

# borderlines

No. 5 Summer 1986 \$4.50

CULTURES • CONTEXTS • CANADAS

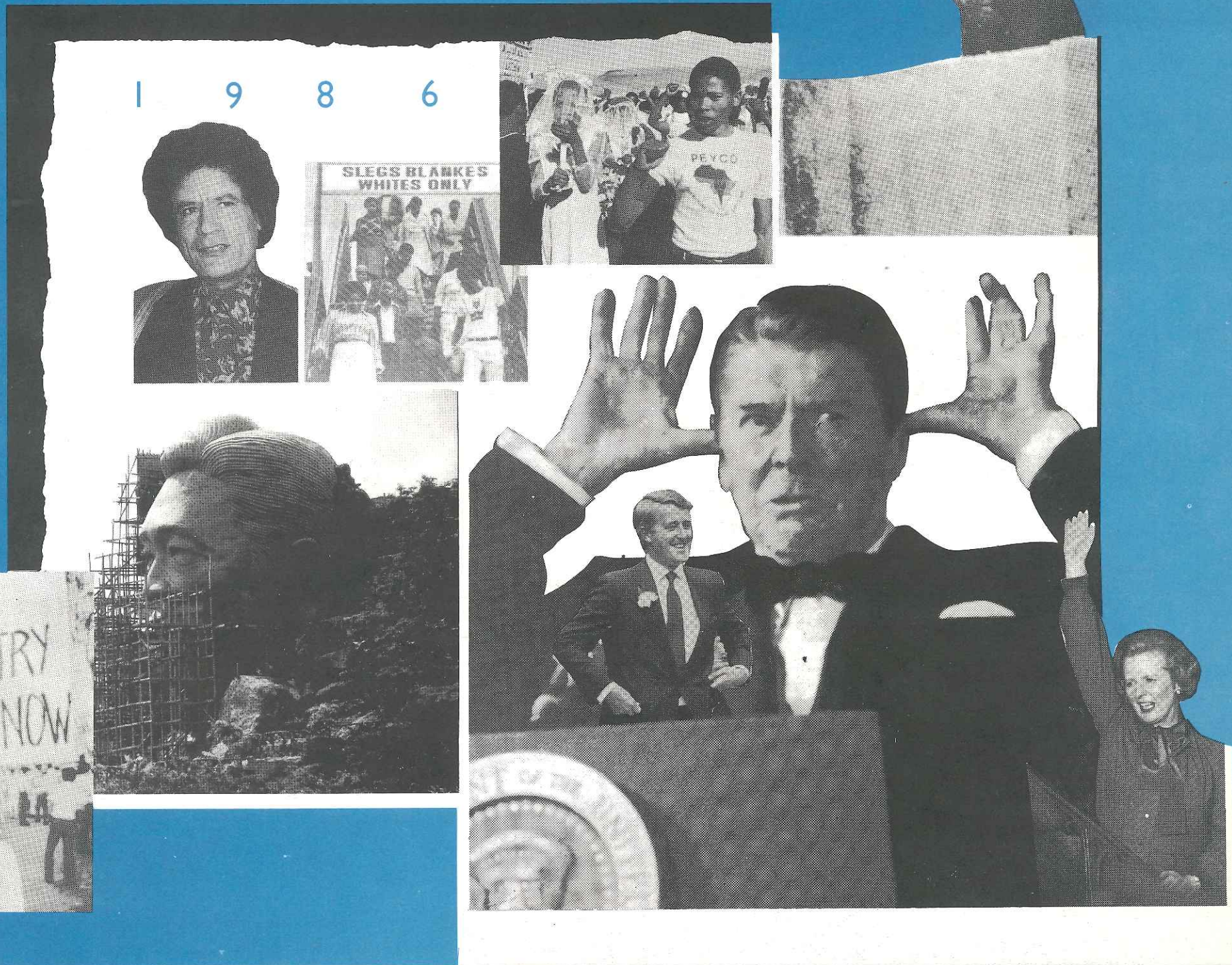
A Geography of "Terrorism"

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Adorning Madonna

Reviews by

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Number 5, Summer 1986

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- Our Times,
- Toronto, Ont.

**borderlines** is published four times a year by Borderlines Magazine Society Inc., a charitable organization engaged in producing written, visual and audio educational materials on culture, the arts and contemporary social issues.

**Subscriptions (four issues):**

- \$16.00-individuals
- \$14.00-low income
- \$25.00-institutions

Foreign subscriptions for all countries are payable in US dollars. Rates for air mail delivery are available on request.

Manuscripts, images and other contributions are welcome.

**Business Address**

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132A De Grassi Street  
TORONTO, Ontario  
Canada M4M 2K6

2nd Class Mail Registration No. 6799

ISSN 0826-967X

Printed and Published in Canada.

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**borderlines** is indexed in *America: History and Life*, *Historical Abstracts* and *The Alternative Press Index*.

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**ERRATA**

Rita Kanarek & Loretta Czernis would like to thank Carol Sorenson & Madelaine Pengelley for modelling for their article **Démaquillant Démaquiller**.  
Borderlines acknowledges partial assistance from the Canada Council, York University and the many hours of volunteer labour by collective members, associates and friends.

Who are all the women who don't come gently and don't want to; don't know yet what they like but intend to find out; are the lovers of butch or femme women; who like fucking with men; practice consensual s/m; feel more like faggots than dykes; love dildoes, penetration, costumes; like to sweat, talk dirty, see expressions of need sweep across their lover's faces; are confused and need to experiment with their own tentative ideas of passion; think gay male sex is hot; are into power? Are we creating a political movement that we can no longer belong to if we don't feel our desires fit into a model of proper feminist sex?

EXCURSIONS

It was some time last year that pop singer Madonna's image exploded on the covers of magazines everywhere. Image of exaggerated 'feminine' sexuality: Madonna sprawled out in an array of bright lace lingerie, stretchy cottons and tacky jewelry, taunting the camera with her bare navel, deviously half open eyes and lips. *Rolling Stone*, *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, *People*, *Time* ran cover stories as did

countless other forgettable magazines such as *Teen Beat*. Along with her overinflated found status as a pop singer was an acting role in a new film, *Desperately Seeking Susan* and an earlier film, *A Certain Sacrifice*, as well as the discovery of several series of nude black-and-white 'art' photographs she had posed for several years earlier, most notably those of American photographer, Lee Friedlander.

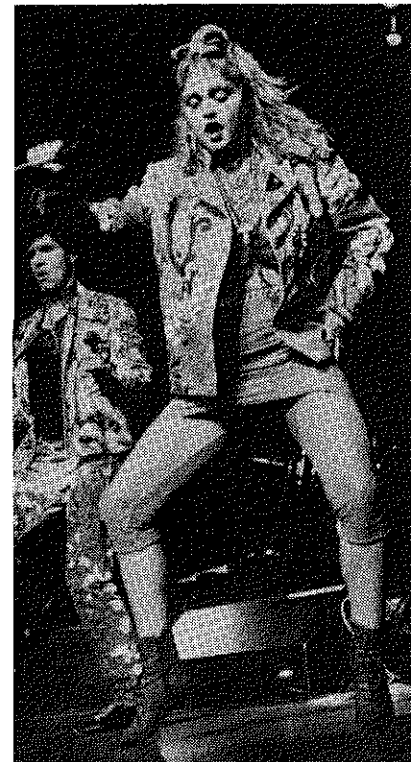
In a single year, Madonna's image occupied film and t.v. screens, magazine covers and newspapers (as she was concurrently on her 'Virgin' tour promoting her second album), while her high-pitched voice vibrated across AM airwaves in the Western world. These 'achievements' crescendoed with her private (no official media invites) marriage to *enfant-terrible* actor Sean Penn last autumn (heroically captured in photographs by *National Enquirer* journalists hovering indiscreetly overhead in helicopters) and recent gossip that she is pregnant.

The inundation and overexposure, this 'coup' of the media over a concentrated period of time, is a publicity strategy employed repeatedly in the 'rock' industry. The release date for new records and selected single cuts are accompanied, of course, by their music videos and the recording 'artist's' appearance on music video shows, at autograph sessions in record shops, etc. All to talk about the making of the video and the record and also to plug the Big Tour (Canadian, World-wide, whatever), that is just about to begin. The overall effect of this PR package is facilitated by the increasing popularity of rock video programming (incidentally, extremely low-budget programming), allowing the singer

to express her/his personal 'style,' creating or reinforcing this 'star' pose of self-importance. A phenomena such as Madonna demonstrates how this 'star' quality rests completely on a 'look,' on a visually powerful and seductive poising of the body.

In all her rock videos, Madonna adopts surprisingly different personae, a constant re-packaging that has instituted her as an appealing novelty. In "Like A Virgin" Madonna is a trembling, desirous bride (in a "Venetian decor complete with gondola," described by Barthes as a titillating and exotic backdrop for the striptease); "Crazy For You" reveals her 'sensitive' side as she mourns the pain of Romantic Love; while "Material Girl" finds her joyously imitating the campy musical performance style of Marilyn Monroe. In her two performance videos, "Holiday" and "Dress You Up" she sings and dances, completely oblivious to her supporting cast of two male dance partners thrusting away beside her in unison.

The notion of 'dress-up,' of masquerade and spectacle is integral to the construction of Madonna. The little girl dressed up in high heels and lipstick is a Madonna wearing a Boy Toy belt underneath her satin bridal gown, not a virgin, but singing "Like A Virgin." She embodies a pastiche of various dominant representations of Woman confused and re-enacted with surprising dexterity. Her own name, of course, evokes the contradictory exaltation of the Virgin Mother, simultaneously untouchable but also the penultimate object of desire. Her now 'famous' statement (quoted here from *Penthouse* and *Fan Club*) - "I like crucifixes because there's a naked man on them" - is vacuous yet perversely sacreligious. Seeing the crucifix at a very literal level, sexualizes the sacred body of Christ and implies a fuckable body, a notion that obscures delineations between the sexual and religious in a provocative and transgressive manner.



In spite of all the foreplay, we should retain a tension between Madonna's image in itself and the concerns surrounding the thrusting of her image into the highly visible and obsessive arena of rock/pop culture. For we are brought to the threshold of problems concerning the representation of feminine sexuality deployed as a saleable commodity by and through a specific mechanism in contemporary culture: the easy bed-partners - rock music (and therefore, consumerism) and the media image (read crudely here for its ideological effects). What are we to make of this squirming and lustful female performer? What is it about Madonna that both repels and attracts women to her image? Makes some men sigh in relief that 'sexy' is in again, providing boys with the substance for wet dreams like 'pin-up' girls used to?

And the idea that the fantasies of women are the same as, or merely derivative or in the service of male values, only serves to belittle our already shaky beliefs about our own sexual importance.

# Bella-donna:

## Madonna at a Glance and in Retrospect

It is difficult to find an equivalent to Madonna as there are so few female idols who have garnered similar public interest. Marilyn Monroe and Janis Joplin are distant comparisons, perhaps. Through popular (media) mythologizing, both women are re-presented as having been exploited and destroyed by the corruption of their fields: the tragic, helpless woman is 'punished' by overdosing on drugs in a horrifyingly lonely way. Such mythologies are in effect extensions of social control that serve to reinforce the binary reduction virgin/whore - Yes, yes show us your desire, but don't say you weren't warned, slut. Madonna represents a new breed: she pumps iron two hours a day; is into vitamins; owns a

We also must contend with her exaggerated use of the paraphernalia of fetishism: garter belts, corsettes, stockings. The overt flaunting of her sexuality in various states of undress/overdress (the padded cream silk bridal gown or the barely veiling blue satin sheet) occupies a dangerous edge between a 'liberated' sexuality and a phallic sexuality, an idea of feminine sexuality played out purely for man's desire. Women groan at the potentially dangerous implications of the popularity of a figure such as Madonna, while young girls adore and emulate her by the hundreds of thousands. While there is something highly disturbing about seeing twelve year-olds wearing gobs of make-up and lingerie they can't fill out, Madonna has released and popularized an image of women who "talk dirty" (enjoy sex and admit it?) Unfortunately, she is always veiled.

Madonna's image consists of a play of loaded cultural signifiers for feminine sexuality: being 'dumb' (the supposedly misconstrued Boy Toy belt), talking 'dirty' ("...this is my box [a ghetto blaster]...it's a very special box...it makes music if you turn it on...") and looking 'sexy' (flaunting garments that are traditionally reserved for carefully selected 'lovers'). There is a point where the excessive sexuality of her image folds back into itself, disturbing erotic tension; the masquerade of her costume surfaces precisely as a costume, a game, a controlled construction of what is popularly imagined/fantasized to represent feminine sexuality.

The point of rupture between the erotic and phallic sexuality is perhaps best thought out in relation to the publication of Madonna's nude photographs. For as Barthes has remarked, the eroticism played out by the strip-tease is the costume (the feather boa, the gloves slowly removed finger by finger), a development of particularized narrative codes of Enigma; the naked stripper exemplifies the alienation of sexuality simply because she transgresses this code by revealing her body. In considering how Madonna's naked images were anticipated to function in the context of the pornographic magazine, we can predict that they were doomed to 'fail' as pornographic images. Madonna's eroticism is predicated on the narrative of the striptease, a continual promise of unveiling that is continually withheld. By removing the lace *bustier* and stockings, bracelets, hair ribbons, objects upon which the fetishization of Madonna, the stripper, are pinned, the structural function of these fetish objects is destroyed, for they no longer cloak her 'lack.' Revealing the naked body and genitals of Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone, is, well, *not* pornographic. The code of pornography is to inspect (with supreme audacity) the Enigma behind the stripper's triangular g-string, not to stage nudity as a historical aestheticization of the female body (which also veils the 'lack' by fetishizing the woman's entire body). Pornography demands a voyeuristic relation wherein the sexualized woman is 'captured' masturbating and manipulating standardized bodily parts that are emphasized (within a phallic economy) to be zones of pleasure.

In Madonna's "No Comment" response to the publication of her nude photographs, there seemed to be an implicit knowledge that nothing she could say in defense or in support of these images would be as effectual or powerful as the existence of these images alone. Her refusal to speak of the images' existence was a refusal to be 'captured' and inspected by the pornographic discourse; her "No Comment" functioned effectively to reclaim these images for the codified discourse of the striptease - allowing her to re-pose (gracefully) as the Enigma. This denial of inspection, in turn, provide erotic and ambiguous gaps that can accommodate the insertion of each member's fantasy. Even Madonna seemed conscious of this circuitous path of desire and chose not to submit to inspection. She simultaneously circumvented any implication of vulnerability or exploitation by retreating behind the surface of her own public image that is/was obviously able to sustain the public's desire and their continual consumption of her quite adequately. Perhaps, Madonna best described herself when she said in an interview, "I've always wanted to become 'Madonna' [Superstar]" - a comment that both distanced her from her own public image and alluded to it as a pneumatic, (over)inflated signifier that was just waiting to be blown...

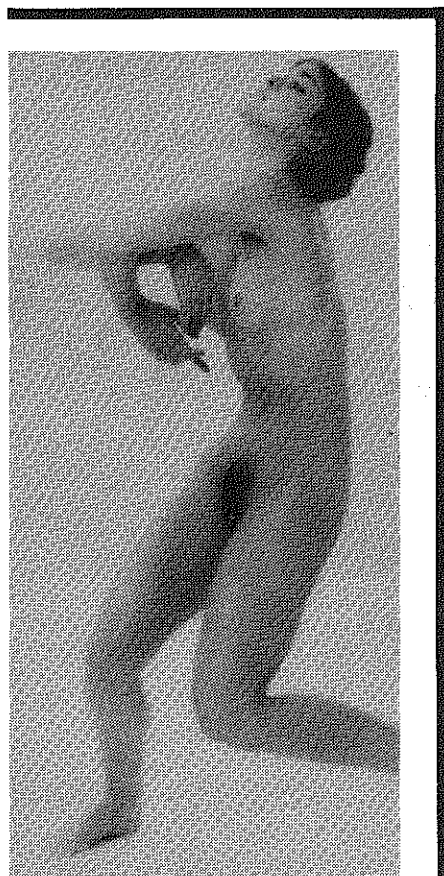
The first two quoted passages are from Amber Hollibaugh's, "Desire For The Future" in *Pleasure and Danger*, Carole Vance, ed. (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

The third quote is from Roland Barthes, "Striptease," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Travers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972). See also his "Sade II," in *Sade / Fourier / Loyola* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976).

**Monika Gagnon** is a Toronto writer and critic and member of the *border/lines* and *Public Access* collectives.



Striptease - at least Parisian striptease - is based on a contradiction: Woman is desexualized at the very moment when she is stripped naked. We may therefore say that we are dealing in a sense with a spectacle based on fear, or rather on the pretence of fear, as if eroticism here went no further than a sort of delicious terror, whose ritual signs have only to be announced to evoke at once the idea of sex and its conjuration.



million dollar condominium in Manhattan; and supports popular charitable causes like Support for Africa and Greenpeace. The Madonna phenomena is, in fact, an extremely successful public relations and business venture taken on by Madonna and her record company executives.

Madonna's image has, to a small extent, forged a public space for the exhibition of women's desire in a way that a Mick Jagger or a Prince cannot quite do for women. But do we want her? For we must also contend with the substance and manifestations of her pleasure through the conventions of feminine representation: as a narcissistic object of desire and as a sex symbol.

# Male-ing:

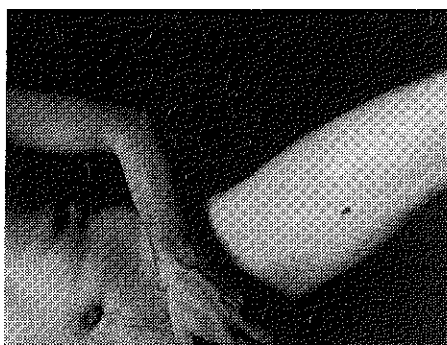
## A Love Letter



**1** To be real men we must be feminine.

**2** To think the psyche or the social in terms of 'a Lacanianism', 'a Freudianism', 'a Marxism', or 'a Feminism', is only to re-register the birth of nomination, the Naming of the Father, the re-citing/siting/sighting of phallic desire: the desire to be in the place of the Other (appropriation) and thus to already be appropriated by the 'phallus' - or 'the State'. Neither can we simply ignore 'the phallus' - ignorance of the phallus and its function within the social is already ideological ignorance. If the social relations of difference are to be re-w/rited one must find ways to go around 'it'.

**3** To be a father is always already to be a *frustrated father* because he can never really be 'the' father. Within this division of the social and the social/sexual dispensing of libidinal energy, he is as subject to this position to the 'law of the father' to phallic law, as are the other members. That is, he is always already subject to this division which holds him in contradiction. He can only ever be a father by 'not' being 'it'.

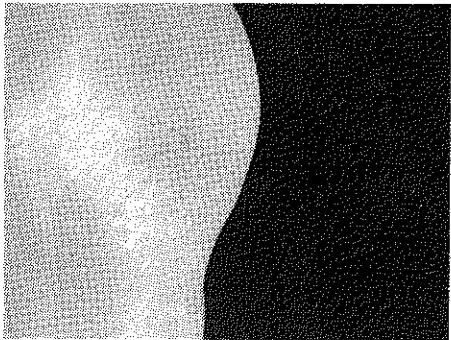


**4** I write in the hope that I might escape castration; not from the father, but by not being fathered at all. The only way to escape the tyranny of the father is to be a bastard. The bastard can perhaps be considered after all, one of the more politically affirmative positions. Is not the fear of the bastard position a fear which supports the law of property - the law of the subject who must be subjected to the Law - the law of the father - the law of the proper name? For surely to be without a proper name is to exist in a situation in which nothing can be passed down - no rites of authorship - a radically other position - perhaps the only position, at least in our society, in which the male can be radically other. Without the heritage of law one can hope that a different ordering of the cultural might be made possible - might some day even be produced

**5** I read for my part by way of Lacan a certain pleasure, a certain beyond of the phallus or phallic pleasure in this w/riting. An excess of meaning which cannot for its part be registered but as something beyond (yet contained within) the very dimensions of language. Both the limitations and the overturning of the limitations of language. The possibility that life could be (is) other/wise. For here the *within of the body* (mine/language's) becomes (is) the site of dance. One exists as a plurality. One dances not simply with but within the body. The body cites itself.

**6** The body is the enfolding and enveloping of Man and Woman in/as one body made plural. In this sense man and woman as categories cannot exist as separate entities but must inevitably be on the same side -- existing in the same body. The body dances from the inside out!

**7** This is mere childish w/riting. But are we not as Nietzsche or Freud would have it always somewhat of a child; polymorphously perverse - something somewhat against the social - anaclitic, sexually non-descript in his/her perversity. For how else can s:he propogate forward and upward but by starting at the polysexual beginnings of life as we know it but through language. Such a position (which is not so much a position as the possibility for the absence of any position) wants to re-w/rite the body - to return it to an earlier site; a non-site. To meet where Freud would have us meet, at the juncture of the Pleasure Principle with the Reality Principle - the phallic signifier's place of overlapping with the signified; a place which marks itself against the discourses of the Other; of Woman in language.



**8** To overturn the structures of language calls for a return to the juncture of language and the body; of language inscribed in/on the body. That is to the place of the 'making-out' of the making of language in order to create a lapse in language in which Woman can re-inscribe herself 'into' language. For Nietzsche the way it might be implied by the 'feminization' of language through the body via the terms life and wisdom. Such signs are conventionally seen as 'other' but by metonymy they become Woman re-inscribed in the body of language in the body. Re-inscribed however as the double to the other dancer - not in relation to but as a promised distance from - the Man signed as self and courage. Life:Self - Wisdom:Courage - Woman:Man, not opposites but positions of distance - the dance within the body would be nothing without distance - promised (premiered) on a return.

**9** We come together in the body not to reconcile our differences but to recognize our distance; our need to be - to get there - in the body.

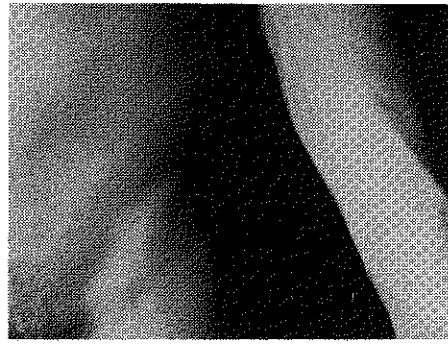
**10** If we cannot have recourse to an Edenic state of language in which God as Nature speaks from tablets (the tablets having been overturned) then what can we have? Perhaps a very carefully constructed string - not Freud's grandson's, of the fort:da game, but Ariadne's.

**11** Ariadne's string is a string of great value (more use that exchange even if made of gold in this exchange and excess of language - yet another Poly-tick - because it comes from Woman's jouissance and there is more than simple chauvinism in this call for a "Woman's Touch"!

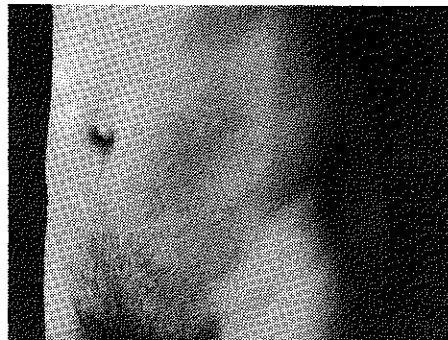
**12** A prophetic foreshadowing of Woman in language comes from Freud though he was perhaps unaware of its existence. A foreshadowing cited in this problematic historical statement:

"It seems that women have made few contributions to the discoveries and inventions in the history of civilization; there is however one technique which they may have invented - that of plaiting and weaving. If that is so we might be tempted to guess the unconscious motive for this achievement."

