ahead on this point) on abortion, birth control, pornography, domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment and child abuse has exacerbated our fear. These are the only issues of sexuality around which there is a public debate, and to a great extent they reinforce the age-old message loud and clear that, as women, our sexuality is indeed a dangerous liability. It's clear that the intent of making these issues public is to create the space in which women can enjoy our sexuality without threat from man, church or state. But has this been the effect?

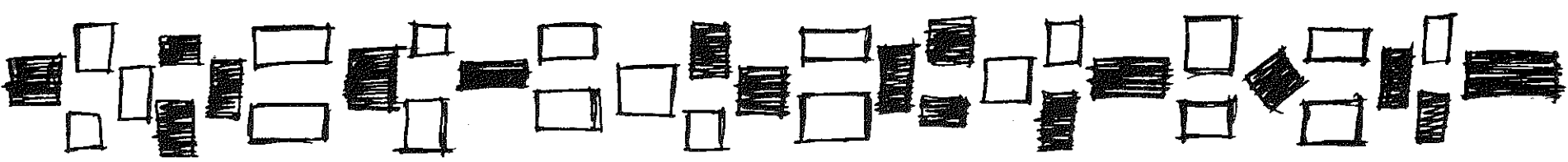
Sex and Love: New Thoughts on Old Contradictions edited by Sue Cartledge and Joanna Ryan (London, The Women's Press, 1983)

Phillips' other important point lies in her identification of "desire" as the crucial concept for any analysis of sex and sexual relationships. She quotes Judith Williamson's criticism of the discovery of the G spot: "But how about desire? -without which the G spot is as useful as a hole in the head, and which equally can turn the nape of your neck or the back of your hand into a sexual explosion. But it is always as if men have desire. Women have 'pleasure' - usually given by a man." This leads Phillips to argue: "It appears that desire is the crucial factor, the pin which holds the edifice of male domination together." Phillips doesn't go further into the issue but her use of the concept of desire together with Wilson's critique of the view of sex as appetitional and functional points to a new way to analyze sex and sexuality.

The concept of desire echoes through Phillips' collection and the Monthly Review collection which even uses the word in its title and through the third book **Sex and Love** put out by the Women's Press in London, England.

Sex and Love has taken on the difficult task of trying to analyze the often illogical, subjective and vexing emotional context of our sexuality. For this reason alone it is the most interesting of these three books. It delivers exactly what its subtitle promises - new thoughts. It is implicitly a profound critique of the way much feminist writing has focused on the mechanics of sex. In order to be able to see our sexuality clearly, so it was assumed, it first had to be taken outside the context of our heterosexual relationships. It is this isolation that most characterizes the early writing on sexuality. The notion of an independent sexuality came from a desire to discover what our sexual urges and responses are in a private place away from the domination of men. We learned that the clitoris is the site for orgasmic stimulation and that we can stimulate ourselves or together with another woman just as, or even more, pleasurably than with a man. The research of Masters and Johnson and later, Shere Hite, was used to validate sexual autonomy and to give us new tactics in our quest for sexual pleasure. Lynne Segal in her contribution to **Sex and Love** gives us a pointed critique of these sexologists: "Sexual behaviour . . . narrows down to become the effective stimulation for orgasm - a straightforward physical event. And even this physical event is more or less the same for everybody on every occasion, never more or less significant."

The problem is that even while we've learned to teach our sexual partners what most turns us on, we have been treating our sexuality as a thing. Objectifying our sexuality is, of course, exactly what men/the media/the pornographic industry/capitalism does that we resent so virulently. Yet we have come close to objectifying our own sexuality by treating it as an appetite that can be satisfied by consuming any one of a plethora of actions from licking to whipping.



Sex and Love attempts to put sex back into the context of the relationships we make. It succeeds most clearly in putting sex firmly into the context of the motivations we have to form and maintain sexual relationships. It uses the concept of desire as the key to understanding our motivations and our pleasure. That desire for another affects our sexual responses and our sexual relationships seems a truism, but as Wendy Holloway explains in her essay "Heterosexual Sex: Power and Desire for the other": "there is a whole area of women's experience of men in heterosexual sex which feminist theory and politics has not successfully addressed. It is almost as if the more widespread assumptions about love and sex are so taken for granted that we keep missing the basic and fundamental question: why do some of us feel so strongly about men that our feminist analysis (the oppressiveness of sexual relationships with men and all that) just does not succeed in determining our feelings and practices?"

Sex and Love is an innovative and provocative collection of essays that use psychological understandings of desire to get at the powerful emotional context of our sexuality. It is a relief to see psychoanalysis being claimed in this way by feminism (though Freudianism was never as wholly rejected by British feminists as it was by American), and I hope this book will help dispel the notion of Freud's work as the product of a dirty-minded misogynist. But a focus on desire is tricky, especially for a political approach to sexuality. It can lead to a fascinating exploration of the way each of us understands our gender and our sex role socialization. It can lead to a greater understanding of our sexual responses and of why and how power is acted out in our relationships. This approach, while potentially valuable for each of us individually, is tricky because of that - it addresses sexuality only at the level of the individual.

If we want to pull out the politics of our sexuality, we can't afford to lose the understanding that sex, desire and love happen (or don't) between us, not only within us. If we lose sight of this then we run the risk of failing to grasp that sex is a political issue because it is a huge and determining part of our social relationships - at home, at work and out on the town. We put at risk the fragile understanding of our personal/sexual relationships as a fundamental part of a continuum of social relationships that stretches uninterrupted into the impersonal/asexual relationships that the male left has taken as its domain. The straight male left has, by and large, drawn a line across that continuum and has declared the personal politically invalid. It will be that much harder to assert the existence of the continuum if we explore what exists within us at the expense of what exists between us.