The unconscious motive - might this not be within language, the setting up of a structure, or the possibility of a structure (not unlike a map of a labyrinth which the string between Ariadne and Theseus makes out - but dependant on Ariadne's holding of the end (the tail of language)) which enables Woman to weave herself in - at some point determined by her. A double re-inscription between Man and Woman in language.



**13** I have a desire. I announce the possibility of a noun for speakers who perform this language. No fear of androgyne in its negative aspects nor of hermaphroditism in its biological precepts. In this language Man and Woman are not made to distance their promise but dance the promised distance as 'WO : MAN'. They become not one but doubled. I long to dance this dance of a body doubled - this dance of bodies in the body - to make this dance a dance within my body - a dance of love.



**T**ext by Geoff Miles

**P**hotos: Carol Sorensen

This piece is, I suppose, initially about the difference between real repression and what Marcuse once called Repressive Tolerance, but it is ultimately about emancipatory practices and the problems of doing anything anywhere through the media which might be seen, let alone to be creatively liberating. border/lines has spent many pages discussing the freedom of the airwaves but rather less on the freedom or unfreedom of the press. I do not want to do that here in quite those terms, but rather to ask on what grounds and to what purpose is an alternative, emancipatory press possible.

Journals discussed:

*Hirmondo*, *Bésczelö* and *Máshonnan Bésczelö* all published illegally in Budapest, but available in North America from M.F.S.B.K., P.O. Box 140872, Chicago, IL 60614-0872, U.S.A.

*Eastern European Reporter* P.O. Box 222, London WC2H 9RP, England. Quarterly at U.S. \$32.00 per annum.

*Index on Censorship*, 36c Highbury Place, London N5 1QP, England. 10 issues a year for U.S. \$20.00.

*This Magazine*, 70 The Esplanade, 3rd floor, Toronto M5E 1R2. Six issues for \$12.50.

Books referred to:

John Downing, *Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication*. London: South End Press, 1984.

Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*. New York: Pantheon, 1985.

Charles Landry, David Morley, Russell Southwood, Patrick Wright, *What a Way to Run a Railroad*. London: Comedia, 1985.

At the outset the question has to be narrowed down further. I am not asking what kind of newspapers should be available for mass consumption, nor what is avant-garde (cultural trendiness that sees itself one step ahead of the *Globe and Mail*, or *Time*) but what intellectual, creative, practical basis is there to writing and publishing which consciously sees its task as being the basis for radical alternatives to the legitimising wholeness of the Other discourse. In other words a press for the intelligentsia, in the fullest Eastern European terms, all those whose Higher Education has led them to expect (and sometimes receive) certain occupations in the society.

I start with Central Europe because in a sense the problem is most dramatically there, though I will talk mainly about Hungary because I am more familiar with its specifics. First, all Central European countries are dominated by intellectuals who operate a not-so-sophisticated political and cultural bureaucracy. They run the publishing houses, radio and TV stations, the film studios, the education ministries, planning offices, museums, parks and recreation, the newspapers, and so on. They are, in general, a well-read, well-educated, and multi-lingual group of people. They can also draw on specialists who belong to the Academies of Sciences and to the Universities. They publish many journals, attend conferences (inside and outside their countries) and have all the educational advantages that bureaucracies have in the Western world. Some have more flexible terms of reference (Hungary would rank high here) and some inflexible (Czechoslovakia is the most rigid). Because the countries are rather small, many of them also personally know the opposition intellectuals, mainly because of common university experiences, and some of them read what the dissidents write out of genuine interest.

What the government intellectuals do, however, apart from their everyday policy and administrative activities, is to collectively define what can and cannot be written about them or anyone else they chose to define, sometimes, but not necessarily, aided by a government censor. Thus it is taboo to write anything critical about any other Eastern European country, or to be over-critical of government policies. In Czechoslovakia the penalty for infringement is either to be banned from writing for life, to be imprisoned, to lose a job, or to be deported to a remote area. In Hungary the punishment is loss of job or, more frequently, a high fine. Of course, censorship does not apply only to the more overtly political writing, but also to the more literary. Thus creative writing is made political. No writer in Central Europe can begin to write without being conscious in some way of the political consequences of his actions. Thus if a writer has been defined as a political outcast, he or she must maintain the momentum, they must continue to write and, if possible, publish more of the same or else remain silent. Similarly, a writer who is accorded recognition by the state publishing houses may receive a wide licence to write and publish which will be continued until such a time as he or she chooses to break with the guideline, or whenever the guidelines change. Both situations are political, though being in the opposition does not really allow for a-political writing, while much of that published by the state is necessarily a-political.

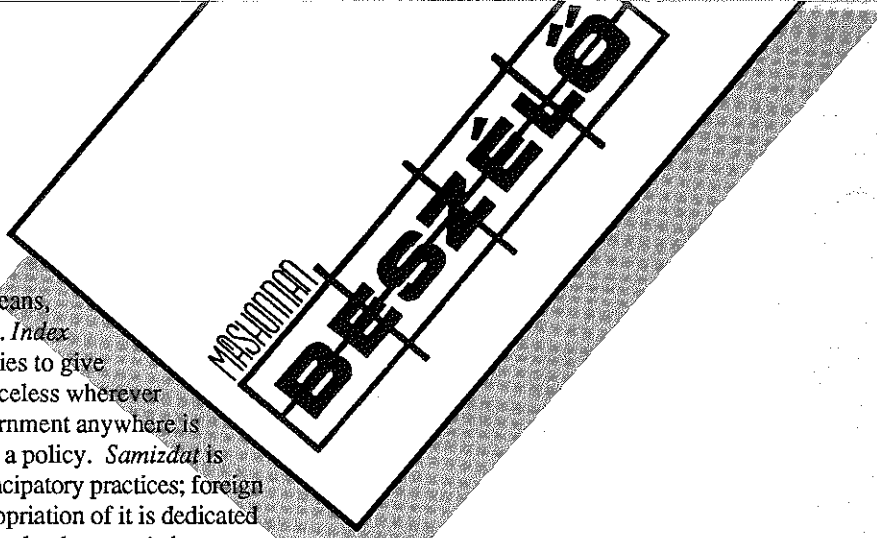
In Czechoslovakia and Poland the situation is much more clear-cut than in Hungary. The fact that there are a large number of people who have been defined as being members of the opposition means that there is a wider range of kinds of writers in the *samizdat* press, a wider range of political positions, and also (particularly in Poland) a wider range of discussion alternative forms of media. In Hungary, the number of writers who have been declared oppositional is relatively small: I was given a figure of around 20 (the Czech figure is over 300). But this figure is misleading, because there are a large number of writers who write in official journals or in foreign publications yet who hold official teaching and research posts, but whose ideas are substantially the same as those who publish only in *samizdat*. The crucial issue therefore rests on what *samizdat* says and what its political presence means. Because the Hungarian situation is rather more subtle than the others, I think it has a more direct relevance to our practices here.

There are two established journals, *Hirmondo* (Messenger) and *Bésczelö* (a title with a double meaning - "speaker" and "visiting a person in prison") which mainly covers politics, sociology, cultural comment, and literature. The material in these journals is exclusively about Hungary or by Hungarians. A new journal, *Máshonnan Bésczelö* (*Bésczelö* from elsewhere) produces world literature, which focuses largely on translations of fiction, essays, journalism, and the social sciences from Eastern and Central Europe. Each issue is thematic (nationalism, Poland, the Soviet Union, the economies of the different Soviet-style societies, etc.). All of these are published by the independant publishing houses AB. *Hirmondo* is monthly, *Bésczelö* quarterly and *Máshonnan Bésczelö* "occasionally." Their function is very specific: to make available critical writing to Hungarians which is not provided by the government presses. This is also the policy of book publishing by the three publishers AB, ABC and Free Time. Around 2000 copies of the journals and books are published, though the readership is estimated to be five times that figure. Like the published work in Czechoslovakia, the political positions of the writers is eclectic, ranging from Socialist, through Green, to Bourgeois-Anarchist. The common feature of all the writers is the obvious desire to live in a society where they can write and say what they like, but also that intellectual debate is the core of a vibrant culture. They also have a "fringe" group of publications: *Snob International*, which sees itself as an elitist avant-garde art magazine, *Artful Letters*, which is the work, almost unaided, of a single painter, and *M.O.* (Hungarian October) which focuses exclusively on the smashed revolution of October, 1956. There is also an irregular critical Art magazine called *Arteria*.

The opposition in Hungary is not strong, it is not united except around publishing and it is certainly not Marxist (in my visits to Hungary I have not met a single opposition-member who would call himself a Marxist). As Gabor Demsky, AB's publisher, said in an interview, "We have to acknowledge that there is generally a national consensus about the present regime. Our duty is to tell the truth about our history, about the real situation here... We have to write and publish the truth about current political taboos, about 1956, and also about the historical experiences of other nations in Eastern Europe...."

The task of the *samizdat* is therefore almost entirely educational, with





a general belief that ultimately there will be an effect on people's minds and therefore on social action. This educational sense is backed by "flying universities" which move from house to house. And all of this in context where most people inside and outside see the Hungarian economic reforms as being the most innovative and "liberal" in Eastern Europe.

But the *samizdat* is not only writing for the countries of central Europe. One Hungarian publisher boasted how important Radio Free Europe was to the success of *samizdat*. And it is also known that that the CIA as a matter of routine provides regular service to the US government of translations of all *samizdat* publications (as presumably does the KGB to the Soviet bureaucrats, though in neither case is this material made available to the public). *Samizdat* material is made available in English by various interest groups. Merlin Press periodically issues a *Samizdat Register* edited by Roy Medvedev on Soviet writing, and the University of Michigan issues the very large annual *Cross-Currents* on Central European (but mainly Czech) writing. From London comes the new journal, *East European Reporter*, which "supports research and creative work by Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians and Poles with the general aim of promoting a wide range of cultural and educational activities in these countries and elsewhere." Journals like *Index on Censorship* have been providing a service like this for the whole world for some time, and in some respects should be put in the same context as the *New Internationalist* which was discussed in *borderlines* 3. The voices of *samizdat* therefore are heard and used everywhere. The real question is how these national and international relations interact.

It is clear that what the CIA appropriates *samizdat* for is quite different from what the *East European Reporter* does. *The Reporter* is written

almost entirely by Central Europeans, CIA policy is not. *Index on Censorship* tries to give a voice to the voiceless wherever they are; no government anywhere is dedicated to such a policy. *Samizdat* is dedicated to emancipatory practices; foreign government appropriation of it is dedicated to closure. Curiously also, *samizdat* represents for Westerners precisely those values which seem to be in danger of being lost in the West because of the West's own journalistic and educational policies, which is presumably why Central Europeans are eagerly snapped up in academia, the media and the arts. *Samizdat* itself, however, is concerned precisely with the opposite: an internal critique of a social system.

But these observations bring us to the question of whether the experiences of *samizdat* are of any relevance to publishing in Canada, without the term itself being appropriated loosely for an "alternative" press, as Studs Terkel does in a review of Abe Peck's recent trendy study *Uncovering the Sixties*. *Samizdat* is illegal publishing, and there are no clear senses in which publishing faces that sense of illegality here. Indeed, virtually all non-establishment publishing in Canada which is not clearly pomographic receives some subsidy from the Canada Council, the SSHRC or one of the provincial cultural bodies. But most "alternative" publishing in Canada does not do more than touch the fringe of the culture nor in any way can be considered essential reading for people who see themselves as political intellectuals. This not because Canada is intrinsically more complex than

Hungary, except in a geographical sense, but because the journals are appealing to culturally and politically fragmented audiences. Hungary's political symmetry is one of its attractive features: there is official culture and there is opposition culture. In Canada there is official culture and there is officially sponsored alternative culture, with plenty of government and non-government paper-work going into deciding what should be the proportion of government money paid to the subsidy of either. (Expo, for example, is definitely official culture; the *Canadian Forum*, to take an example at random is perhaps alternative). In Hungary when the government decided to have an International Cultural Forum, the opposition responded with an Unofficial Symposium. In Canada everyone would want to have a little part of the government action.

Thus if *samizdat* were to have any meaning here it would have to satisfy something like the following requirements: it should represent alternative culture, alternative politics, alternative media, an alternative sense of the place of the intellectual in the society, an alternative economy (Hungarian *samizdat* necessarily is part of an economy that exists on the fringes of the state). There is no reason why it should not take money from the state, when it can get it, but it should see itself as establishing a completely autonomous process of production, whether it called itself socialist, cooperative or syndicalist. It should not be dogmatic, otherwise it will not be taken seriously by anybody, but on the other hand it should not see itself as competing with the established media (an alternative *MacLeans* would end up being something like the Paris *L'Express*). Within Canada the only journals that have come close to doing this are *La Vie en Rose* and *Les Temps Fou* in Québec and perhaps *This Magazine* and *The Body Politic* in Toronto. *This Magazine* represents something of the problem that the issue raises, for its content, and perhaps in its objectives it comes closest to looking like a Canadian *samizdat* (the other three discussed above are special cases in that they are specific sexual interventions in cultural publishing). *This Magazine*, emerging out of *This Magazine is About Schools*, wanted to fill the gap in Canadian journalism that I have been discussing: to be a regular (weekly or fortnightly) journal of the left which would do in Canada what, for lack of clear international comparisons, say *The Nation* or *The Guardian* try to do in the USA or

*The New Statesman* in Britain, though in none of these cases can one say that they represent effective alternatives. *This Magazine* was to be professional, self-sufficient, and linked to movement. It is, in a sense all of this, and clearly provides the best journalistic writing on the left. But its circulation at present is 5500 and it appears six times a year. The problem, and it is a problem with which I want to conclude, is under what circumstances can an alternative press and alternative media flourish?

The problem is that flourishing in the sense I have been writing implies, being an interconnected whole. The alternatives exist in their fragmentation, but they do not have the sense of common purpose and mutually-supportive organization that I have found in Hungary. And it is only with such interconnectedness that we can, in the long run, establish the élan and the mutually-viable economies to be politically and educationally effective. Both *Radical Media* and *What a Way To Run a Railroad* provide suggestive indications of how that might be done. Ultimately for us, that implies a Federation of Alternative publishers in Canada (including magazines, presses, radio, record companies, video) which would push the sterile CPPA to one side and defy the capitalist/bureaucratic stranglehold on our cultural policies. The present situation allows the fragmentation to be masterminded by the grant-giving agencies, and by the hand-to-mouth necessities of being small. An intermedia federation of the left with its own printing-presses, credit union, marketing strategy, educational network, etc., would provide just an organization in which *samizdat* would become a reality. If, for example, *Fuse*, *Body Politic*, *This Magazine*, *Fireweed*, *Pulp Press*, *Parachute*, D.E.C., Bread and Roses Credit Union, the Marxist Institute really organised themselves...*borderlines* would certainly be interested.

But that is a theme for another piece.

Ioan Davies



A Geography of

The Geography of Terror I:  
the Desaparecidos

We know the difference between terrorists and freedom fighters and as we look around the world we have no trouble telling one from the other.

Secretary of State  
Schultz, 1984<sup>1</sup>

**Within** the global escalation of post-industrial capitalism, a language of images is articulated in which the "terrorist" emerges from a multitude of fragments. Continually reconstituted through propaganda, films, literature and so forth, the "terrorist" is further made to turn and feed upon itself in an allusive technique which layers referent upon referent: the gun, the bomb, the *kuffiya*, the list of demands.

The usefulness of the category "terrorism" as a hegemonic device seems clear; at the crudest level, it provides an unintelligible and alien enemy from which the State can appear to protect its subjects. At the same time, "terrorism" permits certain states to escalate their own terrorism by referring to an arena of struggle which increasingly is displaced. The polemic of "terrorism", and particularly its recent innovations, also refers to and sustains a worldwide shift in capitalist economic and political strategies which necessitates the disappearance of whole populations. The systematic ethnocide lately carried out in East Timor,

Guatemala, Sri Lanka, Eritrea, Palestine and elsewhere is one of several "counter-insurgency" techniques practiced against economically superfluous and troublesome peasants and tribespeople; massacres occurring in various parts of the globe should be read not as a miscellany of local tragedies but rather as symptomatic of late capitalism's escalation and transformation of hegemonic practices.

A new ideological tactic which accompanies this strategic mutation can be marked in recent pronouncements of the Reagan administration and its European allies: terrorism is war. Whereas formerly terrorist acts were downplayed and officially interpreted as a kind of banditry and/or criminal activity, today armed action is presented as the "greatest threat facing Western civilization". Official statements centre on two points: the first defines terrorism as a form of warfare and in so doing positions armed struggle in

a traditional military schema of opposing armies, battles and the like. The second refers to "state-sponsored terrorism" and suggests that armed actions emanate from hostile foreign governments, either because these governments order specific attacks or because they finance "terrorist" organizations.

Reagan's definition of a bombing or hijacking as an "act of war" implies a correspondence between such acts and the attack on Pearl Harbour, the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and so forth; it demands retaliation, and retaliation of a specific sort. Reagan also appealed to international conventions of warfare: "Under international law, any state which is the victim of acts of war has the right to defend itself". The Reagan administration is explicit about the identity of the "terrorists" currently threatening Western civilization, i.e., American interests; they are members of Third World liberation movements, "communists" and/or Muslims, allegedly directed by Iran, Libya, North Korea, Cuba and

Nicaragua. (Obviously, Reagan's "terrorism" does not include European neo-fascist terror, the state terror of Israel, South Africa, El Salvador and elsewhere, the CIA, contra "freedom fighters", etc.).

It may be that Reagan equates terrorism and the act of war in an effort to indiminate the "outlaw" states which he suggests are solely behind anti-American activity. Rather than being directed solely at relatively small liberation movements, then, his recent remarks could be read as an ideological preparation for an attack on any one of those countries. While an attack on, say, Tripoli would certainly provoke criticism,<sup>2</sup> the experience of Grenada indicates that flimsy prior justification for such attacks neutralizes much opposition. According to *Time* and *Newsweek*, many Americans are longing to see the U.S. slap Khomeini's or Qaddafi's wrists: the President has not been "tough enough".

By Deborah Root

# "Terrorism"



Yet the escalation of both direct and indirect intervention after the American successes in Chile and Grenada could indicate more than simple-minded belligerency towards a few "looney tune" states and their alleged lackeys; it also suggests a perception of loss of control in the Third World and a fear that armed struggle is effective, a genuine threat to its interests. At the same time, Reagan's apparent willingness to use force underlines the equivalence of tactics being deployed around the world, which includes the increased use of military strength here (recall the 1985 bombing of "terrorists" in Philadelphia for failing to heed an eviction notice).

Post-industrial capitalism is moving quickly: if in the West it seeks to displace traditional political terrain, in the Third World it endeavours to bring about the total disappearance of politics and of populations which reject "modernization" and which potentially could be politicized, i.e., traditional peasants and tribespeople. The effect of capitalism's expansion, carried out by new tactics or repression, is no longer a subdued population providing cheap labour; it is, rather, no population at all. The techniques used to depopulate vast areas, euphemistically termed "counter-insurgency" operations or "fighting communism", are strikingly similar across the globe and range from outright massacre to forced resettlement; other repressive techniques include economic sabotage and destabilization, instigation of inter-ethnic hostility and collective punishment.<sup>3</sup>

Those not physically killed off disappear in a different sense: they are subjected to capitalism through integration into a Western mode of consumption. Pre-capitalist alliances are broken down as the dissemination of Western culture creates new affiliations based on consumption of our commodities and related "lifestyles". The dumping of Western goods in the Third World, along with continuing missionary activity,<sup>4</sup> constitutes late capitalism's covert war; in the latter's strategic escalation, the circle of disappearance begins with massacre and ends with commodity fetishism.

Capitalism seeks the appearance of seamlessness, of closure, but its authority is not yet absolute. Its moves are interrupted by "terrorism", that is to say, by armed struggle, as well as by the presence of margins, both here and in the Third World, which are difficult to

penetrate. The "terrorist" acts of the Third World, defined by state apparatuses as anything from commando attacks on airports to rock-throwing by children,<sup>5</sup> constitute a refusal of imperial hegemony which (momentarily) underlines gaps in the expansionist machine. While this refusal is in many instances contradictory in that the notion of armed militancy itself tends to reproduce repressive apparatuses (cadres, military discipline, trials and executions, etc.), the danger it poses to capitalism lies in its ability to represent the points of rupture which normally are concealed.

### The Geography of Terror II: Algiers/Beirut

The hijacked plane crisscrossed the Mediterranean four times: Beirut to Algiers, Algiers to Beirut and back again, Empire's lake recreated by TWA Flight 847. These two cities represent the duality of "terror" in Europe's imagination, yet each appears to exemplify a different politics, or, if you will, a different "terror" undertaken by seemingly different Arabs. In the 1950s and 60s, Algerian terrorism gave rise in France to a questioning of the colonial relationship which ultimately led to the latter's withdrawal from the colony; "Arab terror" exposed French state terror in the colony and neo-fascism at home. While the Algerian war was debated in Paris primarily in terms of its effects on France itself, it was nevertheless the bombs of the FLN which demonstrated the costs of maintaining direct political and military involvement in the colony.

In the 1980s, terrorism provokes a reverse effect: the bombs directed against the American and Israeli presence in Lebanon conceal state terror and reinforce imperial involvement in the Middle East. Unlike the bombs of Algiers, those of Beirut have been decontextualized to the point where they seem to exist only as the incomprehensible acts of insane religious fanatics. Although Israel and the United States no longer maintain troops in Beirut, they nevertheless affirm that the level of violence and apparent anarchy in this city poses a strategic danger which necessitates their interference in its affairs. The style of involvement is neo-colonialist: profoundly intrusive yet for the time being covert, with insinuations of the possibility of direct military action if the situation gets too far out of control (underlined by the examples of Tunis, Sirte, Sidon...).

The terror which marked the battle of Algiers -- bombs on the one side, torture and rape on the other -- has been rehabilitated and made intelligible, the ululating cries of *qasbah*'s women becoming part of a heroic cinematographic legend which ultimately refers to the convulsions of the Fourth Republic, to De Gaulle and to Sartre rather than to the anti-colonialist aspirations of the Algerians themselves. The bombs which were set off in *piéd-noir* cafés in the 50s and 60s seem today to have more to do with, say, the cannon surrounding Dien Bien Phu than with the struggles currently being waged by Palestinians and Lebanese Shi'ites: in the polemic of "terrorism", the Algerian bombs have become a postscript to French Colonial history or, at most, a moment in an old film.

Algeria, invaded in 1830 ostensibly to put an end to the hijacking of ships in the Mediterranean, has achieved respectability in the eyes of the West through its ability to negotiate with -- and appear to subdue -- the "bad" Arabs who bomb and hijack. After a lengthy and bitter struggle against the French, the "Algerian revolution" was bureaucratized and put into the service of the Empire (although it's probably not useful to say that this revolution was co-opted by reactionaries and transformed into a state bureaucracy; the Algerian revolution was always both, affirmations of freedom and the FLN's officers imposing hierarchy on the *fedayeen*). While at one time Algeria represented the triumph of the political act, that is to say, the affirmative violence of a dying colony in which the terrorist bomb exists in a trajectory of cause and effect, today it displaces anti-colonialist politics through its disciplining of armed struggle and reproduction of a particular style of socialism, characteristically Third World yet wholly Western, integrated into the world economy. The "terrorists" rehabilitated themselves.

Beirut occupies different space; in a geography of destruction, this city exemplifies the way in which political causality now seems to turn in on and consume itself. Interference by external forces has fractured and rendered unreadable political acts occurring in this city: it goes on and on, event overtakes event, but the act itself becomes increasingly less tied to that which ostensibly precedes and follows it. There is no longer an intelligible trajectory of the political, nor is there an outcome; winner/loser/victory/defeat have

collapsed. A cycle of death is produced by floating microacts perpetrated by no one and everyone: CIA, Mossad, Phalange, PLO, Amal, Hizb'ullah -- the list continues, nothing changes. It is in this sense that nothing really happens on the ground, on political terrain, although all appears to.

The continuing destruction of Beirut reinforces the imperial claim to the Third World, which has been based on a notion that the latter creates dangerous situations and is incapable of governing itself. We come to believe in the capitalist state as a benign, protective agency which subdues, rather than creates, dangerous situations: capitalism becomes progress, taming the destructive cruelties of primitives and religious fanatics. This city has become an *auto-da-fé* through which faith in "our way of life" is reaffirmed and its ritualized death made the redemption of imperial power; Beirut is the abyss, it is what the absence of the capitalist state would look like. In this sense the destruction of Beirut is absolutely necessary for the reproduction of post-industrial capitalism and for "the West's" construction of itself as civilization through its barbaric inversion in Lebanon. Decoding the events in Beirut as pure barbarism in effect conceals the global reinscription of empire; there is no "us" who is able to watch "them" destroy themselves -- Beirut is everywhere, inside us all.

### The Geography of Terror III: Bombshelters

*Terrorist war is a form of total war, which sees the whole of society as the enemy and all the members of society as appropriate objects for violence. It is absolute war because its goal is the absolute destruction of the old society.*

Jeanne Kirkpatrick,  
October 1984<sup>6</sup>

As a polemical device, "terrorism" no longer refers to a political practice or mode of resistance. Rather, this category as construed within late capitalism both refracts and deploys the latter's hegemonic strategies by promoting an *appearance* of politics, that is to say, of an arena of political action existing on the ground where a liberal, consensual State defends "innocent people" from "extremists".<sup>7</sup> "Terrorism's" reinscription of politics conceals the increasing displacement of traditional political terrain, a displacement marked both by

--AND FOUND THEMSELVES AT ARCH AND WELLMAN, SITE OF GOTHAM'S EGYPTIAN EMBASSY, WHERE POLICE COMMISSIONER GORDON EXPLAINED:

THERE'S A SYRIAN TERRORIST HOLDING SIX HOSTAGES UP THERE.

CALLS HIMSELF DARKWOLF --AND HE DEMANDS THE RELEASE OF SYRIAN PRISONERS FROM EGYPTIAN PRISONS.



EGYPT FLATLY REFUSES -- DUMPING IT IN OUR LAP.

intensified configurations of social control and by an escalation of various forms of state terror. The global "political crises" continually produced by "terrorism" in effect demand an extension of state terror.

Armed struggle (the ostensible referent of "terrorism") not only is excluded from acceptable political discourse as an inherently "illegal" form of political practice, but the "terrorist" act has come to be defined as an act of war equivalent to an attack launched by a hostile foreign power. In effect, this appropriation reinforces the semblance of traditional zones of political struggle and obliges resistance groups to appear to fight on increasingly moribund terrain. "Terrorism" is war/war is terrorism: both are capitalism. Capitalism deploys terrorism against "terrorists"; armed militants deploy "terrorism" against themselves if they are enticed

into regarding their struggle in terms of seizing - or reproducing -- the state apparatus rather than exploding it.

The "political event" -- election, invasion, massacre -- can no longer be relegated to an "out there" but is embedded deep inside the subjects of Capital. Politics collapses into spectacle, and this spectacle is driven into the subject's mind to the point where an equivalence is achieved between spectator and spectacle. More than an identification with, or internalization of Capital, or power/fascism/empire, the result of this process is a transmutation of external/internal space. As atomized subjects of post-industrial capitalism, we live increasingly inside our own heads rather than "in society"; we produce our own micro-fascisms and simulacra of the outside. *L'état c'est moi*: the "political" is resurrected as an internal colony in which the power of capitalism is always absolutist.

In the film *The Little Drummer Girl*, the "outside" collapses into the individual, and it is through the individual -- and through individuated desire -- that Middle-Eastern "terrorism" is explained and played out. For the Englishwoman, Charlie, "terrorism" is adventure and romance, yet it is "counter-terrorism" which permits her to transform her vicarious dream into "real" romance, "real" adventure. The romance is real; for Charlie, the question of political commitment becomes a choice between two men, or rather two political styles given bodily form by two males, the Arab and the Israeli. For the film's Israelis, and to a lesser extent for the Palestinian characters, political terrain exists as an interiorized stage where the drama is personal; the Middle East is transformed into individuals wrestling with moral doubt as they attempt to do the right thing in a crazy, mixed-up world.

Atrocities, at least on the Israeli side, become understandable, a case of human error: "we all make mistakes" seems to be the explanation for Deir Yassin, "but we want to be good people". With the Israeli "counter-terrorists" appearing as a group of young men and women striving for the same idealistic goals as Charlie, she is able to overcome her initial reservations about their methods, which appear identical to those of the "terrorists", because of the purity of their motives and the basic goodness of their personalities. This film was considered remarkably fair in its

portrayal of Palestinians as dedicated idealists as well, but idealists of a sort motivated by a harsh discipline which at times refers explicitly to German fascism (the German terrorist working with the Palestinians had ways of making Charlie talk: she slapped her around). After an Israeli agent explicates the "Palestinian problem" to her, Charlie is able to persuade herself - and us - that politics essentially occurs in shades of grey: like all good liberals, she allies herself with the side that appears most moral, that is to say, most traditional.

The ostensible point of *The Little Drummer Girl* was to depict how Charlie, or a woman like Charlie, that is to say, a "modern woman", became confused as she learned to play two opposing roles, to become two women. At once Zionist spy and Palestinian revolutionary, Charlie ultimately was won by the greater romance of Zionism, embodied in a liquid-eyed Israeli agent. A greater romance because so obviously moral as well, a morality made even more powerful by its capacity for self-doubt and regret at what it has been "forced" to do: again, "we make mistakes, but we're doing the best we can". The Israeli body is good, honest stock, familiar, not foreign.

In this film, the distinction between "terrorist" and "freedom-fighter" is elucidated through reference to sexuality and to personal style, marked by the attractiveness of the bodies representing the two categories. The politics of the characters is represented by their erotic potential; the Palestinian "terrorist" (who bombs children) possesses a "bad" sexuality which Charlie rejects after sleeping with him on the orders of her Israeli lover. The Israeli, on the other hand, initially exuded a "bad", somewhat oily seductiveness when he posed as an Arab but soon came to embody the "good" sexuality of the familiar, the known. Charlie, the middle-class heroine who expresses the values of Western liberalism, is the conduit of both sexualities and her choice of the Israeli renders him -- and his politics -- intelligible and negates his self-admitted political excesses: he becomes not really Other, not really terrorist, not Arab.

Sex/style/"terrorism": in the 1960s Che Guevara expressed the eroticism of the outlaw, and his image was reproduced in the millions of posters found on walls across North America and Europe. This "Che" of T-shirts and interior decoration was in the vanguard of post-industrial capitalism's appropriation and

commodification of "the revolution", of armed struggle, soon to become "terrorism". Again, Capital transforms into its own image that which it has constructed against itself; again, the political is interiorized.

Nora Astorga is transformed in the Western press from a Sandinista guerilla into a fearsome Circe, a man-eating woman who ensnares men with her sexuality in order to kill: she elicits a frisson of forbidden delight, a masochist's dream of the Dragon Lady whose attraction lies in her ruthlessness. Carlos and Qaddafi: here, capitalist ideology plays a double game in which "terror" also evokes the charm of revolutionary will and olive drab, again, the allure of the merciless, the Nazi in his greatcoat. One reads in the *Toronto Star* of a sixteen-year-old suicide bomber in Lebanon, a girl "dressed in a camouflage uniform, long black hair streaming from under a red beret" and "terrorism" becomes high fashion, like the boutiques on Mykonos named "revolution" or "Mao". Political action is transformed into a commodity, a *kuffiya* to be purchased at a Greek island resort and worn in European capitals.

#### The Geography of Terror IV: Black Holes

**1492:** the beginning of the European conquest of eighty-five per cent of the globe, and the beginning of resistance against colonial expansion. Imperial Europe and America have always treated acts of native resistance as horrific crimes against civilization itself and as confirmation of the savagery inherent in the Other, a savagery which must be suppressed if it is not to rise up in a huge wave of blood and destroy us all. The Sepoy mutiny, Little Big Horn, Mau Mau provoke images of fear, of sabre-wielding savages who kill without pity, for the sheer enjoyment of the act, for fanatacism.

The imperial machine structures all native resistance, violent or not, around the possibility of the knife at the throat, the Kalashnikov at the head; any act which questions Western domination threatens to disrupt the hegemonic machine and ultimately to destroy civilization. Like the nineteenth century American officials who branded Indians attempting to retain their traditions as "renegades", and those accepting the civilizing mission "progressive", imperial capitalism today manipulates a similar dualism in its characterization of pro-American stooges as "moderate"

(e.g. Duarte, Sadat) while all else becomes "resistance", which in turn refers to a potentiality for "terrorism".

Imperial capitalism fears the Third World: it is the space of rupture, of unpredictability, where the codes not only are permeated by ambiguity but can break down altogether. Khomeini emerges, seemingly from nowhere. Whole countries disappear, or rather, we "lose" them, as we lost South Yemen, Ethiopia and, for a time, Grenada. Although post-industrial capitalism is attempting to export 1980s-style Western commodity fascism along with older coercive techniques and neo-imperialist economic practices (which are reasonably successful in places such as Singapore and Hong Kong), enormous black holes still exist which are nearly impossible to delineate and control, at least for the time being. The Third World, or rather its pre-capitalist culture and structures of alliance, is still in a very real sense unknown by Empire; the imperial relationship itself obscures the West's ability to perceive the Third World and leads it to employ increasingly repressive methods which in the long run may lessen the efficacy of capitalism's strategic moves to displace political terrain.

Yet traditional zones of political struggle also are becoming increasingly displaced in the Third World as local conflicts are inserted into the wider problematic of nuclear war; the former are permeated, or are presented as being permeated, by this possibility. Each small "crisis" ultimately refers to the threat of a larger "crisis", the final crisis. Local actions are structured within a schema of superpower rivalry, which provides a justification for the latter's interference in local affairs. Commodity terrorism is moving into the Third World along with tanks and missiles; as in the West, the atomization (or to use the CIA's term: "privatization") of "individuals" and the destruction of traditional social alliances hasten the closure of political space and of an arena in which action is still possible, is still relevant.

The contraction and displacement of political space in effect creates an equivalence of such actions as hijacking/commando raid, and of such roles as terrorist/president/hostage. The American air force hijacks hijackers; the distinction between the "forces of law and order" and the "terrorist" has become meaningless.

A particular event displays itself as a conflict between the "legitimate government" and the "terrorist" and as a political crisis, a drama of events, decisions and so forth, yet in actuality it occurs in a dormant area where very little happens and where movement is nearly impossible: the "terrorist"/political act fractures into thousands of empty gestures which fly about, encircle, intersect and are ultimately reconstituted, but which do nothing.

### The Geography of Terror V: Zones of Conquest

*Terrorism is defined as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.*

**F.B.I. Annual Report, 1983<sup>8</sup>**

*We do not regret our decision to attempt to sabotage the production of the Cruise missiles's guidance "brain". We only claim in all honesty that this action was never meant to be an act of terrorism. We were not trying to threaten or kill the workers or executives of Litton systems. We were attempting to destroy part of an industrial facility that produces machinery for mass murder.*

**Communiqué from Direct Action, October 1982<sup>9</sup>**

**Because** of its ability to represent external, "political" space, "terrorism" eclipses the strategic invasion and interiorization of the subject within post-industrial capitalism. "Terrorism" exists as the final Other, the dangerous fragmentation of code which appears as random violence, as the anarchy of Beirut, as the absence of State; it appears doubly dangerous because of its role as the herald of Armageddon. "Terrorism" seems to threaten public safety and the authority of the state, and in so doing it produces a fear which can only be assuaged within capitalism. Although "terrorism" is constructed on the inversion of "lawful society", and as a violent refusal of civilized values, it is precisely through a manipulation of this appearance of inversion that capitalism reproduces itself and the process by which power is made desirable.

The noise surrounding "terrorism" bears little relation to any acts which have or might occur "out there"; rather, they exist in a vacuum where they echo endlessly against each

other. In effect, "terrorism" provides a foil against which a new, post-1970s style of fascism is able to constitute itself, a fascism characterized not by an explicit attempt to foster identification with the State, but rather by a profound interiorization. The colonized subject is produced by the continuous and simultaneous fragmentation and reconstruction of internal simulacra, which reproduce themselves exponentially; it is no longer possible to separate "people", i.e., society, from their own interiorization.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Middle East Research and Information Project Report* 128:2.

<sup>2</sup> Note the responses of Italy and the Arab League to the U.S. shelling of Sirte in March 1986; other countries have expressed a certain unease with such actions.

<sup>3</sup> See Pieterse, J.N., 1985, "Israel's Role in the Third World: exporting West Bank Expertise", *Race and Class* XXVI: 3, pp. 9-30.

<sup>4</sup> The use of monotheistic religions to integrate tribal people into the state economy is widespread; the presence of Protestant missionaries in Central America, Muslim missionaries in Indonesia are two examples.

<sup>5</sup> In a *Toronto Star* article (10 February 1985, p. B1) on West Bank tensions, the author refers to stone-throwing as "terrorism".

<sup>6</sup> Kirkpatrick, J., 1984. Contribution to "Lost in the Terrorist Theatre", *Harper's* 269: 1613, pp. 43-60.

<sup>7</sup> This seems to be changing as an increasing number of governments stress the need for military strength and acts of revenge against "terrorism" rather than liberalism and restraint. For example, prominent members of both the Labour and Likud parties of Israel have called for this country to appear in the eyes of the world as an "insane" state, which would be capable of anything, including nuclear attack, if threatened. See Chomsky, N., 1984, *The Fateful Triangle: Israel, the United States, and the Palestinians*, Black Rose Books, Montreal, (Chapter 7).

<sup>8</sup> Definition quoted in *New York Times* 12/12/84.

<sup>9</sup> Reprinted in *The Ubysey* 16 November 1982.

#### Post-Script

The U.S. attack on Libya, which occurred soon after the above was written, exemplifies how "terrorism" proliferates equivalences: it no longer matters who the terrorists "really" are or which city is bombed in retaliation, or whether the bombings can "in fact" check terrorism. Many Americans were gratified at the thought of Libyans burning in their beds in a way that had little to do with terrorism *per se*. The attack (cluster bombs and all) can be read as a reminder to the American people, a kind of anti-personnel bomb distributing internal security along with vainglory and rabbit nationalism.

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## Depoliticizing Current Affairs Television: The Nightly Project of

# The Journal

By Ian Taylor



In the third issue of *borderlines*, Marc Raboy offered a powerful analysis of the ideological context and likely recommendations of the Conservative Government's Taskforce on Communications Policy.<sup>1</sup> One of these recommendations is likely to be some form of "privatisation of the CBC. Readers of this magazine are likely in the not too distant future to be bombarded by CBC journalists and other defenders of the Corporation with urgent, not to say desperate, pleas for the defense of public broadcasting -- along the lines, perhaps, of the piece Mark Starowicz, the producer of *The Journal*, published in a recent issue of *This Magazine*.<sup>2</sup> No doubt we will all feel we should rush to the defence of public broadcasting, but it may be that our commitment will be halting and rather begrudging. We may no longer recognize the CBC as a strong, serious and visible source of public political, cultural or economic debate in this country. Certainly CBC television is no longer involved in the representation, and therefore reproduction, of such political debate.

My concern here is to offer a close, critical analysis of the CBC's most recent, and most highly publicised innovation: the nightly current affairs programme, *The Journal*. I am interested in seeing this new programme (in what may seem a contradictory light) as an essentially non-political form of current affairs television; I am interested in the role of *The Journal* as a vehicle in a larger de-politicisation of the public sphere in Canada.



### The Journal as a Managerial Initiative

*The Journal*, launched in January 1982 after three years of in-house struggle and planning, was by all accounts a product of two connected concerns within the CBC. There was, in the first place, a deep anxiety over the continuing extension of American programming into all Canadian television networks. Mark Knelman observes:

"...the CBC was spending vast sums to produce Canadian entertainment that -- with rare exceptions such as *King of Kensington* - Canadians didn't want to watch. The drama department went from bad to worse and the variety department was too pathetic even to be worth attacking."<sup>3</sup>

The decision to run a current affairs programme five nights a week, subsequent to a news broadcast brought forward one hour from 11 pm, was an attempt by CBC journalists to win a Canadian audience in prime-time. It was also an attempt (the second concern of CBC managers in 1979-82) to have Canadian politicians take the CBC more seriously, by winning a larger audience share but also by devoting more time to these politicians' pressing concerns, and thereby, perhaps, to influence, for the better, the CBC's budgetary appropriations.

Quite unlike the earlier CBC current affairs programme -- *This Hour Has Seven Days*<sup>4</sup> -- whose public resonance and significance the CBC would allegedly like to reproduce, *The Journal* is therefore a managerial (rather than essentially journalistic) initiative. As such, as journalists working elsewhere within the CBC complainingly reveal, *The Journal* from the days of the final CBC decision to proceed (in March 1981), has been extraordinarily well-financed, and, in particular, positively inundated with the very latest and most expensive items of modern technology. The costs to other CBC programmes and departments of the management's overwhelming moral and financial support for *The Journal* have been considerable.



Photos: Geoff Miles

As a product of managerial initiative, it is perhaps also not surprising that *The Journal* has had a distinctively and consistently consensual political character to it. As early as December 1982, George Bain was commenting acerbically on "*The Journal*'s seemingly chronic head-down incuriosity about anything below the level of what the government says."<sup>5</sup> We shall say more later ourselves on *The Journal*'s particular relationship (of cynicism and subservience) to authority.

### The Journal as a Technological Form

One of the earliest decisions taken before the launch of *The Journal* was that the programme would be given the resources to purchase electronic news-gathering (ENG) equipment rather than having to rely on film: ENG equipment is much more mobile than film cameras and cuts out the need for film processing completely. The end product also gives the impression of being live and eliminates the "datedness" that some film images imply. The programme would routinely revolve around interviews conducted by the hosts (in the first year, primarily Barbara Frum and Mary Lou Finlay) with guests located in different parts of the world. These "double-ender" interviews would be observed by the audience from a position behind the host who, in the foreground, would appear to be looking up at an enlarged image of the guest responding to her questions. In fact, these interviews are conducted over an "audio hook-up" with the host being filmed in the studio looking at a blank screen, and the guest being recorded by a video (ENG) crew. The resulting video cassette is then relayed at speed to Toronto, if necessary by satellite, and editors piece together a conversation apparently taking place between two talking heads in two quite separate, sometimes very distant, locations.

The use of these double-enders (already in use on ABC's *Nightline*) was a considerable technological advance for the CBC. So also was the introduction of techniques allowing for the simultaneous interview of guests located in two or three different locations in the world, allowing the manipulation of their images, for example, through cubes spinning around the television picture. A further innovation in *The Journal* has been the use of music -- a particularly staccato, abbreviated, fast music -- to introduce, punctuate and conclude the thirty-eight minutes of programme.<sup>6</sup> These short bursts of music not only lead the viewer into and out of adverts; they also give the programme a sense of speedy up-to-dateness. We sense we are being presented with very *fresh information*, as if we are linked to an international information-processing network.

Even sympathetic commentators have noted that the technology in use by *The Journal* has been an overwhelming determinant of the programme's form and, indeed, its internal discourse:

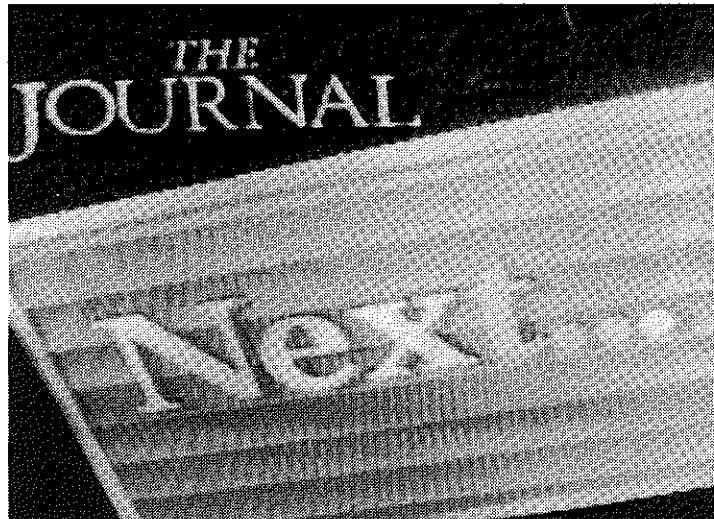
At first, the flashy graphics and music seemed like a substitute for content, and the technology seemed to get in the way; the on-air people sometimes appeared to be talking to each other but rarely talking to the audience. The visuals were rough, fuelling jokes about radio with pictures.<sup>7</sup>

On 20 September 1984, *The Journal* screened a special programme on higher education in which nearly all participants were actually in Toronto, but were filmed in different locations (notably at the University of Toronto, a matter of a half mile from *The Journal*'s own studios). On 8 October 1984, on the occasion of the resignation of Ontario Premier Bill Davis, *The Journal* carried double-ender interviews with guests at its New York, Washington and London desks. It is not immediately obvious that such an expensive and complex set of interviews was justified, when more measured assessments of Mr. Davis' accomplishments were to follow on, in great number, later in the week.

But *The Journal*'s apparent subservience to its own technological capability, which has been made the topic of a more aesthetic or pragmatic critique, is of limited significance for our more political and analytic purposes. There seem to be at least three aspects of *The Journal*'s use of technology that structure the programme in a *routine* and *predictable* way and which thereby contribute to the programme's overall discursive and ideological significance:

### 1. Technology and an Information Culture

I have already spoken of *The Journal*'s use of a speedy style and, in particular, the use of music as a means of conveying the impression of a programme that is faithfully but breathlessly presenting "fast-breaking news". In this respect, *The Journal*, like *As It Happens* is an expression of Mr. Starowicz's declared objective of "building an information culture" in Canada. This "display" of "being-in-touch" is given further emphasis by the zoom shot with which the programme always closes, showing an array of television monitors, as well as by the shot which sometimes appears, of the presenters backed by a further array of clocks showing the time in different major cities of the world. In reality, *The Journal* has no permanent studios or reporters outside of Canada, relying instead on existing thinly-spread staff of the CBC News, on arrangements with American networks and occasionally, on feeds from other English-speaking television systems (like the BBC) or American networks for routine coverage of world events as they emerge. The only foreign coverage undertaken by *The Journal* itself is when *Journal* reporters like Ann MacMillan are sent overseas on particular assignments (to produce "special reports").