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Writing in a Stage of Siege by
André Brink
(New York, Summit Books, 1983)

André Brink is one of a small number of South African writers presently enjoying great international celebrity. Others are Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton, Athol Fugard, and J.M. Coetzee. Brink's novels are best sellers, reviewed in the large circulation American and British newspapers as well as the fashionable liberal/left-wing journals like the **New York Review of Books** and the **New Statesman**. **Writing in a Stage of Siege** is, then, a collection of essays by a major contemporary South African novelist which addresses the problems confronting the South African writer and, by extension, any writer attempting to practise in a society in which political suppression is the norm.

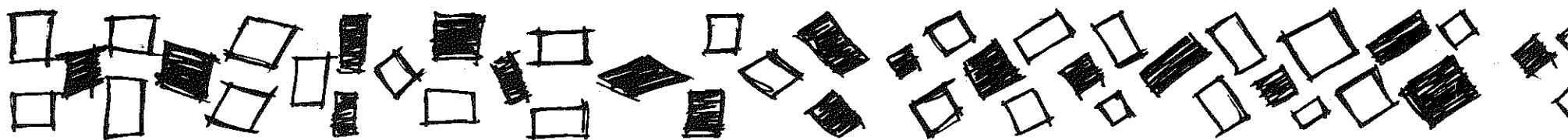
In common with the other writers mentioned above, Brink is white and writes in English - two factors which contribute to their popular success. That only white South African writers so far have managed to garner the world's attention is in some measure a consequence of the kinds of readers who have accorded them their fame. The typical reader - and therefore political sympathizer - of Brink and the others is a literate, curious, white, English-speaking, left-leaning liberal, who is a fundamental part of the vast readership of the English-speaking world at present. By and large, though there are obvious and honourable exceptions, these writers, drawing naturally upon their own experience, tend to write about the world of white people and its relation to that of the black. Their protagonists are, often, not unlike their readers, allowing a kind of "identification with" them which tends to bring the South Africa of the literature into a familiar perspective for the white Westerner. As significant to the success is the fact that, as Brink puts it in the essay "Censorship and Literature," the white writer, "for obvious reasons... can breathe more freely [than the black in South Africa.]" In other words, the South African government, in its desire to placate its Western business partners who publically express abhorrence for apartheid but publically continue trading with South Africa, is lenient towards white South African writers who publish their detestation of apartheid abroad while it jails, harrasses, and bans black writers who express similar views. South Africa is undeniably an industrialized country - unlike the other African nations - whose apartheid problem is perceptible as a logical, if blunt and brutal, extension of Western capitalism and whose setting is thus recognizable to us all. We in Canada may not be numerically overwhelmed by our poor native people, but we do have our poor and our poor native people and we are all participants in the way of life that conspires to keep them poor and harmless. This state is the deepest intention of the apartheid system - to keep the blacks poor and to render them harmless so that the white population can remain rich and powerful. The

government of South Africa has been successful in keeping the blacks poor and relatively successful in keeping them harmless. Though there have been immensely significant movements of black resistance to apartheid since the inception, in 1910, of the Union of South Africa and the African National Congress. In a superbly told chronicle of African Resistance to white domination, "After Soweto", Brink discusses the history of the relation of black and white in an attempt to explain the events of Soweto in an historical perspective. The great irony of South African history is the once-common goals of the Afrikaans and the black South Africans: vividly seen in white-oriented Socialism of the Afrikaans miners in the 20s, and the resistance of the Afrikaners to the British domination and British contempt. The great tragedy of the ultimate enmity of white and black South Africa, as Brink explains it, is the rigidly narrow rural Calvinism of the Afrikaners and the political manoeuvring of the British. This essay brings us from those pristine beginnings of the struggle to forge a nation, of the wars between the British and Afrikaans, and those between the whites and the blacks, through the acquisition of power of the National party of Dr. Verwoerd and the inception of the doctrine of apartheid and its ideas of racial purity, to the present, where the powerful politico-military machine of the South African government smoothly operates one of the most efficient dictatorships in the world. It has, as Brink reminds us, had lots of time to practise and refine itself. For, as all the world knows by now, the National Party of South Africa has been in power, virtually unchallenged and apparently unshakable, since 1948. With decades of practise and accommodation to the miniscule objections of its trading partners in the West, the government of South Africa has firmly and definitively entrenched the doctrine of apartheid which, by definition, implies the subjugation of seven-eighths of the nation's population on the grounds of colour alone.

The success of the South African government has to do primarily with the fact that the West, inherently racist itself, has tended to regard the South African system as objectionable chiefly because of its legitimization of racism. We may, I believe, safely assume that if the South African government were to abolish the laws condemning blacks to servitude and such laws as legally discriminate against them, very little would change. A state would continue to exist in which a vast capitalist machine would continue to exploit a huge majority of working people and peasants who would overwhelmingly be black. And while, undoubtedly, at the top echelon a few blacks would enjoy some power, send their children to expensive private schools, eat in the same restaurants as whites, ride in the same buses, even, God forbid, use the same toilets as the whites, the machine would be fueled by poor black South Africans. The difference would be that under these circumstances the Western World would entirely approve of the South African government, trade even less inhibitedly with it than now, and South Africa would become even richer.