### 2. Technology and the Representation of News-Events

The rationale given within the CBC for the wholesale rejection of film, in favour of ENG equipment, was that film gave an impression of outdated imagery and/or information: the assumed logic of this argument is that dated images or information is unhelpful to, and unwanted by, a television audience. It has, of course, already been argued by critics that television news programmes, in their constant preoccupation with the 24-hour news round and their overwhelming "event-orientation", tend to "inoculate" the presentation of news from *historical* conditions for the creation of newsworthy events. The consequences of this event-orientation are particularly debilitating in respect to foreign news. Gattung and Ruge's classic paper on the coverage of foreign news in American and European newspapers shows how popular knowledge of conditions in particular parts of the world becomes reduced to a stereotyped and superficial knowledge of discrete events that have been the subject of headline treatment in mass circulation newspapers.<sup>8</sup> How many Europeans understood the issue which Québec posed for a federal Canada in the Mid-1970s? How many North Americans understand the sources of the "troubles" in Northern Ireland or the full significance and impact of "Thatcherism" in the United Kingdom?

This process is exacerbated, in the case of *The Journal*, by the ideological priority that is placed on the modernity or up-to-dateness of "the image". The assumption is that the "information-processing" that is required in successful television is the processing only of information about immediately developing events.



### 3. Technology and the Position of the Audience

*The Journal* opens every evening with a shot of what appears, a little ambiguously, to be a keyhole. As the voice-over announces the "headlines" for the programmes in firm tones and with emphasis ("Tonight, on *The Journal*..."), this keyhole enlarges and disappears -- as it were, around and behind the camera, as it zooms forward to reveal, in quick succession, up to three short preview shots of the evening's upcoming stories. Each shot is synchronised with the "headline" uttered by the voice-over.

Most current affairs programmes on television have opening sequences, or "hookers" and "leads" as they are variously called, that have become characteristic and familiar to their audiences. But the choice of such opening sequences is not a matter of mere form or even of otherwise neutral aesthetic significance. Brunsdon and Morley have shown how the opening visual imagery of BBC Television's evening news and discussion programme *Nationwide* (actually a *mandala* -- a magic circle with a set of concentrically-arranged figures with spherical emblems located around a central point), serves to emphasize regional pluralism but within an insistent,

all-encompassing unifying framework (taken by them to signify "the Nation").<sup>9</sup> BBC Television's *World News*, like the competing *News at Ten* of Independent Television News, with the confidence so characteristic of British culture, always opens with a shot of the House of Commons at Westminster (in the case of ITN, accompanied by the chimes of Big Ben).

CBC Television News' opening sequence, with the world represented as a Rubik's Cube turning on an axis, may perhaps be an expression of a less deceitful self-regard on the part of Canadians. Certainly, it evidences a sense that "Canada" is less than central to the key events that are unfolding in the world.

Something of the same message is apparent in the lead into *The Journal*. But the choice of a keyhole as the organising image surely also suggests a particular *Journal* view of its audience. Descriptively and prescriptively, that is, *The Journal* sees itself as working for an audience that is not, and ought not necessarily to be, involved in a personal way with the event the programme portrays. Literally, the suggestion is, of course, of an *audience as voyeur*.

#### Political Television and Audience Entertainment

Robert Stam, amongst many others, has pointed to the transformation during the 1970s of television news programming in the United States.<sup>10</sup> Possibly as a reaction to the unremitting evening news reports of disaster and violence during the period of the Vietnam War, American networks have all introduced a very different form of news. Sometimes referred to as "happy news" and nearly always described as "news shows", these programmes have a very personalized and entertaining style of presentation. Interspersed as they are in some instance with commercials within the programme, the programmes are designed to "flow" in order to retain the attention of the "consuming" audience. According to Stam, there is also an observable tendency for these news shows to work on the reduction of the audience's anxiety over the otherwise unsettling news emanating from different parts of the world. In part, Stam believes, this process of reduction of anxiety is achieved via the elevation of certain authoritative male journalists to the role of sooth-sayers, or symbolic fathers, whose relationship to the audience is constantly worked upon to maintain a very personal and reassuring familiarity.

This tradition, initiated in a period of different and more interrogatory news reporting by Walter Cronkite, is now carried on within the happy news format by anchormen like Dan Rather of CBS, Peter Jennings of ABC and others.

News reporting in Canada has undoubtedly been heavily influenced by the new American news formats, especially at the level of evening news reports on local stations (which are marketed almost exclusively around allegedly pleasing personalities of particular programmed "anchors") but also nationally (for example, in the 12:30 lunch time newshows of Global television and CBC's new news magazine, *Midday*). *The Journal* itself, with its official brief as an in-depth current affairs programme ("providing a sober second-look" at the day's events) and with a 38-minute slot to fill, may not appear to be constructed in any simple sense as "happy news".<sup>11</sup> But *The Journal*'s managers, when evaluating the impact of the programme, are interested not in the size of the audience "captured" by an individual programme, but also in the scores achieved on what is called the "Entertainment Index" -- a measure of the extent to which a sampled audience reported it was "entertained" by a programme -- in surveys conducted by the CBC's Audience Research Department. By adopting this measuring (rather than any measure of the audience's understanding of issues or its sense of having been personally involved in particular issues), *The Journal* has clearly chosen to work within the regime of television as pleasure rather than the tradition of television as a subversive, confrontational or interrogatory journalistic medium.

*The Journal* proves to be "entertainment", however, of a very particular kind: my argument is that the entertainment provided consists largely in the pleasure which the modern or even "modernist" bourgeois audience in Canada derives from a feeling of mastery over what it thinks is important information, and the connected pleasure which such an audience derives from feeling that its disconnected prejudices and/or perspectives about the public terrain are legitimized in journalistic representations of "issues" or "events". So the two organising themes of any *Journal* interview, I would argue, are

◆  
"The choice of a keyhole as the organizing image surely suggests a particular *Journal* view... audience as voyeur"



(a) the insistence of the interviewer on obtaining "the facts" of "the story" from particular guests or interviewees.<sup>12</sup> The practice appears to be to press interviewees until their individual story is complete for the practical purpose of the audience being able to recount its key features, briefly, at work the following morning. So the touchstone guiding the interviewing journalist is the "knowledge" about events or issues and audience feels it needs to know.

(b) the determination of nearly all *The Journal*'s presenters to ask questions, either in interviews or during special reports, which represent most of the different ideological and/or political positions held within the Canadian population. This is particularly noticeable as an aspect of Ms. Barbara Frum's interviewing practice (giving rise as it nearly always does to a brash but essentially illogical sequence of questions, the subject of many complaints by people who have been interviewed by Ms. Frum).<sup>13</sup> But the concern to represent every conceivable aspect of *consensual* politics in Canada is apparent in most of the presenters working for *The Journal*.

In representing these consensual positions, *The Journal* also, almost by definition, works to reproduce a very specific and narrow definition of politics. Politics is overwhelmingly conceived of as that practice which takes place on a daily basis on Parliament Hill (or by extension, on Capitol Hill, Westminster etc.). It is absolutely not a notion of politics as being of potential interest and direct relevance to large masses of Canadian citizens. It is a conception of politics which therefore routinely represents "talking heads" from the three parliamentary parties in a studio discussion, along with clips from the parliamentary television coverage itself, as the only way of "televising politics". Any alternative vision of politics tends to be pathologized. On 26 September 1984, for example, at the height of the moral panic engendered by the killing of nine police officers in Ontario and Québec, *The Journal* screened a special on "Crime, Deterrence and Vengeance". One of the guests on this programme, Mr. Warren Allmand, erstwhile Solicitor General in one of the Liberal Governments, continually attempted to suggest that the police killings were an expression not of the absence of capital punishment but rather of the poverty of social programmes in place for youth in Canada. In one of her characteristically aggressive interventions, Ms. Frum interrupted Mr. Allmand and demanded to know "short of bringing heaven on earth" what Mr. Allmand thought of *capital punishment*. The ideological effect of this interruption was, of course, to close off the possibility of any discussion that might have challenged the link, essential to bourgeois penology, that is thought to exist between capital punishment and the levels of homicide.

The interruptions made by Ms. Frum during interviews could be the subject of a separate study. One of the main aspects of the interruptions, however, appears to be the establishment of the parameters of the consensual view; the concern is always to identify what "we" should think, do or feel about particular topics. In this particular respect, Ms. Frum and her co-presenters do behave rather like the symbolic fathers of American news programmes; but, of course, the significant difference is that the programme has been introduced, continually for the first six months and frequently since, by two women.

The original choice of two women co-presenters for *The Journal* is thought by other commentators to have had no particular significance. According to Mark Knelman:

"Starowicz was committed to the idea of two hosts and, though there were several men on the short list, he didn't shy away from putting two women together."<sup>14</sup>

The elevation of Ms. Frum and Ms. Finlay to the position of co-presenters of *The Journal*, therefore, was no more a reflection of their gender than was Mrs. Margaret Thatcher's election to the leadership of the British Conservative Party in 1974; their promotions depended on their competence as defined within a profession/party already heavily dominated by men. Frum, Finlay and Thatcher are decidedly not in their present positions because they represent a particular (namely, women's) interest; they are there because they represent a professionalism as otherwise defined and because they do *not* try to speak for an interest.<sup>15</sup> Barbara Frum and Mary Lou Finlay never interview their guests from a women's perspective—even, let it be said, during the election specials of September 1984 on the three parties' policies for women. They are, therefore, not to be spoken of as "token women" because they do not raise a feminist interest as a perspective on "the news" even in the most tentative or apologetic of manners. They are there as professional arbiters of consensus between political positions defined overwhelmingly in parliamentary terms.

To see this is also to see that *The Journal* is more or less routinely engaged in a "fudge": it constantly and predictably avoids any informative interrogation of ideologies that compete with the existing parliamentary consensus, and it constantly takes differences which people who are involved in conventional forms of politics may believe to exist and elides them into a consensual form. One can only assume that there is a particular, largely middle class audience in Canada, in the troubled circumstances of economic recession and Cold War politics in the mid-1980s, for whom such consensual "closures" constitute a form of reassurance and even of pleasure.

### The Journal, its "Guests" and Authority

In a recently published reflection on the "slow dissolve" of public broadcasting in Canada, the executive producer of *The Journal*, Mark Starowicz, bemoans the fact that

"The Canadian broadcast spectrum has become a competition among importers of foreign products -- Honda dealers competing with Toyota dealers. The major producer -- the only major car factory -- has been the victim. The Canadian broadcasting system, through importation and privatization, has been Americanized. That privatization has been administered at an almost promiscuous pace by the CRTC, which failed to maintain a balance between importation and domestic production."<sup>16</sup>

Anyone who has watched *The Journal* with any regularity over the last three years will surely be surprised that these sentiments could have been voiced by the executive producer of that programme. For the programme is broadly and rightly viewed as relying *extensively* on American expertise, particularly with respect to the interpretation of world news. The programme consists, with astonishing frequency, of talking heads from Washington and, in particular, of ambiguously described experts from Georgetown University (notorious in the United States as a private "think-tank" colonized by the *soi-disant* "intellectuals" of the American New Right). A "special" edition of *The Journal* in the Summer of 1985 on the "Cold War" involved *exclusively* American experts in a

“Politics is overwhelmingly conceived of as that practice which takes place on a daily basis on Parliament Hill.”

series of role-playing exercises or crisis games. Quantitative analysis over an extensive period of time would surely reveal that American experts (of largely right-wing persuasion) are given access with far greater frequency than almost all other identifiable organized "constituencies" (other than Ottawa parliamentarians). Systematic and qualitative analysis would also surely confirm that the exchanges between these Washington-based experts and the hosts are generally quite amicable, where much more confrontational and antagonistic exchanges have occurred, in recent memory, with representatives, for example, of the Soviet Union (on the question of East-West arms talks), the British Labour Party (at the time of the General Election of 1983), and with others.

George Bain, in his short article mentioned earlier, spoke of *The Journal's* "chronic" subservience to "what the government says." This may be in some sense a misleading accusation. *The Journal's* editors and journalists have plenty of experience, as do all such close observers of politics in bourgeois democracy, of the corruption and incompetence of individual politicians, and they give full expression to their cynicism at appropriate moments. An enormous amount of time is, indeed, spent on *The Journal* on issues of corruption and competence, and it is presumably via such stories that the journalist retains a sense of the moral project of "political" or current affairs television. But, as in all such crusades against "bad apples", the possibility cannot be allowed that the orchard itself is rotten. The cynicism of occasional pieces on *The Journal* should not be allowed to detract from the narcissistic acceptance that characterizes the programme's view of existing parliamentary, state and capitalist institutions. *The Journal's* consensualism is a version of the "happy news" of the United States; it is a gently resigned acceptance of the world as it is, and an everyday attempt to make the world as it is seem more likeable or benign. So news-stories about the famine in Ethiopia cannot be allowed to slide into discussion of the logic of imperialism in the late twentieth century, though they may cheerfully conclude with mentions of the generous scale of charitable donations being sent by "Canada". Stories about the civil wars being fought in Central America can be presented, without any consistent connection being made between the fundamental attacks now under way on democratic Nicaragua and the overwhelming presence in contemporary Washington of a network of ultra-Right politicians of quite amazing political backgrounds, persuasion and future intentions. The point is always to *reassure* -- rather than activate or even, in the end, really to inform -- the audience.

In other countries (like Britain and France) public sector broadcasting is undoubtedly much more directly politicized than it is in Canada - in the sense that state-run television and radio stations produce what critics have identified as systematically patterned, and ultimately "ideological", current affairs and news programme on behalf of established authority.<sup>17</sup>

The current practices of Canadian public broadcasting are by no means so heavily and systematically politicized; they reflect instead, a much more indirect, psychologistic and discursive conventionalism. From the point of view of true democrats, however, neither use of the "public medium" (whether the direct domination of authority or the depoliticized "talk" of bourgeois personalities) can be a substitute for a representative and accountable system of public information and debate.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Marc Raboy, "Broadcasting Policy and the Public", *borderlines*, 3, pp. 14-17.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Starowicz, "Slow Dissolve: the End of Public Broadcasting?" *This Magazine* 19(1) (April 1985) pp. 4-8.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Knelman, "Their Finest Hour", *Saturday Night* (March 1983), p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Mark Knelman, "The Ghost of *Seven Days* Still Mocks the CBC". *Saturday Night* (October 1975), pp. 43-48.

<sup>5</sup> George Bain, "Why the CBC won't bite where it eats", *Maclean's* (20 December 1982), p. 41.

<sup>6</sup> This use of speed and music to underline the instantaneous character of the "news" being spoken is also characteristic of CBC's *Sunday Morning*, but it was first introduced on the earlier news radio production, *As It Happens*, by the then producer of that programme, Mark Starowicz. For a considered materialist analysis of the interrelationship of speed and form on *Sunday Morning*, see Peter Bruck "Power-format-Radio: A Study of Canadian Current Affairs Radio". Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, McGill University, 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Knelman, 1983, *op cit*.

<sup>8</sup> J. Gattung and M. Ruge, "The Structures of Foreign News," *Journal of Peace Research* 1 (1965) reprinted in S. Cohen and J. Young (eds.) *The Manufacture of News* (London: Constable, 1981).

<sup>9</sup> Brunson and Morley, *Everyday Television - Nationwide*, (London: British Film Institute, CTV Monograph 10, 1978) pp. 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Stam, "Television News and its Spectator" in E. Ann Kaplan (ed.) *Regarding Television*, (Los Angeles: American Film Institute).

<sup>11</sup> This formulation of the purposes of *The Journal* is attributed to Mark Starowicz and the Heads of Current Affairs and News at the CBC, Bill Morgan and Vince Colin, by Mark Czarniecki, in "The CBC's Daring New Gamble", *Maclean's* (18 January 1982) pp. 38-42.

<sup>12</sup> This, of course, is the hallmark of the interview technique of Ms. Barbara Frum, perfected originally on CBC Radio's *As It Happens*.

<sup>13</sup> In 1982, for example, Barbara Frum conducted an interview with Mr. E.P. Thompson of European Nuclear Disarmament in London. This interview became increasingly heated as Mr. Thompson objected to the speedy and illogical character of the questions which were posed. As a result, the interview was never shown and Canadians were thereby deprived of hearing the views of a key figure in the European peace movement, at that time at the height of its influence.

<sup>14</sup> Knelman, 1983, p. 60.

<sup>15</sup> *The Journal* itself, being the kind of consensual and de-politicized programme I have described, *never* speaks for any kind of interest except for that of "Canada"/"The West"/"Us". The consequences of this abstentionism in the area of women's interests were nowhere more apparent than in the "special" edition of *The Journal* on pornography shown in the Summer of 1982, at the height of the public controversy over pornography on Pay-TV. Rather than illuminate the absolutely key differences that exist between conservative and feminist arguments in favour of censorship and control, *The Journal* chose, predictably enough, to organise its representation of the issue in terms of a simple pro- and anti-censorship dichotomy. It also worked with an entirely *conventional* definition of what constitutes pornography. So viewers were invited to avert their eyes if they did not want to observe what Mary Lou Finlay announced as a sample of "the kind of hard-core pornography" which was under current discussion. There followed a clip in which two apparently mature adults chased each other around a hill-top house in Japan and then began to make love, naked, on a window-seat. So far from being an example of hard-core pornography (involving violence, children, animals, etc.) this particular clip would surely qualify as an example of a film that attempts to represent a mutuality of sexual enjoyment amongst freely-willed adults.

<sup>16</sup> Starowicz, 1985, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> For more extended discussion of British "public sector" broadcasting as an alternative to the CBC version, see the longer version of this paper in Peter Bruck, John Harp, John Shepard, and Ian Taylor (Eds.) *Canadian Cultural Studies* (forthcoming).

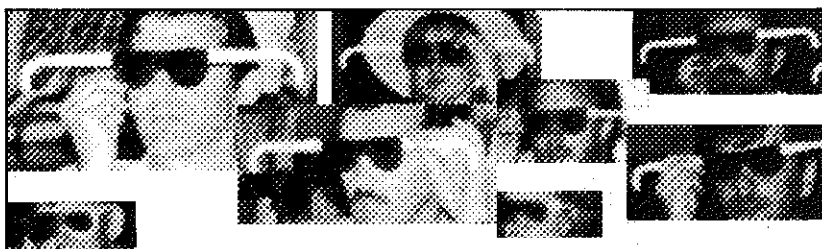
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# COLD CITY GALLERY

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TOM DEAN  
ELDON GARNET  
GARRY NEILL KENNEDY  
DYAN MARIE  
AL McWILLIAMS  
STEPHEN MENZIES  
JAAN POLDAAS  
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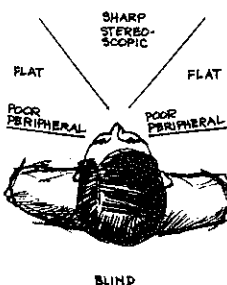
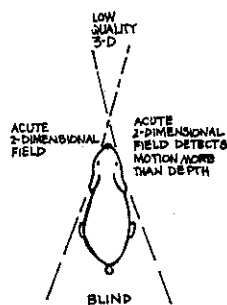


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PRESENTS:

## ARTISTS TALK ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

Edited by Elizabeth Chitty

The articles, by Canadian artists, provide a context for discussion of issues concerning and surrounding the creative use of technology by artists



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# Blessed are



Illustration 1

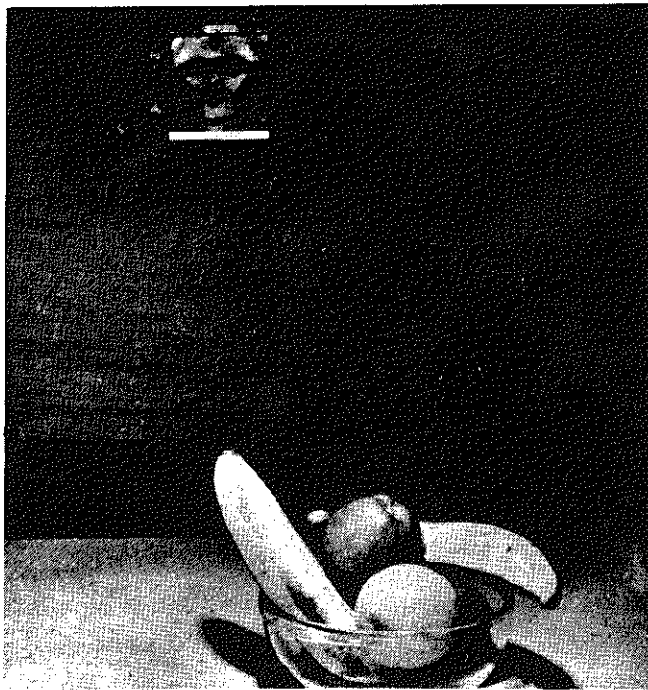


Illustration 2



Illustration 3

Now, the Employer had laboured hard all his life as an extractor of raw resources. Having struggled in more traditional ways to establish a successful and stable corporation, he embarked on a different strategy. He began to seek clues for business advantages by studying the important and enduring stories of Western culture. Despite the protests of his Board of Directors, he would spend long hours poring over the themes of Western culture, reading them and explaining them to his Employee. Homer's *Odyssey* was a particular favourite, which he would cite over and over again. "I am 'stricken to silence'", his Employee would quote in response, "and 'held in thrall by the stories'". The Employer was always quick to compliment him on how well he had digested the stories. You (*see ill. 1*) gets what you pays for, the Employee would reply.

The Employer especially treasured the part about the encounter with the Cyclops Polyphemos. Polyphemos, as we all know, was a shepard of sorts, who cared lovingly for his herds on the island he shared with the other Cyclops. The wandering Odysseus and his men found themselves trapped in his cave, whereupon the uncivilized Polyphemos showed his lack of social skills by eating them one by one. Odysseus cunningly conceived of a plan, told Polyphemos his name was 'Nobody', and lulled him to sleep with wine. Seizing his chance, Odysseus then blinded Polyphemos by stabbing his eye with a hot skewer. Polyphemos cried out for help from his neighbours, but when they asked of his troubles he replied: "Nobody is killing me by force or treachery", whereupon his neighbours left. So too did Odysseus and his men, clinging to the underbellies of the sheep so as to avoid Polyphemos' grasp.

The Employee spoke up and said, "Is this not where Alkinoos admired Odysseus the storyteller, and said 'he could not imagine him being a deceptive or thievish man, who would make up lying stories, from which nobody could learn anything'?" "Shush", answered the Employer. "Let the story work on you; you can play (*see ill. 2*) with it later". The Employer continued the story: "Last to leave the cave was Odysseus", he said, "clinging to the underbelly of the leader of the sheep. The blind Polyphemos recognized his 'dear old ram' by touch and said: 'If only you could think like us and only be given a voice, to tell me where he is skulking away from my anger, then surely he would be smashed against the floor, and his brains go spattering all over the cave to make my heart lighter from the burden of all the evils this nidding Nobody gave me'". Odysseus and his men escaped, taking the sheep with them, which they sacrificed to the gods on the beaches of the next island. The Employer was so taken with this story that he changed both his name as well as that of his business to Nobody.

Moving on, the Employer then began to read Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, for after all it translates from the original Latin as "no place". One Evening, while reading to his Employee, he chanced upon the passage which described how the wealthy landowners neglected the unprofitable sheep. In fact they forced the sheep to such a point of desparation that they actually began to eat people. Employer leaped to his feet, flushed with indignation, determined that he would find that place, and right that wrong. "Ah, here is a night that is very long, it is endless", quoted the Employee. Nonetheless, after lengthy negotiations he said: "I'm game", (*see ill. 3*) and, after the Employer packed all his stories into a master binder, off they sailed to cross a hostile ocean. But they were soon set upon by privateers who proceeded to take (*see ill. 4*) over their ship. They demanded to know the Employer's identity, and where he was going. The Employer said his name was 'Nobody' and that he was going "No Place" whereupon the privateers then felt quite justified in pillaging his goods and scuttling his ship. The Employer could not swim, and so clung to his Employee, who after much struggling brought them safely to the shores of an island.