The Western governments now condemn apartheid because they enjoy large trading arrangements with other black nations and because some of them - most particularly the United States - have significant numbers of black voters. In addition, of course, they fear that South Africa - the most powerful, rich, and strategically necessary nation of the continent - will go over to the Russians in the event of a successful black revolution. It is, then capitalism above all that makes South Africa as sympathetic to the West and it is the assumptions of that system through which non-South African readers communicate with South Africa and through the shared assumptions that the various worlds of white South African fiction become assimilable outside the country. Brink's writings in this book directly address these questions and forcefully attack the inadequacy of white liberalism which is the panacea which well-meaning Westerners - within and outside his country - would apply.

**And while,
undoubtedly,
at the top
echelon a few
blacks would
enjoy some
power, send
their children
to expensive
private
schools, eat in
the same
restaurants as
whites, ride in
the same
buses even,
God forbid,
use the same
toilets as the
whites, the
machine
would be fuel-
ed by poor
black South
Africans**



A measure of the government's sophistication in dealing with intellectual opposition—perhaps the most successful of all its measures—is the very existence of this book and the sheer possibility that such points and arguments as it advances are publishable and speakable in South Africa

A little known fact about Brink is that he began his career as an Afrikaans writer and holds the chair of Afrikaans literature at Rhodes University in South Africa. The former fact looms large in the present book. His career has been a long, intense battle with the established authorities of the language and literature of Afrikaans. They have declared him, and other non-conforming Afrikaners like him, anathema to everything they believe their language and heritage stand for. Effectively they have deprived him of the audience whom he most profoundly wishes to reach. He cannot write in Afrikaans because Afrikaners have been warned against him. The culminating event in this part of his history was the banning, 1974, of his novel *Kennis van die Aand* (*Looking on Darkeness*). In the essay, "English and the Afrikaans Writer," Brink discusses the basis for his decision to abandon the language of his birth and bringing up as the medium of his craft. In a country where banning books is a way of life, Afrikaans writers had been curiously exempt from the ritual of banning that has always plagued English and African writers since the inception of censorship in South Africa. Brink attributes this tolerance towards Afrikaans writers to the respect (occasionally sentimental) that the language and its poets have enjoyed amongst its speakers and a consequent reluctance to prohibit its literary expression. Additionally, there is the fact that most

Afrikaans literature has been inoffensive—in the strong sense of the word as he uses it when he defines offense as one of necessary criteria of all good writing. That is, most Afrikaans literature has not challenged apartheid or its dogmas. *Kennis van die Aand* is the first Afrikaans book in history to have been banned in South Africa, a fact which gives Brink a certain pride of place in the literary history of his nation, but which led him to the decision to continue his career writing in English. As he describes it, in a passionate essay entitled "Culture and Apartheid," Brink was in the vanguard of a small but vitally important group of Afrikaans writers who were willing to accept the stigma of treachery to the ideology of apartheid and the Afrikaans nation and to produce, in Afrikaans, works which dared to question, as never before, the sacrosanct ideals of Afrikanerdom. This group was known as "die Sestigste" (or the sixties, i.e. writers of the 1960s). Its members were isolated and ostracised as they risked their vocations in their determination to write truthfully about South Africa in the language of the oppressors of their nation. The very language which the Afrikaans writer must employ ties him to a specific cultural group which Brink defines as: "a group which through apartheid, through geographical necessity, and through the rigidities of Calvinism, has made a virtue of isolationism: a group almost wholly out of touch with the 'world outside' . . . Especially because the majority of young writers feel a very strong emotional and spiritual bond with 'our people' and prefer to adopt a defensive attitude towards the hostile world outside. This means that, contrary to trends almost everywhere else, young Afrikaans writers openly or tacitly support the establishment; and this leads to the extremes of explicitly or implicitly endorsing, condoning, or supporting Afrikaner Nationalism—and apartheid."

Of all the essays in the book, "Culture and Apartheid" most crucially addresses the intertwined cultural and political issues facing a South African writer of any background. It has the additional virtue of possessing two temporal perspectives. Written originally in 1975, the essay contains a postscript, added in 1982, which brings up to date the issues raised as questions in the earlier-written portion of the essay. Of particular significance is the acknowledgement, in 1970, of the fact that South Africa then was fast approaching the "point of no return" where a violent revolution seemed inevitable. At that time Brink was able to write—many would have found this highly optimistic in 1970—that: "I am convinced that at this stage there is still a possibility of effecting change peacefully." In 1982 he writes: "in many ways . . . the overall situation appears no more gloomy than ever before." The matter of violence is, however, the central issue facing all South Africans at present and, as Brink's words suggest, nothing is being done to avert it: rather, all efforts are bent to the purpose of postponing it. It is a fact that violent acts against apartheid have greatly increased in recent years.

At the same time, however, it must be noted that the government is getting more and more skilled in its capacity to deal with resistance at all levels, including that of violent opposition. A measure of the government's sophistication in dealing with intellectual opposition—perhaps the most successful of all of its measures—is the very existence of this book and the sheer possibility that such points and arguments as it advances are publishable and speakable in South Africa. For the essays it contains were all written for South African audiences and readers and more remarkably, heard and read by them. The essays, like the one just quoted, are all subversive of apartheid. They have in common a deep intellectual, moral, and intestinal loathing of the system and resound with a tense passionate conviction borne of the author's despair of his native country. To some, to the optimistic liberal, they will speak well of the government's capacity to accept and allow criticism of itself. To others, like Brink himself, they denote by their existence, the level of cynical sophistication of the Pretoria regime which knows that the publication in South Africa of such views as Brink presents—which fall far short, it must be added, of advocating violence as a solution—is good public relations amongst South Africa's trading partners, and, more horribly but unfortunately correct, that the essays will be read only by a small minority of white and black South Africans who think these things already anyway. In short, the government is strong enough and confident enough to be able to permit the publication of such ideas. But, most important, it is able at any time to invoke laws to suppress the publication of anything it pleases as soon as it deems such writing even faintly dangerous. In the meantime it can permit the illusion of freedom of expression because it possesses its own legally constituted powers to revoke such freedoms at will—as many a newspaper has discovered when it exceeded the prescribed bounds of political propriety.