The inhabitants seemed friendly -- and with good reason. Such abundance! Eager to verify that this was the right place, so that he could consummate his quest, the Employer travelled tirelessly back and forth across the island, with his Employee following closely behind.

Here the story becomes hazy and confused. Taking advantage of this, the Employee began to insert other stories into the master binder, unbeknownst to his Employer. Thereafter their mission became increasingly obscure, and their course full of stops and starts and wrong turns. The Employer began to doubt that they were where he thought they were. Not so the Employee: "Increasingly I feel that this place will be your (see ill. 5) homecoming", he said comfortingly.

Finally at dusk, and after many days of weary travel, they wandered into some pasturelands. Suddenly, from the trees there sprang a herd of ravenous, woolly-white animals, snarling and snapping their teeth as they teared towards them. Employer raced for a solitary tree which stood in the middle of a field, making it just in the nick of time. Looking down from the branches he saw, standing amidst the crazed salivating sheep, his Employee. Feeling hazy and confused he searched through his master binder, not quite knowing what he was looking for – *Julius Caesar* perhaps. But he found another story in its place which he did not recognize.

"I have found within my master binder a story which I cannot recognize", he said to his Employee. "It is because it is too dark surrounded by all those branches and leaves", his Employee replied. "Why don't you go to the top of the tree where there is more light and you can see more clearly?" Employer went to the top and began to read. The story, which was a Blackfoot Indian tale, went like this:

Now Old Man went on and came to a place where deer and elk were playing a game called "Follow your leader." Old Man watched the game a while. Then he asked permission to play. He took the lead, sang a song, and ran about this way and that, and finally led them up to the edge of a cliff. Old Man jumped down and was knocked senseless. After a while he got up and called for the rest to follow. "No, we might hurt ourselves." "Oh!" said Old Man, it is nice and soft here, and I had to sleep a while."

Then the elk all jumped down and were killed. Then Old Man said to the deer, "Now you jump." "No," said the deer, "we shall not jump down, because the elk are all killed." "No," said Old Man, "they are only laughing." So the deer jumped down and were killed.

Old Man was now busy butchering the animals that had been killed by falling over the cliff. When he was through butchering, he went out and found a place to camp. Then he carried his meat there and hung it up to dry. When he was all alone, a coyote came to him. This coyote had a shell on his neck, and one leg was tied up as if badly hurt. The Coyote said to Old Man "Give me something to eat."

Old Man said to him "Give me that shell on your neck to skim the soup, and i will give you something to eat." "No," said coyote, "that shell is my medicine." Then Old Man noticed that the coyote had his leg tied up and said, "Well, brother, I will run you a race for a meal." "Well," said Coyote, "I am hurt. I cannot run." "That makes no difference," said Old Man, "run anyway." "Well," said Coyote, "I will run for a short distance." "No," said Old Man, "you have to run a long distance."

Finally coyote agreed. They were to run to a distant point, then back again. Coyote started out very slow, and kept crying for Old Man to wait, to wait. At last coyote and Old Man came to the turning-point. Then Coyote took the bandage off his leg, and began to run fast, and soon left Old Man far behind. He began to call out to all the coyotes, the animals, and mice, and they all came rushing up to Old Man's camp and began to eat his meat. It was a long time before Old Man reached the camp; but he kept calling out, "Leave me some meat, leave me some meat."

But the branches at the top of the tree were too thin. They broke, and the Employer fell to the ground, landing among the sheep who were delighted by their good fortune. "Well, you plays the game, you takes your chances," (see ill. 6) responded the Employee, looking on.

# the Meat

GARRY KIBBINS



Illustration 4



Illustration 5

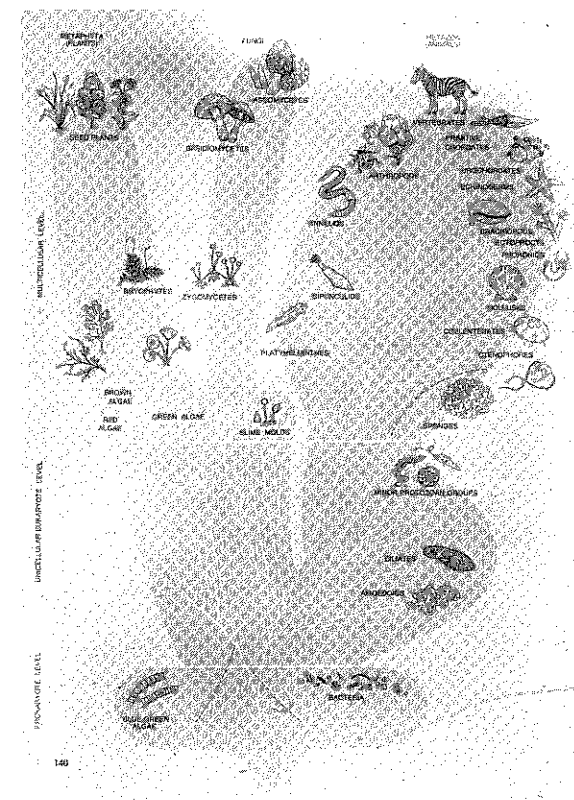
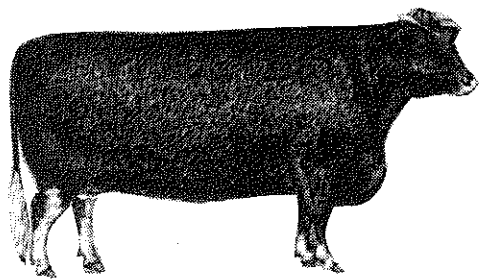
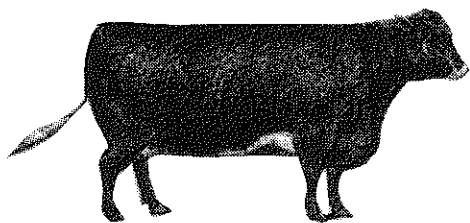
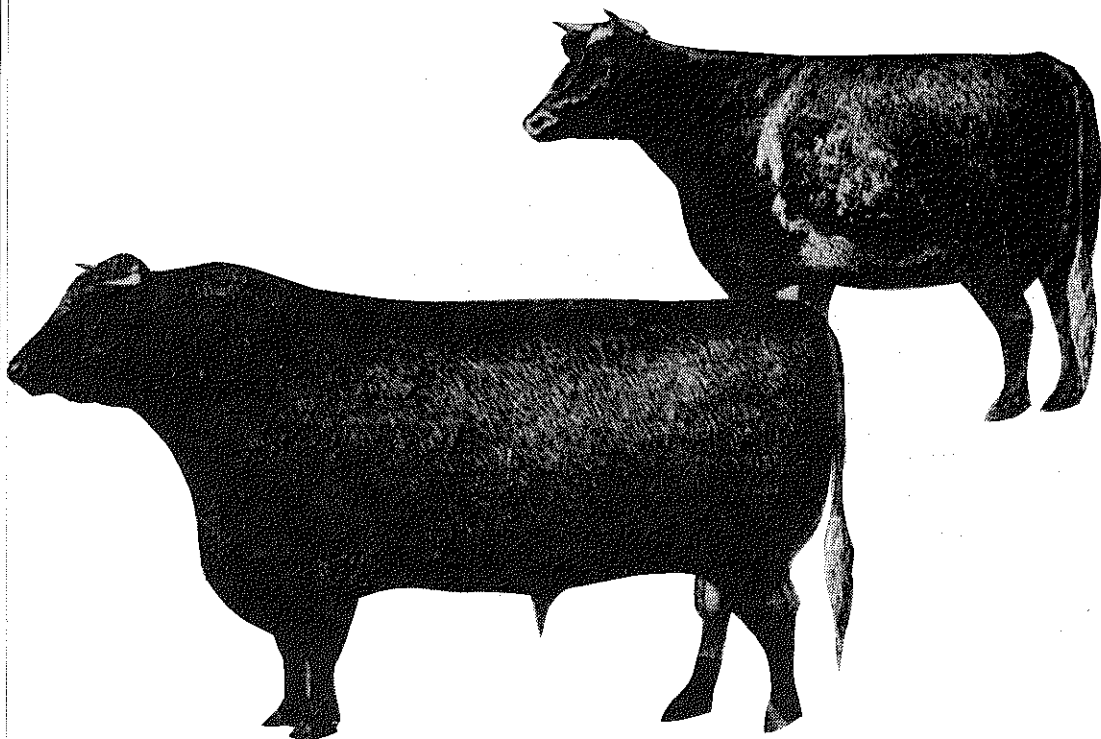


Illustration 6

# RIGHTNESS OR RIGHTS

John Livingston



The need for rights is uniquely human, arising out of unique human social relationships. Domesticated and captive non-human beings, as a part of the human organization of society, can be seen as qualifying for "prosthetic" rights on the same grounds as human members. Wild nature, on the other hand, seems not to require rights between co-existing participants, and certainly between species. The capacity for humankind to be able to "confer" rights upon the non-human world would require all existence to be moved under human control. The goals of many environmentalists thus have become paradoxical.

By and large, "environmentalists" are humanists, not biocentrists. Most current discussions of "environmental rights" centre on the interests of human beings against those of other human beings. Such discussions usually come down to questions of relative individual, group and public interest. While there may be sufficient philosophical, legal and other existing frameworks for their ultimate, if gradual, resolution, the political obstacles to implementation are formidable. In a lesser measure, valiant attempts to bestow legal rights on "the environment" continue, and valiant intellectual enterprises attempt to bring non-human beings under the umbrella of human ethical systems. Both efforts may prove to be misguided. The environmental problem is not a technical, legal or moral problem, but a metaphysical one.

## I. THE NEED FOR RIGHTS

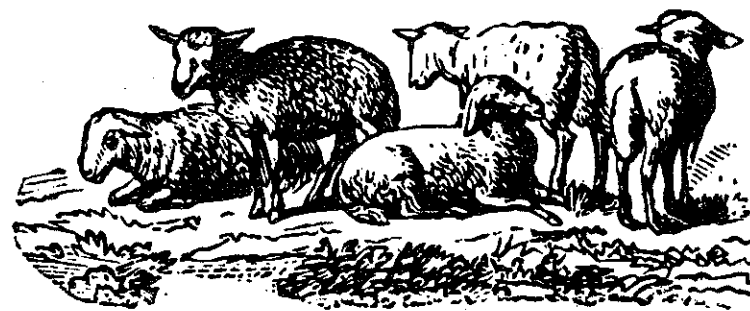
On the attempts to ascribe rights to the non-human, there is little, if any, theoretical, philosophical or legal basis for the arguments. Debates surrounding rights for the non-human customarily flounder on definitions such as, for example, of moral subjects and objects; such definitions are inescapably anthropomorphic and lose all meaning in the attempted translation to the biomorphic. The difficulty inherent in these discussions arises in great measure from the failure to acknowledge that concepts of rights

arise in human social environments which are built on dominance hierarchies or other forms of *power relationships*. That there were many and still are very few human societies (for example, hunter-gatherers) in which *competitive* power relationships do not appear to exist<sup>1</sup> indicates that the need for the concept of rights is neither universal nor absolute; power relationships appear to be peculiar to more "advanced" or "civilized" human organizations, especially those in which rank and achievement are symbolized by the accumulation of commodities, such as cattle, wives and other accoutrements.<sup>2</sup>

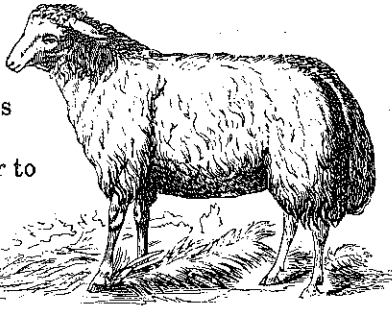
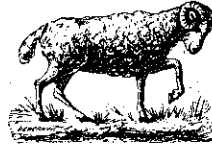
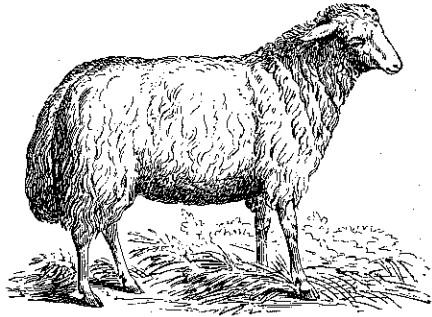
Human uniqueness among biological beings is frequently justified on the basis that people are the only moral species. This assertion may be disputed on a variety of grounds, most ultimately hanging on semantics. There is good reason to think, however, that the statement may well be accurate. I have recently argued<sup>3</sup> that human moral and ethical systems, among other cultural techniques of social control, may be seen as surrogates for "natural" forms of behavior, which although they still exist in human biology, have been at least temporarily suppressed by the pathological structure of power and dominance on the basis of which most human societies are currently organized. As an institution, the arrangement is continuously reinforced by tradition and convention, that is, culture. Moral, ethical and legal systems may be seen as part of a "prosthesis,"\* set in the place of abandoned biological ways of peaceful group co-existence.

## II. RATIONALIZING THE NEED

So fundamental is the survival of the powerfully competitive believed to be, that modern biology was able to take what was essentially a sociological, economic and political principle, and to project it upon all of non-human nature.<sup>4</sup> Charles Darwin did not invent the concept of a competitive struggle for existence, but he argued it with such elegance and persuasiveness that it entered the



mainstream of Western thought as "a blinding flash of the obvious."<sup>5</sup> If we are able to see natural processes as competitive, goal-oriented and dominance-striving, it is seductively easy to see the human ethical prosthesis as an advance over brute systems of social organization. The non-scientific public is as yet largely unaware that concepts of dominance and competition in the non-human world are presently under serious challenge on grounds not merely hypothetical.<sup>6</sup> Non-human societies and multispecies communities may be organized in ways that are closer to those of "primitive" human hunting-and-gathering societies than those of the prosthetic sophisticated civilization.



If people form the only moral society, it is for reasons dramatically different from those most usually purveyed in the humanistic cultural tradition. Non-human nature does not appear to require prosthetic means of social control, because it has not yet amputated mutual and peaceful co-existence from its behavioral repertoire. It is the wont of the humanistic observer to view the "struggle for existence" as *fundamentally natural*. On the same body of evidence (or lack of it) the biocentric observer may think it anomalous and pathological. Such are the ways of worldviews. Neither extreme interpretation is sustainable on Cartesian method, but since one view is the child of Cartesian metaphysics, and the other is not, the truth is summarily laid down. Many "philosophical naturalists," to use Darwin's terms, are persuaded that non-human nature, far from being competitively preoccupied with the achievement of future goals, gives the

consistent appearance of present complementary co-existence. If this is accurate, the assumption of a competitive goal-oriented struggle in non-human nature is not sustainable. Nor are dominance structures and relationships. Therefore it necessarily follows that in a state of nature, *rights* have no meaning.

There are, however, countless numbers of non-human beings who are not in a state of nature. There are many familiar situations in which the concept of rights could and should be applied to non-human existences. While these have been addressed by numerous authors on moral and ethical grounds, I will present a slightly different formula.

### III. PROSTHETIC RIGHTS FOR SLAVES?

**A**nimals (restricted here to mammals) are domesticated for four basic purposes: as pets, as servants, as sources of food and clothing and as human surrogates in experimental research. Some, such as the dog and horse, may be used for all four purposes, but most are used for three. Such sensate beings are bought and sold on the open market as commodities. The essence of domestication is tractability, docility and manageability. This is obtained through selective breeding, by systematic dismantling of the animal's social dependance on conspecifics,\* while at the same time maintaining, encouraging and redirecting its innate need to participate in a group social arrangement. Group interdependence is replaced by

one-way dependence on the human proprietor. Unfortunately, it is necessary to point out the extraordinary lack of sensitivity to the psychological needs of the animal. Since it has been brought directly into the social unit, as a moral being, the proprietor would seem to have no alternative but to treat it as a functioning member of that social unit.<sup>7</sup> Drawn, body and mind, into the human social organization, the animal becomes part of the power-based prosthetic dominance structure. Domestication has conferred upon it interests that deserve to be recognized in the interest of all members of the organization. On psychological and behavioral grounds alone, there is simply no civilized alternative to this view.

That the legislators, legal theorists and philosophers have tended not to address this argument, usually preferring to emphasize the obligation of moral animals which arises from control of second and third class beings, is less a matter of politics, the law and moral philosophy than of the cultural bias that towers over and dominates virtually all intellectual pursuit. It is a comment on moral beings themselves, and on the undeniable chauvinism that pervades our prosthetic cultural institutions.<sup>8</sup> Failure to acknowledge this fundamental flaw in Western moral and ethical systems (that is, they are human-specific and species-chauvinistic) means that philosophy and law cannot influence human treatment of non-human domesticates. Clearly, much, if not all, of the unspeakable barbarism that prevails, for example, in factory farming and experimental research,

*could* be dealt with if we understood and accepted the significance of such beings as members of the human social order. Brutality and cruelty, both physical and psychological, could be treated as phenomena in their own right, without pedantic Cartesian recourse to definitions of "objects." Brutality and cruelty within the social order would be inherently wrong and thus punishable *and* preventable, regardless of the taxonomic or clinical classification and labelling of targets.



○  
"...concepts of rights arise in human social environments which are built on dominance."  
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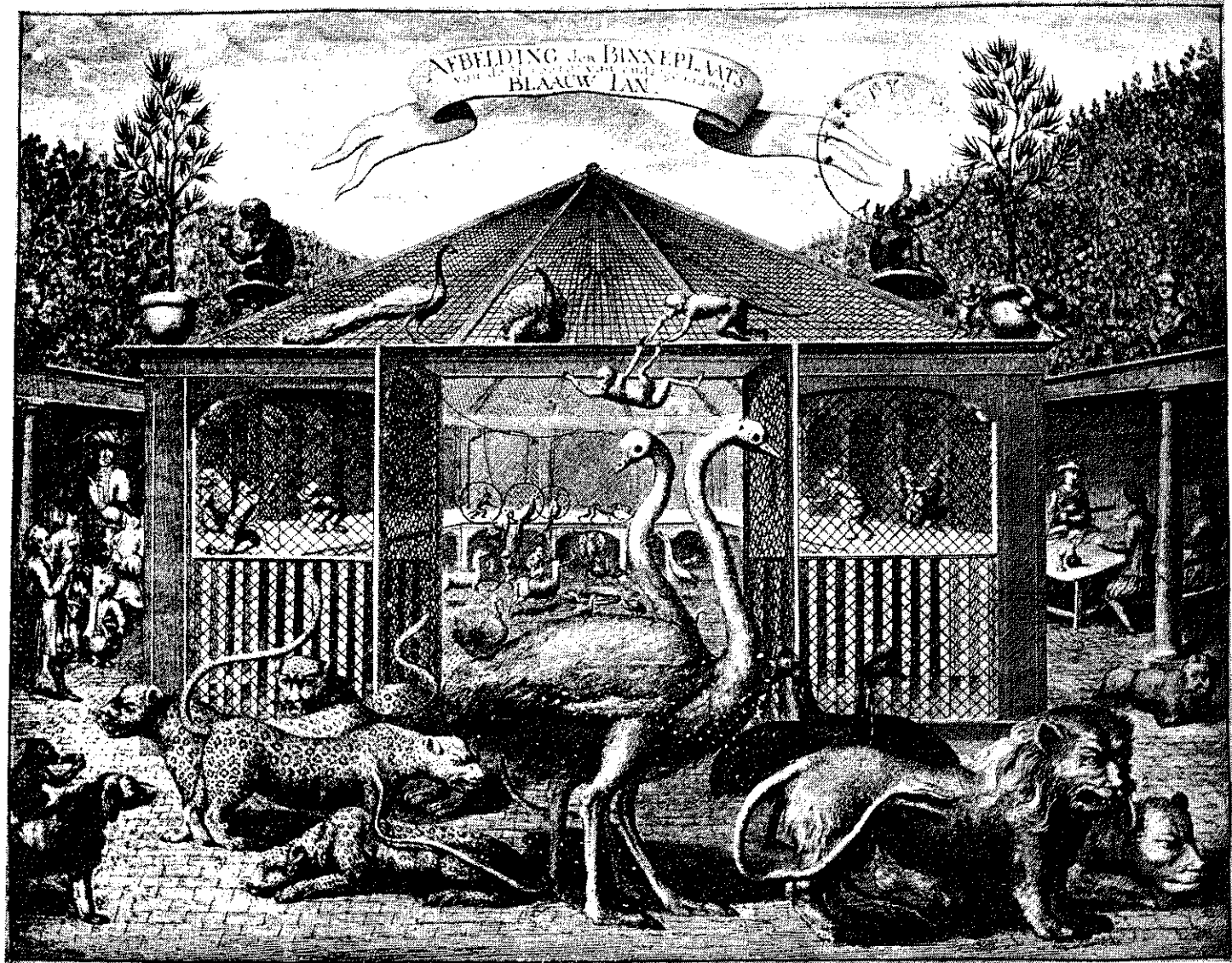
In addition, this argument can clearly be made on behalf of individual non-domesticated species, held captive and occasionally tamed, entirely within the human power structure, as are exotic pets, experimental surrogates and the inhabitants of zoos, circuses, menageries and so forth. In maintaining captive non-domesticates, there is *no* fostering of *social* dependence. Indeed, since the animal is not "socialized," its psychological suffering is probably much greater than that of the domesticate. The same conclusions on rights would apply: if the animal is contained in a power relationship -- foreign to its psychology -- it deserves to have rights. It seems reasonable to expect that how those rights would be exercised is a technical, not philosophic challenge.

The assumption legitimating our discretionary power transcends all moral philosophy, all law. It is a *given*. It is essential that it be understood that the human conquest of nature and the planet, accomplished through sheer power, is translated retroactively into the human *right* to dominate. No element of the environmental discussion is as crucial; all flows

from this radical source. I have suggested that the modern scientific view, projected upon nature, allows the inference of certain conclusions about the "survival of the fittest" and other post-Darwinian rationalizations. On such reasoning, people are the species who are the "fittest," having become dominant. Ergo, human dominance is right, proper and *natural*. Ironically, far from upsetting the human chauvinist appellation as he had originally feared, Darwin legitimated the rationale for future generations.

Darwin's preference for *progress*, as manifested in the emergence of new species, is of the greatest importance to Western thought: competition produces the best of everything. It is interesting that there are different views on progress as applied to domesticated animals. There are those who see domesticates as grotesque travesties of their wild antecedents.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Darwin saw new breeds as improvements over "older and inferior kinds."<sup>10</sup> Surely, however, the qualitative assessment of animal breeds and species cannot have logical relevance to their status as living sentient participants in human society.

It can be said that the recognition of rights in domesticated and captive animals would be an exercise in anthropomorphism. This would be entirely acceptable, indeed necessary, for these purposes, on the grounds that the physical and social environments in which they live out their lives are in fact human environments. The animals -- even the captives -- are expected to behave not in relation to other animals, as they would in nature, but *in relation to humans*.<sup>11</sup> Behavior in relation to others is the most fundamental means of identifying one's social "place." Their social place is in the human context, where prosthetic rights prevail.





IV. PROSTHETIC RIGHTS FOR THE FREE?

Domesticated and captive animals are one thing, but wild nature is another. There is at least one aspect of wild nature in which the concept of prosthetic rights might apply. This is "sport" hunting or recreational killing. Again, the human right of access for the most frivolous of purposes is taken to be a given thing. It might be expected that the law might eventually help to eradicate this practice if society were to understand that recreational killing and wounding is inappropriate behavior for moral animals.

This "sport" may be seen as a gratuitous intervention into nature by the human power apparatus. The target animal is drawn into the same relationship with the shooter as the lamb experiences with its slaughterer. The argument that the wild quarry is "free," is spurious; there is a relationship based on power. Killing -- or sparing -- is Caesar's ultimate exercise of power over a lesser being. Surely no being of whatever perceived rank has any obligation to enter, however briefly, into such a relationship. The moment the target is within shooting range, it should have the right to go its own way. The moral being squinting along the gun-barrel has a moral decision to make, and the ability to make it. As yet, because of the overwhelming species chauvinism of moral and legal authority, the shooter has no guidance.

Some advocates of "sport" killing defend it as a healthy competitive pursuit: man against beast, one-on-one. Since one participant is aware of the contest, such a justification need not be considered on either moral or logical grounds. Hunting takes the place of natural predation in the folkloric "balance of nature" because there are no natural predators left. And, of course, sport killing is cleaner, more efficient and more merciful than natural predation. What is steadfastly ignored is that predation naturally has little or no effect on prey populations. Rather, predator numbers fluctuate as the result of naturally changing numbers of their prey. The sporting community does not like natural ebbs and flows; it likes guaranteed "harvests." It is for this reason there is wildlife management, which so often involves predator control.


Barry Holstun Lopez argues that the natural act of predation includes a "conversation of death."<sup>12</sup> During this moment, a decision seems to be made as to whether the predator will or will not attack. It is as though the act of natural predation were mutually agreed upon. This cannot be said of sport killing, in spite of its often ritualized trappings. There is only one participant aware of the ritual; the conversation is one-sided. The phenomenon Lopez describes would appear to be some ancient interspecies pact, arrived at over thousands of years of joint evolution, not an arrangement of rights and obligations. The pact is clearly not a power relationship, and since predator and prey are of two unrelated species, neither the domesticator of the other, it is clearly not a social relationship. In this relationship, the concept of rights has no meaning.

Some observers would, however, be able to perceive *intra* species rights, or at least, *intragroup* rights, especially in those species that are highly social. It is tempting to see each individual member of a well-functioning group as not only having a social place in relation to others, but also as having a right to that place against all others. This is an unnecessary anthropomorphism, projected upon the social group. It occurs because we are taught to expect strife and competition as the norm, and would like to see this counterbalanced by the right of the individual to a place in the "pecking-order." But, if the concept of dominance competition is removed<sup>13</sup> the necessity for a competitive place, and thus the necessity for the *right* to that place, is also removed. As non-human social behavior is beginning to be understood, every individual has a place by simple virtue of presence. This does not need to be seen as a *claim*.

There are, of course, exceptions; all is not unbroken tranquility. Everyone has seen occasional incidents of aggressiveness and fighting in non-human social groups. I would venture to say that all such exceptions are stress-induced, arising from difficulties involving food, population, illness, disturbance, habitat disruption, social disruption and a variety of other factors. They

very often manifest themselves as communication problems. Physical or psychological stress seems almost always to be at the root of aggressive-competitive behavior in social species. The only *normal* competitive activity is probably play.

V. THE ULTIMATE EXTENSION

 n the assumption that the existence of rights, whether inter- or intraspecies, cannot be satisfactory demonstrated in non-human nature, we are left with its palpable necessity in the human relationship with domesticated and captive animals, and with the targets of recreational killing. What must be done about those aspects of nature -- non-game species and wild nature -- which are of the most pressing concern to conservation, preservation and environmental groups?

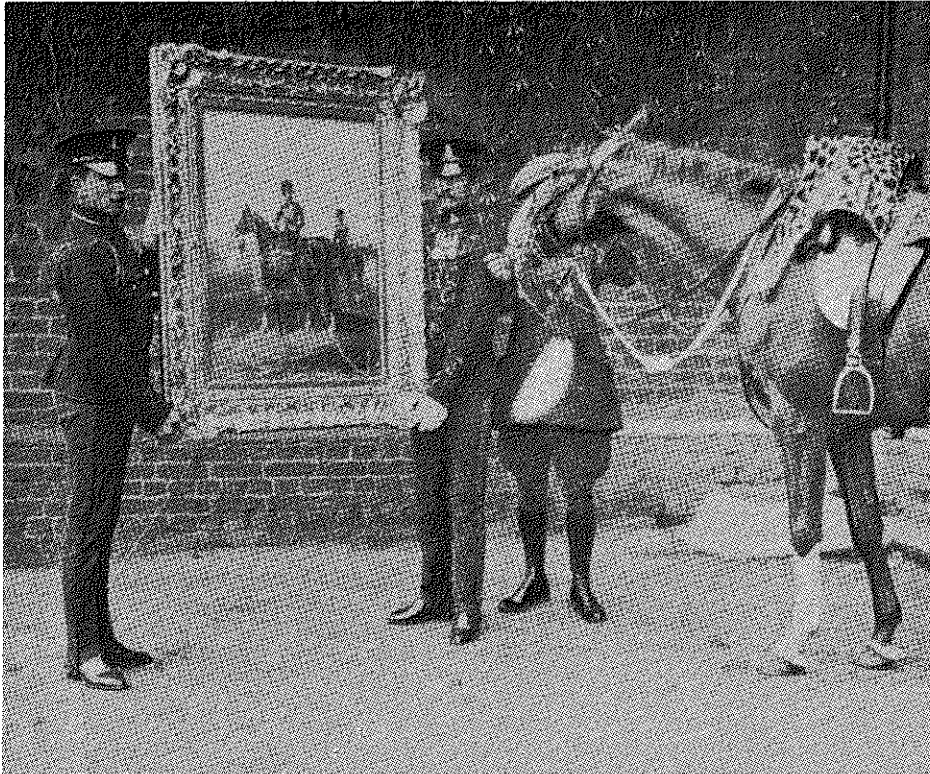
A starting point is the status of the national parks. As in so much of the reflection on environmental rights, there is a move into the neighbourhood of the *reductio*. Some of the smaller national parks of the world are little more than extended menageries. Most of the animals inhabiting them are not under our direct control as individuals, but they are certainly under our control as local populations of their species. Breeding stock is often introduced to improve the genetic "mix." Wildlife management in the national parks and game reserves is a growth industry. More and more, populations of large species, at least, are manipulated in the long-term interest not only of the biological community but also of the tourist trade and international balances of payments. Indeed, many of the ungulate species are under more intensive management in other areas, leading toward domestication, or are made available for shooting on game "ranches." All of these, even those moving freely within the fenced parks, are directly under our discretionary control. They have been subsumed into our organization. As members of the technostucture, or the managed community, they should have rights equivalent to those of any other members of the (prosthetic) community.



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**"Hunting takes the place of natural predation in the folkloric 'balance of nature' because their are no predators left."**

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The *reductio* is closer, camouflaged by questions of degree. What will be done about the really *large* national and wilderness parks, or wild places in general, not yet cordoned off? My argument would seem to require that such places are often the last refuge of endangered, threatened, rare or vulnerable species, on whose behalf constant vigilance is maintained. The occasional result is to bring captive specimens to world-class zoos for controlled breeding toward eventual restoration to the wild, or, salvation in captivity. Certainly, those individual captives have moved into the realm of human control, and thus, of rights. But has the species? Has its unique habitat also gained a status deserving of rights, when the animal is officially listed as endangered?

On this analysis, the ultimate question for the environmentalists et al. is whether *all* of non-human nature ought to move into the control of the human relationship. Presumably, the goal is to prevent such a relationship from developing. But if it is prevented, then the goal of environmental rights must be relinquished. Taken to its extreme, the result of the extension of rights would be to "humanize," or domesticate the entire planet. All life would be a human farm. All would have decent treatment. All would live happily ever after. It must be remembered, however, that the administrator of the extended enterprise would receive proportionately extended obligations and responsibilities. Is anyone willing to accept them?

If the domestication of the planet is thought desirable, the price of the total conquest would be to confer rights on all species conquered, usable against everyone. But past evidence of the human conquest of nature displays massive extinctions, widespread suffering and disfigurement. Accordingly, either total domestication could not take place because each new expansionist move would create a new array of rights to stall it, or rights would have to be subtracted for a majority and selectively retained for a few. That would not amount to moral or ethical behavior toward those under our total control as part of the planetary estate. The argument leads to chasms of absurdity.

As a "nature preservationist," I take no satisfaction from the apparent absurdity of environmental rights. The exercise does, however, have residual merit, if only for having shown that environmental despoilation, degradation and the barbarous interspecies behavior of humankind may have no remedies within the Western cultural tradition. These problems cannot be resolved by the familiar disciplinary tools. Tortured logic and absurd conclusions are inevitable so long as we persist in huddling within conventional legal and moral ground rules. The need is not to invest endless time, energy and creativity in futile attempts to rationalize rights for non-humans within the existing belief structure, but rather to systematically address, with every intellectual tool at our disposal, the pathological species-chauvinist belief structure itself. The humanist tradition dictates that people have absolute rights against all things non-human, and that the human interest is the court of the last resort.

Some philosophers and legal scholars have already recognized the merits and demands of this challenge. Those who have accepted the challenge have found disciplinary precedent scarce. This is understandable. The present relationships with other species, so far as rights and obligations are concerned, are logical outcomes of a unidimensional and egocentric vision of the world. To extend concepts of rights into nature -- Caesar's ultimate exercise of power -- would be to export and legitimate a pathological obsession with hierarchical relationships. As such, the choice is clear: either we must acknowledge the intrinsic "rightness" of non-human existences and sensibilities and express that acknowledgement in *human* behavior, backed by law, or, complete the "humanization" of the planet by making all living things unwitting participants in a prosthetic moral hierarchy.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Fromm analyzed thirty "primitive" cultures, and identified a syndrome in which competitiveness was linked with individualism, private property, dominance hierarchy, and tension in those societies which were strongly aggressive. In others, including those of the Pueblo and the Eskimo, which Fromm terms "life-affirmative societies," he found "little envy, covetousness, greed and exploitativeness...little competition and individualism and a great deal of cooperation...trust, and confidence, not only in others but particularly in nature." See Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973) at 168.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 169.

<sup>3</sup> Livingston, "Ethics as Prosthetics," in Hanson and Dugaid, eds., *Proceedings of 1983 Environmental Ethics Research Workshop* (as yet unpublished, 1984). In this paper, the prosthesis is explicated in the context of the self domestication of technological mankind.

<sup>4</sup> Worster, *Nature's Economy: The Roots of Ecology* (1977).

<sup>5</sup> This is attributed to Thomas Henry Huxley, when first examining Darwin's thesis. He is also said to have exclaimed, "How stupid of me not to have thought of that!" *Id.* at 182.

<sup>6</sup> Harvey and Silvertown, *Can Theoretical Ecology Keep A Competitive Edge?* (1983), 99 *New Scientists* 760 at 760-63.

<sup>7</sup> I would emphasize that this argument does not need to address such speciesist caveats as relative levels of sentience, self-awareness, intelligence and reason, significance in the divine eye, and of human beings as unique "ends-in-themselves" as contrasted with mere animal means. The specious claims (none sustainable on scientific grounds) have been disposed of. See Singer, "Animals and the Value of Life," in Regan, ed., *Matters of Life and Death* (1980) at 218 and *Animal Liberation* (1975). See also Rollin, *Animal Rights and Human Morality* (1981).

My reason for taking a different approach is my (admittedly lay) perception of the self-defeating nature of conventional philosophic and legal argument, mounted as it must be within the inherently chauvinistic framework of Western thought.

<sup>8</sup> Routley and Routley, "Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics," in Mannison and Rotley, eds., *Environmental Philosophy* (1980) 96 on the chauvinism of our ethical systems. See also White, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis* (1968), 155 *Science* 1203. This early statement of the Judeo-Christian roots of the "environmental crisis" has become a classic.

<sup>9</sup> Shepard, in *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (1973) at 15, argues that domesticated animals are "well-padded drudges, insulated by blunted minds and coarsened bodies against the uniformity of the barnyard...coming to terms with the grey world of captivity by arriving at the lowest common denominator of survival." But, one might ask by what *right* did we accomplish this?

<sup>10</sup> Darwin, *supra* note 12, at 111.

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps I may be forgiven for a personal note here. Many friends appear to be mildly amused by the fact that I talk to my family dogs a great deal. The practical fact is that this is the best way to "train" them -- for them to learn the social ways of the household. More important, however, the dogs are an integral part of the social organization of the household. The animals *belong*, not in the proprietary sense, but in the sense of a social imperative. When I am teased for behaving anthropomorphically, my rejoinder is that as a person that is the only way I *can* behave. Judging from their behavior, I have little doubt that the dogs "canimorphize" humans. Their behavior is that of human-socialized dogs. There is no other way to behave.

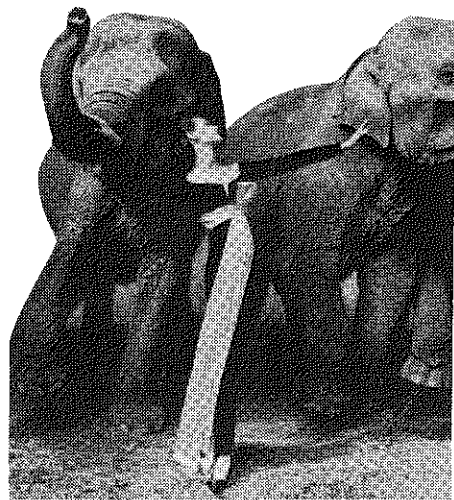
<sup>12</sup> Lopez, *Of Wolves and Men* (1978) at 62.

<sup>13</sup> For works that also argue for the removal of the dominance-competition concept from our society, see Haraway, *Animal Sociology and a Natural Economy of the Body Politic*, *Signs*; 4 (1978); Brownlee, *Biological Complementariness* (1981); Livingston, *The Fallacy of Wildlife Conservation* (1981); Fedigan, *Primate Paradigms: Sex Roles and Social Bonds* (1982). There are also many other recent speculations, some as yet unpublished.

\* surgery: the fitting of artificial parts to the body (eds.).

\* members of the same species (eds.).

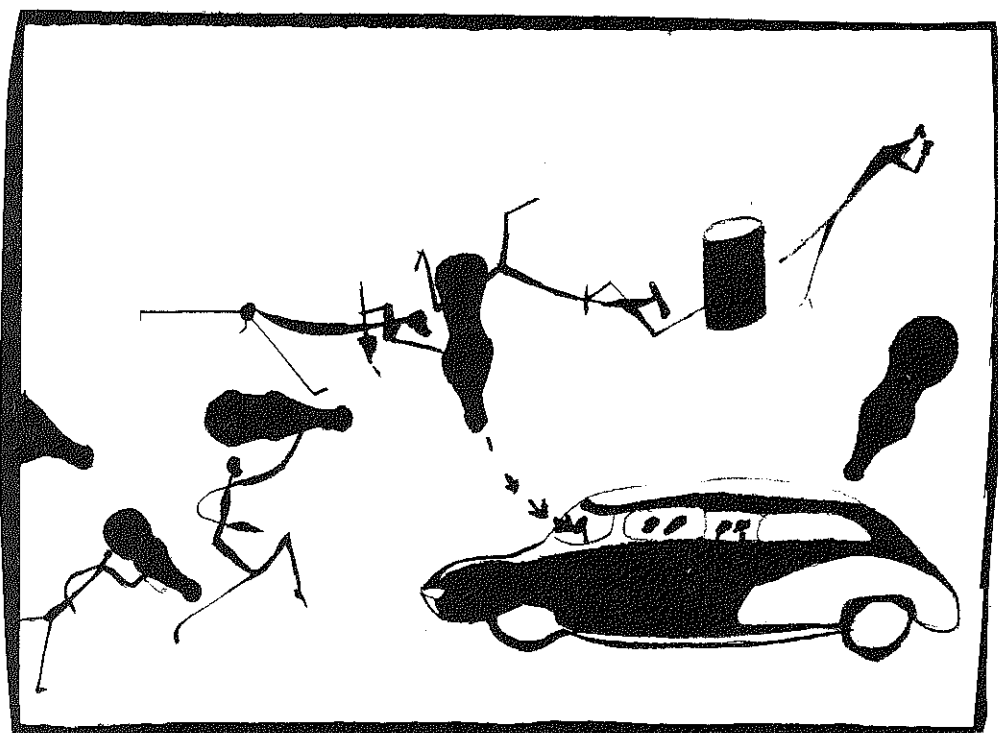
John Livingston is a Professor of Environmental Studies at York University. His books include *The Fallacy of Wild Life Conservation*, and he has done television writing for *The Nature of Things* and *A Planet for the Taking*.





# LASTIC TONE GE

By Rob Nixon



Illustrations: Oliver Girling

As colonial subjects in a territory occupied illegally by South Africa, Namibians can neither govern nor vote in their own country. But within the ranks of these dispossessed, one group, the Bushmen, even stands to lose access to the last of its viable lands. If a proposal by the Namibian authorities is implemented, most of the the Bushmen (or more properly speaking, the Ju/wa San) would be banished from their "homeland" while those remaining would be kept on, either as modern mercenaries in the South African armies or as "primitives" in a game reserve.

The forced removal of people "for their own good" is a routine cruelty under *apartheid*, but the plan to "relocate" the Ju/wasi is especially reprehensible, even by South African standards. Under this plan, traditional Ju/wa culture is to be safe-guarded by turning what is left of the ancestral lands into a game reserve, driving the majority out of the area but retaining a select few who, through their hunting and gathering, are to assume their "authentic" place in the region's fauna and flora. According to the Namibian administration's *Survey of the Bushmen Population of South West Africa* (Namibia), these San are to be organized into "hunting bands" at special tourist points under supervision of a game ranger, the idea being to attract a special class of tourist. As the wildlife in the area earmarked for the reserve is comparatively sparse and unvaried, the region would normally seem a poor competitor with Namibia's other, far richer game parks. What all those reserves lack, however, are real "wild" bushmen; they presumably, will be the major drawing card.

The report justifies this scheme in part by asserting that the project will safeguard "the uniqueness of the Bushmen as part of Nature." The San are thus reduced to a factor in an ecosystem -- as "part of the ecology, in their natural habitat," in the words of Polla Swart, until recently Namibia's Director of Nature Conservation. More than any African people, apart perhaps from the Masai, the San have been saddled with the stereotype of the primitive who lives so symbiotically with nature that one is hard-pressed to tell the difference. Wherever myths of noble savagery have taken root, the nobility has been serenaded by the philosophers, but the savagery has stood out for the colonists. In 1941 Colonel Deny Reitz, a South African Minister of Native Affairs and connoisseur of the San, had this to say in their favour:

"It would be a biological crime if we allowed such a peculiar race to die out, because it is a race which looks more like a baboon than a baboon itself does....We have so far got about twenty who are just about genuine...it is our intention to leave them in the Kalahari Game Park and to allow them to hunt with bows and arrows but without dogs. We look upon them as part of the fauna of the country."

While a "human" who is really a baboon may be indulged with protection in a game reserve, outside the reserve it would certainly, in terms of civil rights, be a lot safer to be mistaken for a person. To be a genuine Bushman is to be an inauthentic human.

These days people are more careful about what they say. But the line of reasoning, however covert, is often not all that different. Most outsiders have gleaned what knowledge they have (or think they have) of the San from Jamie Uys's phenomenally popular comedy *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. In that film, the white microbiologist speaks English but knows no "Bushman", while his "coloured" assistant commands both languages. One rung lower down, NIXau, the Bushman lead, is bewildered by the white man's inscrutable chattering, but when a baboon steals the film's iconic Coke bottle, NIXau lectures him at length on its evil power until the ape is persuaded to drop it. Clearly, NIXau is fluent in both 'Bushman' and Baboon.

The Namibian Administration's Report could never speak of Bushman as essence of baboon, but it does justify the envisaged reserve by appealing to the notion of the San as "children of Nature." The rhetoric of naturalness, preservation and habitats -- with its rider that the San are an "endangered species" -- and even the inordinately prominent role of the Department of Nature Conservation in determining the fate of these people, point to the dangerously blurred distinctions that mar the entire project. (In an analogous confusion of human and animal life, the French television network TF-1 once included a special feature on the San in their Sunday evening documentary series, *Wild Animals of the World*.)



**"Wherever myths of noble savagery have taken root, the nobility has been serenaded by the philosophers, but savagery has stood out for the colonists."**

John Marshall, an activist anthropologist who lived with the Ju/wasi on and off for thirty years, has remarked that the proposed reserve is envisaged as if all San had hunting and gathering encoded in their genes. The plan is premised on an abstract, idealized notion of the hunter-gatherer culture; it is a classic instance of the power of commercial resourcefulness, in league with racism, to invent a tradition. The vast majority of the people classified as "Bushmen" in Namibia have been obstructed from hunting and gathering for three generations or more -- above all, by being ousted from their lands. The "Bushmen" who subsist purely by hunting and gathering may still roam the pages of encyclopedias, but today in Southern Africa are nowhere to be found. The Ju/wasi's formerly extensive knowledge of the veld and their acute powers of observation are waning to the point where scarcely any of those born since about 1960 know how to augment their diet by hunting and gathering. Far less can they subsist by it. Namibian Conservation Department officials acknowledge this deficiency in "experiential learning," and have recommended that San children be taught tracking as part of the school curriculum.

What of N!Xau, one might ask? Jamie Uys, in interviews, has rhapsodized about his San hero's splendid isolation, but anthropologist Toby Alice Volkman has determined that N!Xau has lived a far less secluded existence than Uys would have us believe. Years before starring in the movies he had worked as a herdbooy on a Botswana farm and was later employed as a cook in a Namibian school.

Historically, the Ju/wasi have been the most isolated group of San and the last to become acculturated. But even their hunting and gathering economy collapsed in the 1960s and became truly irretrievable in 1970, when they were dispossessed of 70% of their land, again in the name of nature conservation. From 1970 onwards, one thousand people had to survive in an area that could support at most 250 hunter-gatherers, and that only in a year of good rains. The movement towards a mixed economy and a more Western lifestyle accelerated sharply in the 1970s as the South African army entered the area and began recruiting San as mercenaries in the bush war against SWAPO guerillas. (The largest of Namibia's political organizations, SWAPO has been battling the South African Army for twenty years in a conflict that costs the South Africans about \$170 million US per annum).

If plans for the game reserve are allowed to proceed, *The Gods Must be Crazy* may well serve as a propitious, if unintended, advance advertising campaign. The plans for the reserve dovetail tidily with the myths dispensed by Uys. Key sections of the film were shot in the threatened region and at the very time when Marshall was filming a documentary broaching the problems of a San culture in transition. The society Uys witnessed was already in disrepair. Increasingly landless and dependent South African military handouts, the Ju/wasi were subject to alcoholic fits of violence and showed all the melancholy symptoms of North meeting South -- developing tastes for J&B, skin-lighteners, hair-straighteners, and infant formula. Why then, does Uys's narrator blithely inform us that the San are "the most contented people in the world," and that "nobody knows about the Bushmen, nobody goes into that deep Kalahari"? San society, he says, knows "no crime, no punishment, no violence, no laws, no rules." He might as well have added "no history." But Western incursions have proved less easy to deflect than Uys would lead us to believe.

The San have accrued a history, at least three centuries old, of dispossession and decimation. As the South African historiographer, G.M. Theal, put it at the turn of this century: "(The San) were of no benefit to any other section of the human family, they were incapable of improvement, and as it was impossible for civilized men to live on the same soil with them, it was for the world's good that they should make room for a higher race." Seventy-five years on they continue to make room. Steadily stripped of land, they have been hampered by perplexing legislation: Since 1920 bow-and-arrows have been banned, and for sixty-odd years they have fallen afoul of the territory's vagrancy statutes (a particularly tough one for nomads).