"On Culture and Apartheid" attempts amongst other things to come to grips with one of the more bitterly disputed intellectual issues raised by apartheid—that of the cultural boycott by which non-South African writers in the early sixties, with the support of all the black and many of the white opponents of apartheid, agreed to prevent their works being presented published or shown in South Africa. At that time the most notable South African opponent of the boycott was Athol Fugard who argued that little was to be gained by the prohibition of ideas and cultural artifacts in South Africa and that more was to be won by exposing South Africans to these things than not. The point is still arguable and much debated. Whether the boycott has any measurable political effect is highly unlikely. The real significance is that it stands as a reminder to South Africa and to the rest of the world that South Africa is a pariah and that its racial laws are unacceptable. Brink writes on this issue in a sincere and convincing way. He opposes the boycott, believing instead that it is preferable for South Africans to have access to current ideas and such modes of thought as undermine the pernicious doctrines with which they are forced. It is an argument which has un-doubted merit and one which

issues from a moral conscience quite as strongly opposed to apartheid as that of the supporters of the boycott. He writes: "If it has any faith in the persuasive value of ideas, the outside world should expose South Africans to them as much as possible rather than cut off the hands of those inside the country who need the might of revolutionary ideas to reinforce their own struggle for change."

"A Background to Dissidence" which forms the introduction to this book is in many ways the most revealing and interesting of the essays. It describes the spiritual journey of the writer from a solid, Nationalist childhood, a confirmed believer in the traditions and culture that were his birthright, to the position he now occupies of an avowed, outspoken, and implacable opponent of white South African nationalism. The context of this particular essay is the entire history of the Afrikaans nation; yet because of its personal perspective, the essay adds fascinating insights into the history of South Africa from the untypical perspective of Afrikaans iconoclasm. For it is the fact that he is an Afrikaner and the fact that the language he loves has become a language of oppression, wrenched out of shape by a political religion which threatens to extinguish its vital and creative possibilities that accounts for much of the pain and the fury of this superb, courageous book.

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The Shape of Rage: The Films of David Cronenberg edited by Piers Handling (Toronto, General Publishing, 1983)

In the film, **They Came From Within**, directed by David Cronenberg, slug-like parasites get loose in a Toronto suburb apartment complex and attack the occupants. The effect of the parasite attack is to release the victims' libido and to turn people into desiring bodies. Significantly, what's most chronicled in the film is not the attack by the parasite monsters but the consequences of the attack in the way the libido comes pouring out. Eventually, it is the human victims who appear to be the real monsters as, in the film's view, they give in all too easily and willingly to forces that had been lying in wait just beneath their socialized veneer. In such a representation, **They Came From Within** suggest that the interest of the contemporary horror film lies not so much in the immediate shock effect it has been imputed to have, but rather in the ways it taps into deeper fears, the ways it connects up to tensions and contradictions of contemporary everyday life—in this specific case, the ambivalences of a society caught between sexual liberation and sexual repression. Far from being simply an escapist genre that depicts the shock of things that go bump in the night, the horror film is a central form of contemporary mass culture, modelling and providing symptomatic social representations.

Interestingly, some of the most significant works in the study and production of horror has come out of Canada. For example, the 1979 Festival of Festivals in Toronto was devoted to an overall examination of the horror genre and led to an extremely valuable anthology, **The American Nightmare: Essays on the Contemporary Horror Film**. Centered on the work of Toronto film scholar Robin Wood, the anthology reads the horror film as social form, a particular vision and version of contemporary life with ideological functions, political effects, cultural reverberations. Wood, for example, suggests that the basic formula for the horror film is "Normality is menaced by a monster" and argues that this seemingly simple formula actually enables us to understand the different ideological emplacements of various horror films. Thus, one can discuss a film's ideology in terms of its image of normality, of the monster, of the forms of menace, and ultimately of the ways that the "normal" world chooses to deal with "menace." To take one example from the anthology, Tony Williams applies Wood's formula to the street-crime film, **Assault on Precinct 13**, to suggest how the film's utilization of horror iconography in its chronicling of a street gang attack on a police station gives minority groups the same connotations as the monster in the traditional horror films: an absolute Otherness so separate from the realm of the human that communication is impossible and destruction seems the ultimate necessity.

This Canadian interest in horror seems not accidental for the theme of normality menaced by a monster implies that a central feature of the horror genre is its investigation of questions of marginality, of dominance and hegemony and of the alternatives to hegemony, the forces that exist in the margins, beyond or in opposition to dominant culture. At some level, indeed, the theme of Canadian horror is repeated in the production history behind the films as commercial Canadian filmmakers try to break into the world market and find frequently that the only way to do so is to work in genres that will work in America, that will play across the margins.

Alongside this critical study of horror, as equally important a development in the Canadian investment in the horror genre has been the film-work of David Cronenberg, and if the 1979 Festival of Festivals was an overall examination of horror, the 1983 festival included a special Cronenberg event. Cronenberg's films in particular have as their subject the life of marginal figures, from the outcast telekinetic superhumans of **Scanners** to the rabid heroine of **Rabid** to the telepathic loser of **The Dead Zone**. These figures wander through two wastelands that seem themselves to have a thematic tie to meanings of contemporary Canada. On the one hand, nature as a vast wasteland: Cronenberg's films present the great outdoors as a bleak, virtually scorched land, closing off any Rousseauistic solution to contemporary ills. On the other hand, the films also suggest that the modern city, the sleek glass and concrete gleam of cities like Toronto with its snazzy shopping malls, has also become a place of waste-where to be accepted into the mainstream can only mean that one has turned into a zombie of sorts. Cronenberg's films thus play on notions of belonging and of inclusion and exclusion. The films develop to a large degree out of a cynicism in which even the positive saviour figures in classic horror—the doctors and scientists who know authoritatively how to deal with monstrosity—now become sources of monstrosity themselves: for example, in **They Came From Within**, it is a mad scientist who is responsible for the parasite onslaught and the young hero-doctor is finally defeated by the monstrosity.

The Shape of Rage: The Films of David Cronenberg is a valuable extended look at the films that Cronenberg has directed. Most important, but for a few exceptions, the book avoids the kind of auteurist approach to direction that has too long plagued film studies and which sees the director as a kind of Romantic individual, a lone hero who through special insight, willed artistry, whatever, takes the resistant material of commercial film and gifts it with his or her (but usually his) personal vision. To be sure, while some of this notion of Cronenberg as special figure, a profound Artist, does creep through in the book, for the most part the essays impressively manage to treat Cronenberg as a force within forces, within the social situation. The essays study Cronenberg as a genre director, as a Canadian director, as a respondent to the modern social world. Thus, to take



photo: David Cronenberg Productions Ltd.

one example, the one essay in the book that is especially critical of Cronenberg, Robin Wood's "Cronenberg: A Dissenting View," is critical not so much of Cronenberg the individual but of the ways that individual so well repeats many of the dominant sexual ideologies of the day, such as the repulsion from anything that dominance views as aberration. Wood's essay well demonstrates the need to understand thematic analysis apart from evaluation; that is, while Wood is not at all in disagreement with the notion, expressed in many of the other essays in the book, that the films stand as thematic statements, he suggests that the mere presence or complexification of a theme does not in itself establish value.

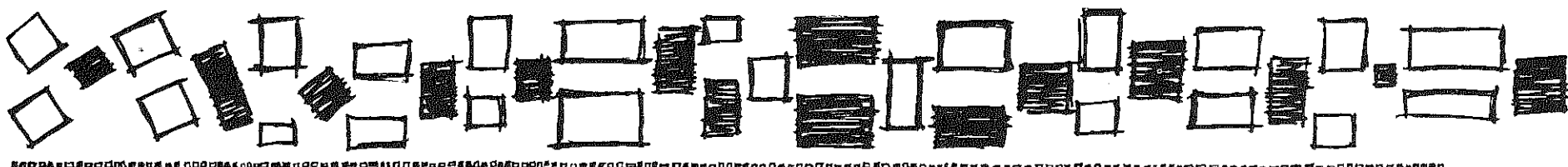
Rather, one has to judge the political worth of the theme. In the case of Cronenberg, for example, Wood argues the recurrence of nihilist themes that portray an irrevocable rot of civilisation in which, the films dangerously imply, women can only be unfortunate victims (for example, **Rabid**, with its unwitting heroine turned into a monster by science) or quasi-demonic threat (as in **They Came From Within** which pictures lesbianism as one of the ultimate marks of parasite possession). Wood's move from aesthetic to political criteria for the evaluation of art is a useful qualification of the tendency in some of the other essays to assume that meaningfulness and aesthetic richness are automatic sources of value. Indeed, overall, the best moments in the collection are those that eschew aesthetic evaluation and turn instead to an historical study of the place of the films: for example, the production history that William Beard provides in "The Visceral Mind: The Major Films of David Cronenberg" and that runs against Beard's dominant desire to treat Cronenberg as heavy thinker, or the social history that Piers Handling hints at in "A Canadian Cronenberg" when he suggests ways in which Cronenberg films replay recurrent Canadian themes and concerns. Against these critical insertions of

the film director into interlocking contexts, the extended interview with Cronenberg that closes the book only confirms the fact that artists have no more than a partial view of their work, and indeed frequently seem proud of their own partiality: for example, defining the politics of a film as arising solely from the artist's intention to be political, Cronenberg insistently denies that his films are political, a declaration that the rest of the book would well seem to belie.

Yet this sort of disagreement suggest one major limitation of the book—namely, its ignorance of form and style as forces in the production of meaning (and, even, of meanings that might run against the univocal expression of a dominant theme)—for it is precisely formal analysis that might allow sharp specification of the films' political investments. Thus, where Wood's declaration that **They Came From Within** is reactionary about sexuality, and Cronenberg's declaration that the film is ambivalent about sexuality stand as two irreconcilable assertions, stylistic analysis could search for ways in which camera placements, editing logic, etc., all imply certain ideological points-of-view. Unfortunately, the book includes very little analysis of the look of the films—of the ways, for example, that they work in and perhaps against dominant conventions of narrative and image-production. This disinterest in a politics of form has as one consequence to construct an image of Cronenberg as heavy thinker for whom the choice of film as a medium is either indifferent or arbitrary.