But the most decisive changes amongst San cultures have come about in the past decade through the actions of the South African Army. The South Africans, understandably, have been wary of training and arming large numbers of blacks in the war against the SWAPO guerillas: not until 1974 did the army create its first black force, the Pled Crow battalion, which significantly was comprised (officers apart) solely of San. The unit's emblem of the Pled or White-breasted Crow is a signally South African bit of iconography. Commanding Officer Botes's explication sums it up:

"The black portion of the bird represents the Bushman population while the white breast represents the white leadership element (thus they accept that whites take the lead in their development process). The crow is the first bird which was let out of Noah's Ark and did not return -- this symbolizes the fact that the Bushmen, too, will not return to their previous customs."

Four years after the founding of the Pled Crows, a second battalion was launched in Bushmanland proper, the territory of the Ju/wasi, and by 1981 the army had become the primary employer in the area.

Why did the military choose to recruit amongst the San in preference to all other black groups? In the early years, at any rate, the San's legendary tracking skills were cited in defence of this change in policy: if they could stay with the spoor of wild game, they

could do likewise with the tracks of the elusive guerillas. But that was only the beginning. Soon the army's rationalizations veered in a pseudo-scientific direction: SWAPO and the San, who historically had scarcely any contact, were made to appear *natural* adversaries. The colonizers's trusty rhetoric was trundled out again: "A Bushman's hate for SWAPO will give you the shivers... They hate SWAPO because they enslaved them and took their daughters for prostitutes." Similarly the old *apartheid* maxim -- they would sooner scrap amongst themselves than fight with us -- was invoked in tones of mock perturbation: "The only real problem lies in their (the San's) conviction that all blacks are the enemy," a statement which, if true, smacks of breakneck indoctrination.

The newly forged alliance between the South African Defence Force and the San has also been explained in patriotic terms, the San apparently relishing the chance to defend the Namibian people from "terrorists" who wished to seize their land. Yet the San are incapable of perceiving themselves as citizens of anything so grandiose as the Namibian nation-state; they do not even recognize the Namibia Administration's designation of them as "the Bushman group," and their sense of collective identity is expressed in the much smaller units of, say, the Ju/wasi as against the Vasekela San, people separated from each other by great linguistic and other cultural and geographic differences. And as for the Ju/wasi defending the piece of land they actually lived on (as opposed to a generalized nation), the game reserve proposal further testifies to the fact that the real threat of dispossession has always come from government, not "terrorist" quarters.

Flipping through back issues of the South African military's major publications, *Paratus* and *Armed Forces*, one finds the progress of San units assiduously documented. A banner headline proclaims that "36 Battalion is engaged in transforming stone-age hunter-gatherers into competent infantry-men, radio-operators and medics." The same article announces that the battalion now "boast the only Bushman Leap Into The Space Age" -- one of the first San paratroopers remarks that "falling through the air was a nice sensation." The gods, it would seem, drop not only Coke empties but the San themselves from the heavens. Elsewhere it is noted that San require more schooling in musketry than the average recruit, but that "survival training is somewhat superfluous." There is a good deal of talk along the line of "guided cultural change" and having drawn conflict to the region in the first place, the military now scripts itself as the Bushman's jealous protector: without "the Supportive Services being offered by the SADF to the community they would have fallen prey to subversive SWAPO activities." One commanding officer is even quoted as believing "the Army to have saved them as a tribe from extinction." Salvation implies sheltering the San from themselves by redeeming them from what is thought to be their perennial aimlessness, neither a surprising nor a fatal "flaw" in a residually nomadic culture.

But the army seems divided -- or confused -- about precisely where the Ju/wasi's newfound sense of purpose is leading them. On the one hand, it issues statements like: "The Defence Force does not only make war. On the contrary, the task of civilizing...is probably *greater* than the military function" (their emphasis); on the other hand, one finds Lt. Wolff insisting that: "Our aim is not to Westernize them but to make them better Bushmen." The latter assertion seems much more in keeping with the chief premise underlying the planned game reserve; namely, that it is justifiable to interfere with a culture in order to make it more like itself. One member of the top brass of the

South African Defence Force Ethnology Department struggled to define the limits of the army's efforts on the San's behalf: "Although the SADF has been concerned with the so-called upliftment action since 1974, its actions cannot really be spoken of as acculturation." We can leave such niceties to the military ethnologists.

In accordance with South African policy, every "homeland" must have its appointed chief. Bushmanland is no exception. "Chief Geelbool (Yellowboy) Kashe -- officially designated "Paramount Leader of the Bushmen" -- was for several years the main mouthpiece for South African policy towards the San. The February 1983 issue of *Paratus* flaunted a statement by Geelbool that was quickly seized upon by pro-government sectors of the South African press. "The giraffe," Geelbool declared, has his kick, the lion his teeth, the tiger his claws and the buffalo his horns to frighten off the enemy. We, the Bushmen, we have our Territory Force! The Bushman welcomes the presence of 203 Battalion in Bushmanland -- the Battalion is the Bushman's horns, teeth, claws and kick.

Geelbool is an interesting case. While holding his appointment he must certainly have been -- to use some *Paratus*-style hyperbole -- the world's one and only "hunter-gatherer" with a white Mercedes and a white chauffeur (both government-donated). The responsibilities of the chauffeur, Mr. François Stroh, were multiple: he was also known as Geelbool's "secretary" and doubled up as interpreter-cum-puppeteer. For Geelbool, the sole spokesperson for the "will of the Bushman people," conveniently knew no other language than his native Ju/wasi. As nobody apart from his almost uniquely bilingual white "secretary" had recourse to the chief's original utterances, who knows how the translations were negotiated?

Geelbool's prominence as the most-quoted Ju/wasi on the subject of the South African occupation of Bushmanland has tended to screen out other opinion radically at odds with his own. But in the prize-winning movie, *N!ai, The story of a !Kung Woman*, which documents the genesis of Battalion 36, Marshall records the outrage of one #Toma who, despite South African propaganda to the contrary,

insists that his people are happy "to share the pot with SWAPO." At the same time, he is violently opposed to the effect of the South African military on the social fabric: "I won't let my children be soldiers, the experts at anger. The soldiers will bring the killing. This I know."

The Ju/wasi's dependency on the largesse of the South African Army for employment and handouts has generated dangerous disparities in income and power among them. Historically non-hierarchical, Ju/wa society has become precipitously imbalanced, with a small core of young men earning twenty times Bushmanland's average per capita income and lording it over an ever-widening circle of medics. The introduction of wealth in such a lopsided fashion has brought with it alcoholism and violence which, together with a diet comprised disproportionately of donated white sugar and refined meal, have resulted in declining health and an increase in the mortality rate. The Ju/wasi's dependency leaves them doubly vulnerable because it is quite clear that their South African sponsors, for all their skillful stalling, cannot remain in Namibia indefinitely. It is equally apparent that SWAPO, who the Ju/wasi have been encouraged to consider their deadly enemy, will win the country's first free election. Even the South Africans concede privately that SWAPO is the territory's strongest grouping by far, but it would be bad for morale to admit as much publicly. Inevitably, the South Africans' public posture skews their interest in the future of these particular San, making them indifferent to easing the Ju/wasi's reliance on an impermanent military. Marshall puts it quite tidily: the Ju/wasi "have been recruited to fight a war they do not understand, and, when the war is over, and when the paycheques stop, they won't have the skills to support themselves...."

There is, however, a feasible scheme underway which, if given a chance, could loosen the noose of dependency. Launched by Marshall and his colleague Claire Ritchie, with the support of Ju/wa communities, it recognizes the alliance with the military as ephemeral and recommends scuttling both the plan to "relocate" the bulk of the Ju/wasi to the arid and uninhabitable western region of Bushmanland and the proposal to declare the eastern sector a game reserve. Most importantly, the Marshall-Ritchie scheme would ensure that the Ju/wasi retain the last of their uninhabitable land and would secure their autonomy during an era of somersaulting political change. This pragmatic proposal (now promoted by the !Kung San Development Foundation in Watertown, Mass.) seeks to shore up and develop existing skills, notably animal husbandry, amongst the Ju/wasi and integrate these skills into a mixed style of subsistence. So far the Marshall Cattle Fund has established four cattle posts, each supporting communities of sixty to seventy people. The activist anthropologists' alternative to the Namibian Administration's plan takes into account the composite character of the culture. To survive, they argue, the Ju/wasi need to blend different forms of subsistence: rearing cattle, planting crops, and hunting and gathering, supplemented if necessary by sporadic wetwork. Marshall and Ritchie can point to stable, productive, adequately nourished Ju/wa communities embracing just such a lifestyle in nearby Botswana. Their core conviction is that the survival of the Ju/wasi is best guaranteed not by jobs but by land.

The !Kung San Development Foundation's blueprint enjoys considerable local backing, even from Geelbool, who has recently become disaffected with the Namibian Administration. He is angered by the proposed banishment of his people from their ancestral hunting grounds and by the prospect of the only district with surface water being turned over to wild animals. Gratified by the success of the cattle posts, Geelboi is also frustrated by the Administration's insistence on blocking attempts to establish further communities along similar lines. For the Administration is resolutely opposed to this rival to their own scheme of expropriation and tourism, invoking the

anachronistic argument that animal husbandry is alien to "the Bushman way of life." It also predicted sanguinely that when Ritchie and Marshall left Bushmanland the posts would collapse. However, three to four years after the anthropologists' departure the posts remain thoroughly intact, and all the evidence points to the Ju/wasi wanting and needing more of them. The !Kung San Development Foundation has come up with the only plan to date that adequately takes into account the chequered state of Ju/wa society, admitting that if there is any future for it at all, it will entail not a choice between two ways of life but an amalgam of them. The alternative offered by the Namibian Administration would be, in Marshall's phrase, a futureless "plastic stone-age," a culture to be performed but not inhabited.

An incident at the 1984 agricultural show in Windhoek, the Namibian capital, attests to the grinding contradictions between official perceptions of the Ju/wasi. The South African Defence Force sponsored a Bushmanland stall where two Ju/wa women and a child sat for three days making beadwork and bows-and-arrows against a photographic backdrop. Lt. Dokkie Lindvelt, the army chaplain who supervised the stall, made it clear that the exhibited Ju/wa had been instructed to dress down for the occasion - to go "traditional." From the SADF's point of view the stall was a massive success. But the Ju/wasi involved felt otherwise, one of them remarking how "some people make us feel strange, like we are not people, like we are strange creatures, like animals." "There are some people in this town who just do not know anything about us, they think we are wild animals," a companion added. After being taunted and harassed by visitors for two days, the Ju/wasi abandoned the mandatory loin cloths and insisted on covering their buttocks. Despite their rebelliousness, the stall was awarded a bronze medal in the Industrial Section of the show. The South African military and Department of Nature Conservation, between them, seem liable to shred Ju/wa society by tugging it every which way. According to the one, Noah's crow, though in military colors, is flying forever free; the other

▽

**"Some people make us feel strange, like we are not people, like we are strange creatures, like animals."**

seems persuaded that it should be summoned back to the (meanwhile remodelled) ark. While such rival arguments continue to fog the air, one thing remains clear: seldom have the rhetoric of preservation and the need for survival been so obviously at odds.

At this stage, one can only imagine the Namibian Administration's delight at the success of a movie which would persuade the world that "what distinguishes the Bushmen from all other races on earth is that they have no sense of ownership at all, because there is really nothing they can own." Hasn't that always been the colonial way? Step One, romanticize a "primitive" people as delightfully unencumbered by proprietary instincts; Step Two, with sparkling clear conscience, disencumber them of their land.

"San" is an alternative to the sometimes derogatory and genre-biased term 'Bushman'. !Kung is one of three major languages spoken in Namibia. The Ju/wasi speak a !Kung dialect and are probably by and large the least acculturated of all the San people.

The best source for information on the game reserve project and on the state of the San in general is:

The !Kung San Development Foundation  
#5A Bridge St.  
Watertown, MA  
02172

Thanks to Ellen Levy for her editorial help.

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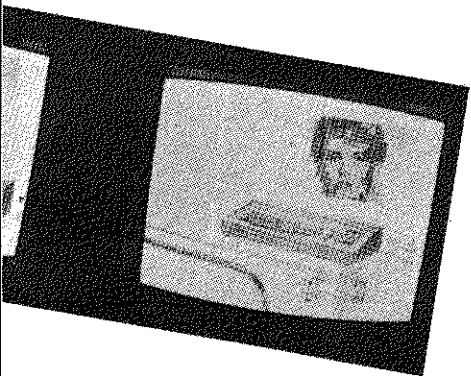
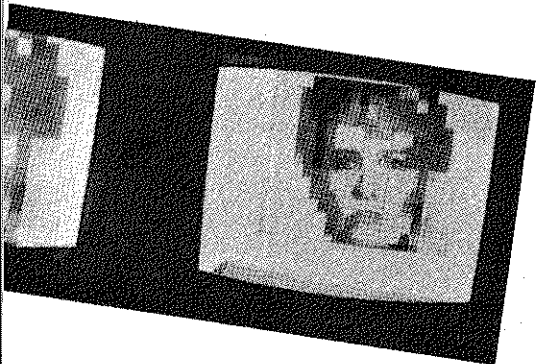
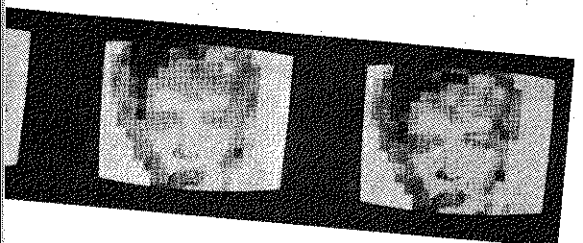
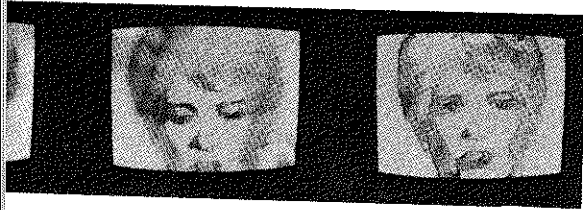
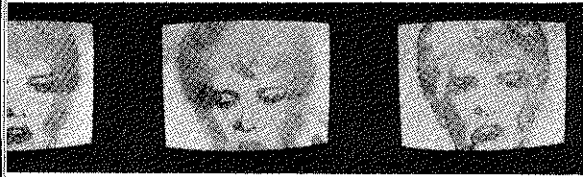
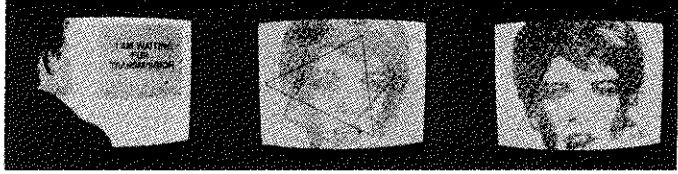


**Closed Circuits: The Sellout of Canadian TV.**By Herschel Hardin  
Douglas and MacIntyre, 1985**Jolts: The T.V. Wasteland and the Canadian Oasis**By Morris Wolfe  
James Lorimer, 1985

"The CBC is writing the autobiography of Canada. It's important that it be well written."  
Morris Wolfe

"It was best not to risk anything."  
Herschel Hardin

There is something unseizably complacent about the Canadian soul. Indeed, it is less an uncertain sense of self than an unacknowledged sense of complacency that informs Canadian identity.



Hardin's *Closed Circuits* confronts this situation. The book takes us through a nightmare of complacency: the complacency of our entire broadcasting system but supremely, inescapably, the complacency of the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (the CRTC), that self-appointed guardian angel of the Canadian Broadcasting Act.

Hardin's book is not complacent. It is angry. As founding president of the Association for Public Broadcasting in British Columbia (APBBC) and as general manager of Capital Cable Co-operative, he has spent the last fifteen years not only as a media critic but as a participant. *Closed Circuits* documents the failure of the CRTC, since its inception in 1968 to the present day, to insure that Canadian broadcasting might be at least basically Canadian.

Set up at enormous cost to the tax-payer yet productive of nothing, the CRTC has been a regulatory body that has been too pusillanimous to regulate. Except for holding firm to its decision in 1970 that 30% of all music on Canadian radio should be Canadian -- thus ultimately allowing Canadian rock stars like Corey Hart and Bryan Adams to develop and, if they choose, to remain in Canada -- the CRTC has bungled every regulatory decision that it has been confronted with, from the establishment of our privately owned networks like Global Television and CTV, throughout the cable hearings to the bringing of Pay-TV. Hardin is particularly angry because as a believer in public broadcasting, at each stage of these proceedings, alternate models were offered to the CRTC

and were refused -- refused in favour of maintaining federal authority and of making a buck rather than establishing a meaningful broadcasting system.

The story is so well-known that it is boring to reiterate. Although mandated to *regulate* the private sector, the CRTC has always played into its hands. Indeed, Hardin cites a number of cases where Commissioners have left the CRTC and gone to work in the private sector. If the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is Canada's national disappointment, The Canadian Radio-Television Commission is Canada's national shame.

At the same time, there is something unhelpful about Hardin's account of all these inequities. Whether dealing with the realm of broadcasting, of journalism, or of the Commission itself, Hardin's attacks are all directed at the evil, corrupt, and hypocritical people involved in these activities rather than at the institutional structures that corrupt them or, at least, render their nobler gestures ineffectual. Also, as a British Columbian, Hardin can with reason cast the blame on the myopic centralist thinking of Ottawa. Throughout the '70s, the federal Liberals were so preoccupied with the separatist factions within Quebec that they would not even consider creative, public-spirited provincial applications, such as those put forward at different times both by Saskatchewan and by British Columbia.

What we need if we are going to change things is an analysis of how that centralist thinking operates as a system of control within the federal economy. We are not helped by a list of all the "stupid" people and of the terrible things that they have done. We have to understand more completely how the Treasury board, through its complex system of "enveloping," maintains a strangle-hold over whatever any other government department might want to initiate. For Hardin to fill his book with accusations is, finally, to empty it of politics.

For instance, take the case of Moses Znaimer and of CITY TV--"the little station that didn't," as Hardin refers to it. Znaimer began with one plan for his station and ended up with another. Setting out to challenge the "mediocrats" in Ottawa, he ended up in collusion with them. Hardin tells this story totally in terms of Znaimer's

demonstrable hypocrisy. Yet there is another story here that would be less personalist in its thrust and more political in its analysis. It would situate the station within the political and economic systems of power that operate between the city and the province, between the province and the nation, and between what often *feels* like private initiative and public restraint. It would *analyse* and lead to *understanding*, not just accuse everyone for what has not been done.

Nevertheless, in spite of its accusational tone, Hardin's book describes a situation that could have developed differently -- a situation that would have given more power to the provinces and that would have created a public broadcasting system independent of the futility of advertisements. The system we now have is one almost totally dependant on merchandising -- a situation, approved, of course, by the Treasury Board! In such a situation, programming ceases to matter as a broadcasting priority. It simply becomes (to paraphrase Roy Thompson) the stuff you put between ads. Corporate stupidity in the public sector becomes a necessity to allow this situation to continue. Grey matter is not encouraged to intervene within this grey area. To alter this collective stupidity, one would have to alter the priorities of the whole of Canada.

One would have to posit values other than the values of late capitalism, other than the short term profits to be gained from merchandising. But this cannot be done, certainly not now, simply within the broadcasting system. When even our educational systems marginalize our own achievements, it is naive to think that the battle for a national broadcasting system would be easy to win. Had there been more courage and foresight within the public sector in Ottawa, had there been more grey matter, there might have been a different scenario. But in the '80s, with the short-sighted fiscal priorities of the Conservative Party in place, any effective changes, whether in education or in broadcasting, will have to involve radical changes within the country as a whole.



Is there a political party in this country that would present these changes as a priority within any election campaign? Would it be elected if it did? I too am angered and sickened by what has happened to our broadcasting system, with what I can hear happening minute by minute to CBC FM. But raving at individuals is not going to change anything. Concerned Canadians will have to work on consciousness-raising sessions for enough of our population to make education and culture a political issue at the national level. Working within education, I am not without hope. But there is still an extraordinary amount of work that needs to be done to overcome the self-ignorance and its attendant complacency that infects the national spirit.

In the struggle that is always before us, Hardin's book will help--through the documentation that it contains and through the record of noble battles fought and lost. So might *Jolts*. A very different work from *Closed Circuits*, *Jolts* actually values the Canadian achievement in television, whatever the problems, compared to the "wasteland" of the United States.

More anecdotal than analytical, Wolfe takes us through a variety of Canadian television programs, largely produced by the CBC, and speculates about the values they contain that he feels are positively Canadian. Citing past work like Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, Herschel Hardin's earlier work, *A Nation Unaware*, Edgar Friedenberg's *Deference to Authority*, and June Callwood's *Portrait of Canada*, Wolfe situates himself within that great tradition of Canadian nationalists who celebrate Canada's cultural achievement and/or lament the character traits that can be found within the traces of our culture which have been made available to us.

Wolfe begins by regretting the impoverished state of television criticism, which I think does an injustice to Michael Arlen in New York and to Joyce Nelson in Toronto -- though it is true that these writers work more on the theoretical level than on the program-by-program descriptive level that Wolfe himself adopts. Wolfe's own theoretical contribution, however, to the discourse about television resides in his having invented the concept of jpm's -- jolts-per-minute.

Throughout his book, Wolfe claims that there are generally more jpm's in American shows than in Canadian ones -- an interesting concept that allows him to relate the pacing of television programs to the energy with which they are tied to their advertising strategies. And if we notice nowadays that films made with the help of the Broadcasting Fund of Telefilm Canada have more jpm's than Canadian films had previously, then we must join in Herschel Hardin's howl against yet another federal institution, Telefilm Canada, that is putting the concept of profits over any concept of culture.

Wolfe, of course, doesn't howl at all. His is a "sensible" book. It is even a light-hearted book. If, finally, we might feel that in its casualness, its informality, it is part of the national complacency, it is also complaisant. It is fun to read as it must have been fun to write -- sitting home a lot and watching television with his children, being pleased with much of what he finds within those programs that he feels are distinctly Canadian.

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### Take Two: A Tribute to Film in Canada

Edited by Seth Feldman  
Toronto, Irwin Publishing, 1984

Every few months a new film book that focuses on a particular national cinema appears in the bookstores. All of these books, whether written by socialists, cultural nationalists, or bureaucrats, aim to define and affirm the uniqueness of a given nation's cinema. They are written to defend against the imperialist flood of US culture that swamps most western and Third World nations. *Take Two* is such a book.

A collection of essays edited by Seth Feldman, *Take Two* provides several good answers to the question of what is an authentic Canadian or Quebec film. Unfortunately, it doesn't dwell much on whether that question is the most useful one to ask. Rather it sets out to prove that good films are made in Canada -- and succeeds. As its subtitle suggests, the book was motivated as much by public relations as by serious scholarship. Published to coincide with Toronto's 1984 Festival of Festivals, the book was designed to complement the international focus of the festival with the best in Canadian and Québec cinema.



The book doesn't shy away from dredging up some of the past fiascos and dark episodes -- the red scares at the NFB, the tax shelter rip-offs, and the god-awful dreck beneath contempt (let alone analysis). But the book is primarily a leap to the defence of Canadian cinema and as such it valorizes the entire output of some filmmakers in the name of Canadian creativity. In the process it settles into the conventions of auteurism and consequently lays the blame for most of the fiascos at the feet of the state -- a state in turns timid, censorious, short-sighted, and miserly. Polarizing the discussion between individual creativity and insensitive institutions in this way tends to close down the distinctions that should be made among films

and filmmakers on one end and among institutions on the other. This polarization also leaves out considerations of genre, working methods, and other mediating factors.