Nonetheless, to wish for more analysis of style may ultimately be to suggest that the arguments of **The Shape of Rage** need to be both appreciated and developed. Filled with polemic, the book is a worthy addition to any library on mass culture and everyday life.

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Literary Theory: An Introduction

by Terry Eagleton

(Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1983)

Over the last fifteen years Terry Eagleton has been consolidating his reputation as one of the most playful, versatile and multi-faceted English Marxist literary thinkers both as a theorist and as a practical critic. A Cambridge graduate working as an English don at Oxford, Eagleton is a vocal speculator, a productive sharpshooter constantly on the move who, by the very nature of his views, often becomes a target of criticism both within and outside the traditional academic establishment, challenging and difficult at times as in his seminal **Criticism and Ideology** (London, NLB, 1976) and **Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism** (London, NLB, 1981), he has also proved a skillful and clear popularizer, readily didactic and accessible, judging by the success of his **Marxism and Literary Criticism** (London, Methuen, 1976) and by the book under review, also a digested derivative of his most ambitious critical works and an effective bestseller as such.

Literary Theory: An Introduction, Eagleton points out in the preface, "sets out to provide a reasonably comprehensive account of modern literary theory for those with little or no previous knowledge of the topic." Apparently in line with other recent introductory works on literary theory such as Catherine Belsey's **Critical Practice** (London, Methuen, 1980), Eagleton's book, while satisfying a craving for a generic albeit superficial knowledge of a subject, also proves distinctly more subversive from a didactic perspective. Like those ubiquitously independent

"Literary theory is less an object of intellectual enquiry in its own right than a particular perspective in which to view the history of our times"

Marxist politicians who endeavour to unite the multilayered left, Eagleton's strategy is to be committed only from a critical distance to the literary theories he brings into perspective. Through his mastery of a technique akin to the military strategy known as the domino effect, the text progresses from literary theory to literary theory, posing problems which first illuminate and then end up by exhausting and debunking his subject matter, only to move on to the next theory.

In the substantive section of this book, Eagleton discusses phenomenology, hermeneutics, reception theory, structuralism and semiotics, post-structuralism and psycho-analysis, guiding us through difficult material with exceptional ease and clarity. In the best British tradition he demonstrates his talent in concocting down to earth and often humorous examples from everyday life. He reenacts the dialogue around the nature of language and existence that has predominated in the 20th century, using this as the joining thread to tie together the Anglo, American, French and German literary theorists. His approach is interdisciplinary and also dialectical: he gives a fair ear to a school or movement, and then using its own "discourse" or logic, exposes its weak points and contradictions to us.

In the chapter on Husserl and phenomenology he quickly digests Heidegger, Sartre, and the reception theorists: Ingarden, Iser and Fish. Using the two poles of liberal humanism mapped out earlier in the personages of Leavis and T.S. Eliot - Romantic rebellion and conservative traditionalism - Eagleton situates European and American theorists between these edges of the humanist tradition. Despite Eagleton's general unhappiness with phenomenology, he does not deny its importance in showing us that theoretical knowledge always emerges from a context of practical and social interests.

After a rather heavy hand with critics such as Northrop Fry as part of his exposé of structuralism, Eagleton has some good things to say about semiotics and post-structuralism. In a competent depiction of Saussurean linguistics and European formalism, he credits these with the necessary reformation of twentieth century criticism, to address the sociological and historical antecedents of language. The strengths of this movement include theorizing the relations between text and society (with the Formalists' notion of "defamiliarization") and most recently, the development of the notion of "discourse" in the works of Genette and the newly rediscovered Bakhtin (replacing Saussure's monolithic "structure" with the heterogeneous and dialogic play of "discourse").

Eagleton's arguments are designed to shock, especially the reader who has fashioned his life around being a "lover of good literature". The introduction begins with the philosophical debate about what exactly the "object" of literary theory is, and Eagleton does his best to show that from a sociological point of view, this elusive object termed "literature" is no different from jokes, football chants and slogans, newspaper headlines, road-signs and ads. He rescues us from this quandry by distinguishing literature as "non-pragmatic" discourse: "unlike biology textbooks and notes to the milkman it serves no immediate practical purpose, but is to be taken as referring to a general state of affairs."

Eagleton conducts a discussion of literature as "ideology" in terms of "those modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power", and selects as a test case the rise of English as an academic subject in Britain's educational institutions. This is a subject dear to him, and one that has already been discussed at large and in harsher terms, from the Romantic period to Matthew Arnold, the Leavises and Raymond Williams, particularly in **Criticism and Ideology**.

Eagleton accredits the rise of literature in the modern period to the fact that it provides an enclave for the increasingly emasculated intellectual from where fantasies about the "organic society" will pose no threat; and the failure of religion is offered as an explanation for literature's other function: to hold together the seams of class society. Thus literature, according to a model which owes to Durkheim and also to Foucault, operates as a secular mythology at every level of society, it claims to be an absolute and hence is impervious to rational demonstration, and it holds up an example of passive contemplation for the individual to model himself after during his leisure hours.

The chapter dealing with post-structuralism is probably the most contentious, as it brings literary theory into a political debate: deconstruction and feminism are on trial. At this point Eagleton admits he himself is leaning towards a practical materialist criticism that thinks language as something we "do" which has a real effect on the way we live. Thus he confesses he feels ambivalent towards post-structuralist theories - for all their radical deconstruction of other schools of criticism they themselves are perhaps the latest symptom rather than the solution to the social and linguistic crisis in the aftermath of Modernism. Suspicious of all theory and political engagement as "terrorism", they leave intellectuals with "writing" as the only uncolonized enclave - and from this position, intellectuals rewrite history in their own image, reducing it to yet more "undecidable" text. Eagleton sees feminism as a viable alternative, arguing that it is the ideology most likely to bring some real sense and meaning out of the infighting amongst the left, and develop out of it something constructive with liberating practical consequences. This is a courageous stand by an author whose work has been criticized by some feminists for not deviating from male discourse in spite of its Marxism.

The longest chapter in the book is dedicated to psychoanalysis and offers an exegesis of Freud's opus and a reading of Lacan through Freud. As in **The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson** (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1982), Eagleton appears keen to exploit with a dazzling touch practical applications of literary theories. An example worth noting in this chapter is his discussion of D.H. Lawrence's novel **Sons and Lovers**. Eagleton reconciles a psychoanalytical reading of this work with a social interpretation of it as a means of accounting for a broader critical design: "by attending to what may seem like evasions, ambivalences and points of intensity in the narrative - words which do not get spoken, words which are spoken with unusual frequency, doublings and slidings of language - it can begin to prove through the layers of secondary revision and expose something of the 'sub-text' which, like an unconscious wish, the work both conceals and reveals. It can attend, in other words, not only to what the text says, but to how it works."

In the conclusion Eagleton attempts to broaden his discussion of political criticism. He admits in the process that: "literary theory is less an object of an intellectual enquiry in its own right than a particular perspective in which to view the history of our times." Alarming as these remarks may sound to some reverers of literary theory, they are however far from dismissive, and, in fact, are an attempt to account for the particular use Eagleton gives to the subjects he discusses in the previous chapters within his own bizarre and elusive literary practice. Purporting to embrace a radical yet traditionalist position, Eagleton explains his stand: "Rhetoric, or discourse theory, shares with Formalism, structuralism and semiotics an interest in the formal devices of language, but like reception theory is also concerned with how these devices are actually effective at the point of 'consumption'; its preoccupation with discourse as a form of power and desire can learn much from deconstruction and psychoanalytical theory, and its belief that discourse can be a humanly transformative affair shares a good deal with liberal humanism." Eagleton confidently rounds off his argument by stating: "The fact that 'literary theory' is an illusion does not mean that we cannot retrieve from it many valuable concepts for a different kind of discursive practice altogether." As controversial as Eagleton's commitment may seem, the overall effect of the book is to tempt even the general reader to take up the critical tools Eagleton has succeeded in putting at our disposal and jump into the arena of debate.

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The Republic of Letters: Working Class Writing and Local Publishing edited by Dave Worley and Ken Worpole
(London, Comedia Publishing Group, 1982)

Dockers & Detectives by Ken Worpole
(London, Verso, 1983)

From time to time literature must be revitalized by new materials and new techniques. As Synge, who wanted to give utterance to the peasantry of Western Ireland, said to Yeats, style is born out of the shock of new material. We have the English novel in part because of the English Dissenters and their preoccupations - money and the growth of the soul. Recently we have seen the impact of various submerged groups on Canadian and American literature: Blacks, women, gay men and lesbians, all with compelling stories to tell. New writing by newly vocal communities may become fashionable for a while, but the only enduring ways to keep the work available are the alternative networks of presses, bookstores, and magazines, enterprises which are often run as co-ops.

In **The Republic of Letters** Dave Worley and Ken Worpole have assembled a history and analysis of an alternative writing network in the United Kingdom, The Federation of Work Writers and Community Publishers, an organization that embraces twenty-seven local writers' groups with a variety of interests. These groups are a movement: "which aims to 'disestablish' literature, making writing a popular form of expression for all people rather than a preserve of a metropolitan or privileged elite." It is a book that Canadians and Americans can learn from, although there are some important differences in the British situation. The obvious one is class. Britain has classes that are more clearly demarcated (especially in language) than we can find in North America, and the classes are more aware of their identities. The working class is more likely to see itself as such. It has a long and honourable history of self education and its own institutions, including a political party to feel betrayed by. From the text of **The Republic of Letters** it is clear that the alternative writing network is basically working class. There are Black groups and women's groups, but their members are working class. In North America the members of the working class are likely to define themselves by the middle class: they believe they are in it, or will be, or have failed to be. I can't think of any North American equivalent to Richard Hoggart's study of working class culture, **The Uses of Literacy**, a book written not by a sociologist but by a scholar who has a firm sense of his working class origins.

In Canada and the United States alternative writing does not have a clear working class orientation. While there is a successful waterfront workers' writing group in San Francisco, the emerging minorities finding voices are usually not consciously class oriented. There is, of course, a growing body of writing about work, but that subject cuts across class lines, and the work writer is most likely to be a member of the middle class who doing something unusual for a while: fishing, laying pipe, waiting on tables. There is much to be

learned from this book in spite of the different class situation. Major questions are raised: does the alternative publisher have the right to deprive union employees of wages in order to cut costs; what is the role of the hired administrator, who may not be a member of the constituency but comes to be seen as its spokesman; what happens when the experience of the minority group clashes with ideology. The last question is poignant. Alternative writing in Britain comes from a class that often indulges in prejudice against Blacks and women. This problem is confronted honestly in the book. Another ideological problem arises when the content of the work fails to meet some critic's notion of "correct" socialist doctrine. The Federation is clearly socialist in spirit, but its members don't always find that their work grows on the trellis of theory.

The most interesting insights come, I believe, with the discussions of the mystique of the writer and the mystique of publication. As long as the writer is seen as a Romantic figure whose work is a mystery, writing is not likely to flourish as an activity open to anyone with talent. As for publishing, it is too widely assumed that publishers are primarily interested in selling good books rather than in making money. Now that conglomerates own so many publishing houses, there is hardly any room for established writers of merit, let alone new ones with an unfamiliar point of view. The publishing system now commissions best sellers (cookbooks, novels based on television or intended for television). But it is widely believed that talent will always emerge and find a standard publisher. The Arts Council of Great Britain has denied funds to Federation activities on the basis of that belief. Working class writers are assumed to be untalented amateurs.

The book, then, concerns itself largely with the economic basis of literature. The authors of this joint effort want to make more writing available from groups who have had little chance to be heard, groups that haven't thought of themselves as having a voice. The quality of the writing is not the main concern, and some of the literary judgements show a minimum of discretion. The book has many samples of writing from the working class. They are uneven but many are quite good, especially the autobiographical narratives. A common tendency in writing from emergent groups: there is a desire to tell what has not been told before, to offer testimony. The style of these reflections carries more of the shock of new material than the poems. At one point we are told that the good thing about a poem is that it is short and can be written in brief intervals: "The great thing about a poem is that it can be short, can be sometimes actually written, revised and finished within the odd quarter of an hour between washing up the Sunday dishes and starting to get tea, or in a spare half hour when the other people in the house are watching television or out at the cinema." A poem can be started in an odd quarter of an hour, but not revised and finished too. But I

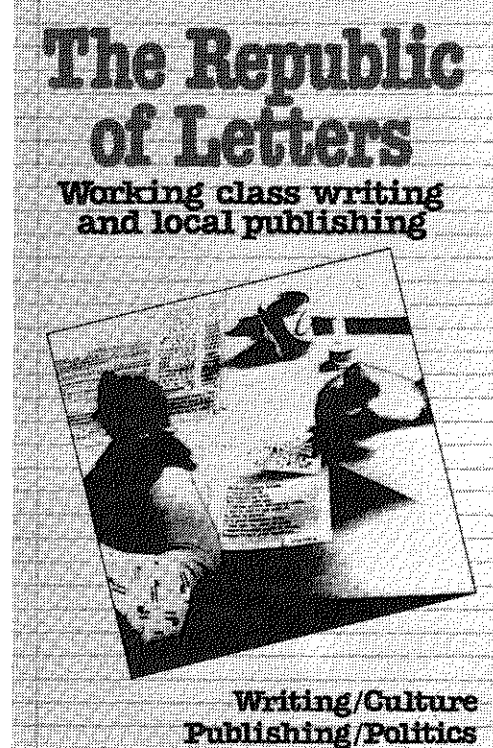
assume that the gifted will find their way to a strong commitment. The Federation works against the mystification of poetry in particular, the notions that the poet is a being detached from life and that all poetry is difficult to understand. The Federation's member groups have found that poetry actually sells when it speaks to people's lives.

The authors show an interest in creative writing courses, and here they might have something to learn from North America. Creative Writing is not a standard subject in the U.K., and they assume its prevalence in the United States is: "a contribution to American literature's being more energetic, less elitist, more open to ethnic and minority experience." However, for all their value, creative writing courses are being questioned these days because they encourage an exclusively technical approach to writing, detached from social and philosophical concerns. For the writers' groups in Britain, a workshop is a free meeting of people with a common experience who want to learn how to write about it.

The closest Canadian equivalent to the Federation is probably the provincial writers' guild. These groups are open in membership and encourage all sorts of writers. The Writers' Union of Canada is a different kind of body, one limited to professionals. The small presses have organized to distribute their members' publications. But so far there is no national network like the Federation.

Literary history is usually a safe and dull enterprise. In **Dockers and Detectives** Ken Worpole, one of the editors of **The Republic of Letters**, performs a salvage operation, which is more daring than reciting facts. Worpole wants to retrieve some valuable books that haven't made it into the canon. And he wants to clarify the nature of popular writing.

He clarifies the British working class enthusiasm for American tough guy fiction in a very informative essay. Many British readers (and writers) were impressed with the naturalist assumptions and vernacular style of writers like Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Ernest Hemingway and Theodore Dreiser. This list of authors shows that Worpole doesn't trust the usual distinction between popular and elite literature. The simplification of syntax and vocabulary, the realistic descriptions of common life, the cynical attitude toward society, all can be found in the popular writers as well as in the Nobel Prize winner. Worpole suggests that the American vernacular style democratized literature at a time when writers in England were preoccupied with provincial manners and a refined, elusive syntax. "Democratized" is a loaded word for discussing style, of course. I find Worpole's theoretical framework - bits of Gramsci, Walter Benjamin and Russian formalism - a little shaky for some of his assumptions and arguments throughout the book. It is clearly a collection of studies rather than a full treatment of popular reading and writing.



Recently we have seen the impact of various submerged groups on Canadian and American literature: Blacks, women, gay men and lesbians, all with compelling stories to tell

Other chapters deal with popular fiction of World War II in some of its left-leaning, pacifist tendencies and with expressionist novels by three Liverpool seamen who wrote in the 1930's. The books by the seamen show alternatives to Socialist realism and the documentary novel in dealing with working class life, but unfortunately they are out of print. The final chapter considers a number of forgotten Jewish writers of London's East End, whose work is also unavailable. They write out of the same setting as Arnold Wesker, but they have been forgotten. Worpole's intention is admirable, to show us literature that we didn't know existed, and to find it in places that most people don't look in. The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers makes it less likely that valuable writers will fail to publish or fail to be noticed in the future.

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