It is too bad that Feldman didn't situate this book within its publishing context. There is no discussion of the role of the film festivals, and the absence of this discussion together with the absence of any assessment of the nature of film criticism, seriously weakens the ability of Canadian cinema to move forward.

Feldman divides *Take Two* into five sections: "The Big Picture", "The English Screen", "Les Québécois", "The National Film Board", and "The Experimental Challenge". As a survey of major films, people, institutions, and movements the book works well and stands as one of the best resources to date on Canadian cinema. With a few exceptions, the quality of the writing and criticism is high. Writers such as Peter Harcourt and Piers Handling have a real love for Canadian cinema and their enthusiasm rubs off. Feldman's introduction to each essay provide excellent summaries of key issues and his insights link the ideas of many of the authors.

*Take Two* includes a number of valiant efforts at defining all of Canadian cinema. In Feldman's key overview, "The Silent Subject in English Canadian Film", he states the historic difficulty "In establishing a truly independent form of self-expression", but goes on to provide a rather startling summary: "the enforced silence of the culture in its most economically vulnerable medium, cinema, has become a tradition that is incorporated into the works themselves."

Feldman argues that, unlike the films of Québec, English Canadian cinema has neither developed the forms nor captured the language appropriate to its society. They are either dominated by the imperial voice of God or peopled with characters "battered into silence" by circumstances beyond their comprehension.

Other overviews by Jay Scott, James Leach, and Bruce Elder also attempt to define what distinguishes Canadian and Québec cinema — one enormous joke (Scott); that the characters overwhelmingly display frustration and emptiness (Leach); that concern with photographic reality determines form (Elder).

Apart from these attempts at very general criteria, most of the writers in *Take Two* have retreated (or rather advanced) to look more closely at specific forms, institutions, and movements. These specific kinds of analysis aren't more appropriate simply because they're more modest. It's that the nature of the 'objects' under study — the NFB, broadcasting, Québec's big-budget features, the Anglo avant-garde, and so forth — share so little terrain that generalizations prove weak indeed.

The section on the NFB contains two historical essays that cover the immediate post-war years — a period poorly known in film studies. Both articles document the close but always strained relations between the Board and other institutions of the State, including Cabinet.

For all the influence that NFB films have had on Canadians, perfectly illustrated in recent years by the controversial *Not A Love Story, If You Love This Planet, Speaking Our Peace, and Home Feelings*, few people have a way of understanding the context of these films or a knowledge of their historical antecedents. The two essays on the 50s, together with Handling's essay on Michael Rubbo, open up that area.

The essays on Québec are quite strong, especially when read in sequence. In particular, the analysis of Pierre Perrault by Harcourt and Clandfield achieves the kind of depth that allows us to understand the specifics of the films and at the same time to consider the larger questions of Québec documentary. The two articles on Perrault work well as an illustration of one of Feldman's main themes — the importance of language and of finding a national voice in cinema. Harcourt describes Perrault's work as "un cinema vécu" — "Language has dominated his every activity. Authentic speech has been the goal of all his quests."

This search for authentic Québec speech introduces us to the may fascinating people in Perrault's films, but it also suggests some the fundamental problems of cinema direct and other forms of observational cinema. Perrault remains a controversial figure in Québec because his portraits seem to some critics to be an appropriation of his subjects because the search for authentic speech can look reactionary.

Unfortunately these criticisms enter the book second-hand via the English Canadian writers. Inclusion of at least one of the key critical texts from a Québécois writer would surely have deepened our understanding of Perrault's importance.

Brenda Longfellow provides a valuable discussion of Québec feminist fiction. Her argument about the reasons why women directors in Québec have chosen fictional forms highlights the different social and political contexts surrounding Québec cinema. Although women directors in many countries fight similar battles within the mainstream and on the margins, Québec women have achieved distinctive solutions and have created an impressive body of work.

A key article for linking the concerns about Canadian media with the experiences of other countries is Sandra Gathercole's "The Best Film Policy This Country Never Had". Gathercole, who for several years chaired the Council of Canadian Filmmakers, recalls Canadian state attempts to foster a cinema policy. She suggests that while good ideas have been put forward, none have been adopted. Unlike many other countries, Canada has only threatened to use quotas, taxes and the like and has opted instead for voluntary agreements or half-baked tax incentives. Gathercole argues that only a comprehensive economic and cultural policy has any chance of fostering an indigenous cinema.

The political orientation of *Take Two* is nationalist and auteurist. Question of feminism and socialism are made to fit within national and aesthetic categories, like pesky younger siblings — something that has to be put up with. A few writers question the ideological work of Canadian cinema (Kneelman, Morris, Handling) but, overall, questions of aesthetic quality prevail. For most writers here, the worst example of Canadian cinema are those that pretend to take place elsewhere. This nationalist approach makes it possible for deeply misogynist and reactionary class portraits such as *The Parasite Murders* and *Wedding In White* to be treated unproblematically.

To be fair, very few of the 'good' national products discussed (*Goin' Down The Road, Paperback Hero, The Grey Fox*) are utterly reprehensible in their depictions of women and working class

characters. Yet Canadian criticism will remain inadequate if writers continue to shy away from examining home-grown state and ruling-class ideologies. This orientation serves the public relations function of the book, but not the overall health of film criticism.

In my view there are serious flaws in the selection of articles. Though Feldman states in his introduction that good writing about Canadian film is easier to find than in 1977 (as it is), his reliance on some writers for two and three articles belies his interest in the real range of current. Why, for example, does he include two pieces by Toronto academic David Clandfield in the section on Québec? And four pieces by and about Bruce Elder on experimental film betrays a clubbiness that seriously mars Feldman's survey — and tries my patience. 40 of 52 pages in this section are by or about Elder!

But the most serious flaw by far is the absence of Québécois criticism. To state that Québec cinema differs profoundly from Canadian is to state the obvious; to argue that "the thoughts of our colleagues" lie "outside the parameters of this book" reveals a political failure on the part of the editor.

The main debates about the kind of Canadian cinema desirable in *Take Two* relate primarily to the degree of truth about Canada contained in a cinematic self-portrait. The underlying question is whether the film is really Canadian or merely ersatz Hollywood. Such attempts to generalize filmic qualities play a useful critical role, but we also need to ask whose interests are served by defining a cinema merely as Canadian. We need cinema that is progressive culturally and politically as well as viable industrially.

**Peter Steven** works in film distribution and exhibition at DEC films, and is editor of *Jump Cut: Hollywood, Politics and Counter-Cinema* (1985).

## Strange Bedfellows: The State and the Arts in Canada

By George Woodcock  
Douglas and McIntyre, Vancouver, 1985

In the fall of 1985 the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council teetered on the brink of closure. At issue was the role of arms-length versus direct funding to the arts. The provincial government had decided to retain control over sustaining funds to publishers, dance, and theatre groups through the Department of Culture, Recreation and Youth. Several members of the Arts Council had resigned in protest, arguing that funding for the arts, and the right to decide who deserved it, belonged solely to the Council. Backed by those arts groups receiving the lion's share of the direct funding, the government attacked the council for its high administrative costs, and threatened to replace it with an advisory board. Payment on all funds to the Council was stopped. Staff waited for paycheques and artists waited for grants while the majority Conservative government launched an investigation into the internal administration of the Council. Finally, the decision was made to appoint new Council members, and the Council again opened for "business", with the issue of arms-length funding still unresolved.

This recent experience highlights the insecurity that besets the relationship between the State and the Arts in Canada, and underlines the need for understanding the past and present of that relationship. This is something that George Woodcock has aimed for in his book *Strange Bedfellows*. Whether he has hit the target is another question.

The book begins with a clarification of the terms "art" and "culture". According to Woodcock the term culture does not recognize the distinction between what is art (literature, ballet) and what is not (television, bowling). Thus, when we talk of culture instead of art, we play into the hands of bureaucrats and politicians, who are only too happy to use the confusion over what is truly under discussion to further centralize their control over the artistic process. This is exemplified by the growth of cultural industries as an instrument of government policy.

While I think there is some truth to this argument (as evidenced by recent suggestions that multicultural programs be administered by the Canada Council), it seems to me that Woodcock's position is presented in an either/or approach. Either we use the term culture, and therefore reject great art from the

past or outside Canadian borders; or we use the term art, by which we welcome into our society the universal appeal of art with its ability to transcend time and space. The cultural nationalist position has never been to shut out art from other cultures, but rather to encourage the development of Canadian art. I suspect that Woodcock's position can largely be attributed to his anarchist politics, and that his argument, as evidenced by his denunciation of Susan Crean, is more an attack on nationalist politics than it is a defence of elitism in the arts.

Woodcock relates the history of the various commissions investigating aspects of Canada's cultural life. He tends to describe these commissions in terms of their findings relating to writing and publishing, which is not surprising given that writing is Woodcock's *métier*. I found several times that his disgust over government intervention in arts funding petered out when that intervention benefited either writing or publishing. For example, in the mid-seventies, the Secretary of State gave the Council extra funds earmarked for publishing, and though not mentioned, and though not mentioned, by Woodcock, for film. Although many people have severely criticized Council for tarnishing the arms-length relationship by accepting money clearly designed to foster policy determined by the government, and not by the Council itself, Woodcock tends to gloss over this. He also makes light of the Ontario Arts Council's controversial Writer's Reserve program, through which a writer nominated by a publisher is given a grant towards the writing of a book. These inconsistencies weaken his purist position.

The best chapter is on tax and censorship laws in relation to the artist. It contains specific and engaging examples rather than the textbook prose that characterizes much of this book. When Woodcock is writing on subjects he feels strongly about, such as writing and publishing, or about the poverty of artists, the book comes to life. Having been active in Canadian (dare I say it?) cultural life for so many years, Woodcock brings a wealth of individual experience to his topic, and I wish he had included more of his own personal journey through the maze of arts funding.

The final chapter is disappointing. The suggestions for saving the arts from the peril of the state are neither new nor controversial. Woodcock critiques the jury system at the Canada Council, pointing out that while it is the best system available, a look at the scope and range of each discipline's jurors leads one to question just how "peer" they really are. He suggests more money to Council as a solution, although warning that artists who rely on the largesse of the state are liable to become servants of the state. I disagree. As long as arms-length funding remains in place, the individual artist is not likely to experience direct political control through Council, but simply the cutting off of funds, as happened in Newfoundland this fall.

Woodcock goes on to propose tax incentives for artists - even though he recognizes that most artists don't earn enough to be liable for taxes in the first place. He proposes to increase artists' income, (thus making them eligible for tax breaks?) through several programs. One proposal is to sell manuscripts and sketches as archival material. This would be done under the Cultural Property Export and Import Control Act, giving money to institutions to purchase works certified as being of national importance. This, a suggestion from a man who abhors bureaucracy?

Even though he admits that exemption from taxation will not help the majority of artists, in the biggest disappointment of the book, Woodcock suggests there is no way for "untested or apprentice" artists, (ie. all those who do not earn enough to benefit from tax breaks) to avoid the "long struggle" which offers a "rough and perhaps necessary process of natural selection". He then tosses off the notion of a minimum guaranteed income as the only thing that could really help artists.

Woodcock ends with a call for greater corporate investment and sponsorship of the arts. Some regard this as the height of politicization, an integration of the world of art with the world of free enterprise that inevitably leads to both political and ideological control of the ideas expressed, the plays commissioned, the dances, and exhibitions chosen. One wonders just how Woodcock feels about political art, about films or plays that take on contemporary social and political issues, about artists who engage in public and political debate on issues related or unrelated to arts funding. He certainly issues no call to arms - emphasis is placed on art for art's sake *alone*. The artists of the nation must be treated with care and respect, and kept out of the pigstrough of politics. Yet given his antipathy towards cultural bureaucrats and arts administrators, just how does he propose that the goal of improved funding for the arts be reached? Somebody has to write the brief, contact the press, the politicians, garner support for the issue. What does he understand by political?

While this book is a good introduction to funding of the arts in Canada, and is perhaps best suited as a reference text for university courses in related disciplines, it provides little to work with for artists or others interested in the (I dare say it) cultural life of this country. In this year's round of activities to save the Canada Council, the CBC, NFB, etc. it looks like the artists across the country will have to rely, as they always do, on their own inspiration.

**Debra McGee** is a filmmaker currently living in St. John's, Newfoundland.

### Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press

By Abe Peck  
Pantheon, 1985

### A Trumpet to Arms: Alternative Media in America

By David Armstrong  
South End Press, 1981

### What a Way to Run a Railroad: An Analysis of Radical Failure

By Charles Landry, Dave Morley, Russel Southwood, Patrick Wright  
Comedia, 1985

### Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication

By John Downing  
South End Press, 1984

**1986** looks like a kind of mirror-image of 1968, and that is how one version of the history of the last 18 years has been written. An important part of this is the story of the under ground press, made possible by the collective work of new social movements and cheap offset print technology. According to a deeply misleading version of this history we have now grown up, got sense, and the Underground Press Syndicate got renamed the Alternative Press Syndicate. Well its true that it got renamed; but in 1973, not in the 80's. The history is complex. Many of those underground papers now exist only in microfilm research collections. But many others have taken their place. We need history, not a mythology. The 1960's is not simply the decade when we "believed," any more than the 1980's is the decade in which we get sold things.

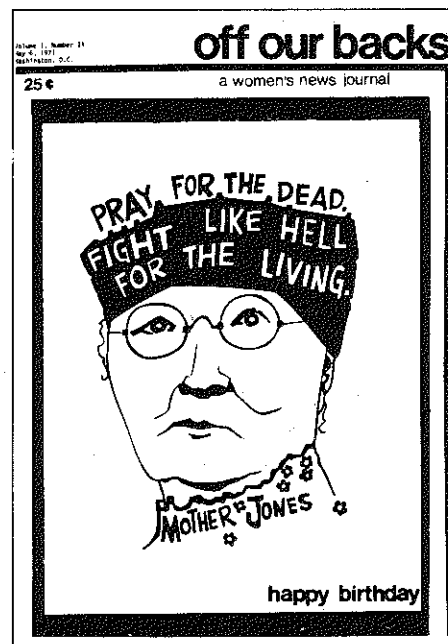
It is odd to read Abe Peck's *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*. The book is written in the short breathless paragraphs of popular journalism. But in a *book* there is, after all, no need to sell the reader anything. What had seemed a necessity to hold a newspaper reader who is tired, reading on the streetcar, or about to turn on the television, has then become a habit. Not just a habit: a form of writing which pushes an argument in certain directions and makes other questions difficult to address.

Abe Peck wrote (and edited) the *Chicago Seed*, an important underground paper of the 1960's. In the 1970's he worked for *Rolling Stone* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. He now teaches journalism at Northwestern University. *Uncovering the Sixties* is fair and full of interesting detail. It's organized as a narrative from the 1950s to the 1980s. The assumption is that the Sixties was a unique period (what did you do in the Sixties?). An important part of the book is the discrete presence of the world-weary journalist. Because the book is in part the story of Abe Peck the narrative is one of growing up, growing sensible.

This mythology of "the 1960s" is politically very damaging. The problem is not just that the real interest is in the period 1966-72, or 1956-1979 (depending on the kind of questions you want to ask). The damage is that a version of "the Sixties" is used by neo-conservatives to prove the foolishness and danger of liberalism in the 1980s. The danger is that a version of the 1960s is used to divert attention from oppositional movements that exist strongly in the 1980s and are as lively and more rich in ideas than ever before.

In a wonderfully vitriolic review of Peck's book in *Alternative Media* (Winter 1986), Tom Ward argues that as a "decade" the 1960s are probably less interesting than the German 1840s or 1920s, the Spanish '30s, or the Britain of Morris and Wilde.

Ward also points out that there were more people at the 1982 Central Park anti-nuclear demonstration in New York than at any Sixties demo. It's only because we insist on holding to the mythical Sixties that we object and say that this 1982 demonstration is "not typical" or that the atmosphere couldn't have been the same. In 1982 the arguments are harder, better argued, more intelligent, and more urgent.



Marty Jezer reviewed Peck's book in *The Progressive* (February 1986) and says that it is "the best study of the underground press now available." This is wrong. David Armstrong's *A Trumpet to Arms* is cheaper, better written and more comprehensive. It covers radio, television as well as newsprint. It is a full history of alternative media in the US in the 20th century that continues into the present and the future. It has a good chapter on the state persecution of alternative papers. It doesn't have a fancy cover, though, and it is published by an alternative publishing house. It is probably not distributed nearly as widely as Peck's pop history but it is worth the search.

One of the issues that Armstrong deals with is the relation between skills among staff and democratic organization. This is the main subject of *What a Way to Run a Railroad* which is published by a London firm of radical media consultants called Comedia. They argue that the radical media need to organize efficiently and learn necessary skills (like accountancy) to survive in an increasingly difficult environment. A reliance on collective structure is costly (all those meetings) and "the collective" is not a solution for all problems. It's a healthy argument and I know at least two magazine editors where an earlier version of this argument (in *Media Culture and Society* (1984): 95-102) was carefully read and passed around.

But it doesn't make a good foundation for a serious book on the alternative media. It is in effect another version of "the rise and fall of the 1960s." The argument lacks any real history. The reason there is no serious gay paper in England is not because *Gay News* was run by a collective but because it owned by one person who sold it. Many alternative papers in the US were founded by strong (male) editors and operated with a hierarchical structure until this was challenged in the early 1970s. But much more research is necessary. For example, how many papers would simply not have existed were it not for volunteer labour from collective members? How many people who are now professionals learned their work by volunteering, rather than in journalism school? Isn't this broad educational function often just as important as getting the magazine out?

Comedia also argues that the left needs to organize commercially viable media for a wide audience -- not just the already committed. The idea is to provide forums where debates could happen. At present such debates happen (if at all) in forums controlled by organizations which are hostile to progressive ideas. It is not clear if these media could be collectively operated. What mechanisms would be necessary to prevent such an open forum turning into another *Rolling Stone*?

The arguments of *What a Way to Run a Railroad* could be a lot more convincing if they were backed by a good history of alternative media in Britain over the last (say) fifty years. What is needed is a book like John Downing's *Radical Media*. This is not a general introduction. It is a specialized book of case studies of alternative media in the United States, Portugal and Italy, and Eastern Europe. Downing's main emphasis is on worker-managed projects: papers, radio, film and video. He discusses these enterprises in the context of the broader history and political culture of the countries. The conclusions are complex and difficult to summarize. The alternative media are wild dandelions that split open the pavement.

Downing has an expression for what Comedia call an undue reliance on libertarian collectivity. He calls it "ultra-democracy." Like Comedia he is critical of ultra-democracy when it is introduced for only theoretical reasons. Like Comedia he discusses the existence of *skills* (including social skills) which ultra-democracy tends to ignore. But against Comedia, he argues that genuinely democratic communications almost always have some form of collective organization. If that is the message of the 1960s, it is still valid in the 1980s.

Alan O'Connor is a member of the editorial collective of *The Body Politic* and *border/lines* magazines.

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*Cultural Critique* examines and critiques received values, institutions, practices, and discourses in terms of their economic, political, social, cultural, and aesthetic genealogies, constitutions and effects. The journal encourages and solicits analyses utilizing various methodologies and combining different fields.

Number 2 (Winter, 1986)

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*The Struggle for Cultural Heritage: Christina Stead Re-functions Charles Dickens and Mark Twain*

**Peter Bürger**

*The Institution of "Art" as a Category in the Sociology of Literature*

**Terry Eagleton**  
*The Subject of Literature*

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*White Privilege and the Right to Look: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory*

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*Arnold, Ferguson, Schiller: Aesthetic Culture and the Politics of Aesthetics*

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#### POLITICAL AND CULTURAL EVENTS

For political and cultural events we want to provide a publicizing opportunity for those events which, for financial or ideological reasons, do not have access to the major media outlets.

**RALLY AGAINST APARTHEID** -- May 31, Toronto, beginning at 11 am, with a rally at 1 pm at Queen's Park. Bishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize, and Robert White, President of UAW will be speaking.

**HIROSHIMA DAY VIGIL** -- August 6, at the City Hall, Toronto. Co-sponsored by the Toronto Disarmament Network and Hiroshima and Nagasaki Relived. For more information contact the Toronto Disarmament Network at (416) 535-8005.

**GRAPHIC FEMINISM** -- A project of the Canadian Women's Movement Archives, opens May 14 at A Space Gallery, 204 Spadina Avenue, Toronto. The main purpose of this project is to compile, access and exhibit work produced by and for the women's movement in Ontario. Posters previously mounted on telephone poles and billboards will be represented, along with buttons, banners and magazine covers. This material can be appreciated not only for its political content but also for its aesthetic qualities, demonstrating how a movement collectively represents itself.

**SOME UNCERTAIN SIGNS** -- A Public Access Project -- May 19 - July 28. A display of artists' work on Electromedia's animated pixelboard, located on Yonge Street just south of Bloor Street in Toronto. Artists from Program II will include: Krzysztof Wodiczko, Don Carr, Barbara Kruger, David Tomas, Michael Cartmell, Mary Kelly, Peter Wollen, Thomas Taylor, Monika Gagnon, Rosemary Heather and Robert Kennedy. Info: (416) 928-1918.

**MODERN ENGLISH -- A TRENDY SLANG DICTIONARY** -- by Jennifer Blowdryer, June 6-15, Le Lieu Centre en Art Actuel, 629 rue St. Jean, Québec, PQ. Collection of texts, definitions and photography in the form of a dictionary. Testimony of a contemporary urban reality, accompanied by an exhibition of original photographs of the dictionary in question.

**FEELING YES, FEELING NO** -- presented by the National Film Board, June 25 at 12:15 pm at the NFB Theatre, 1 Lombard St., (Victoria and Adelaide), Toronto, as part of the Wednesday free screenings. The film is designed to offer assistance for sexual assault programs and portrays the problem of child sexual assault while focusing on the feelings of the child through role-playing. For information call (416) 973-0895.

**NOTES FROM THE GREENHOUSE** -- a performance piece by Vid Ingelviks, June 22-July 18, at the Eastern Edge: Centre for the Arts, LSPU Hall, 3 Victoria St., St. John's, NFLD. Ingelviks has been documenting the experimental music community in Toronto for the past several years. His work is sympathetic to avant-garde music in its structure, and at times he becomes part of the performance while photographing it.

**PAPER WHEAT** -- the acclaimed musical collective from the 25th Street Theatre concerning early prairie wheat farmers, opens July 16 (preview July 15) at the Muskoka Festival, directed by Michael Ayoub. Contact Christina Dixon, Muskoka Festival, P.O. Box 1055, Gravenhurst, Ont., POC 1G0 (tel. 705-687-3303).

**CULTURAL PRACTICES: POLITICS\*PLEASURES\*PEDAGOGIES** -- June 20-24, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), Toronto. The aim is to bring together groups and individuals from communities that are often separated...to experience and celebrate our different structures, contexts, places, politics and lives -- that is, our differences. All ideas and offers to participate are welcome. Write: Cultural Practices Working Group, c/o 32 Mountview Ave., Toronto, M6P 2L3.

**WOMEN IN THE MEDIA** -- Call for Papers. Canadian Women's Studies issue dealing with "Women in the Media." Deadline July 1. Contact Judy Posner, Dept. of Sociology, Atkinson College, York University, North York, ON M3J 1P3.

**MICROTECHNOLOGY RESOURCES** -- The Participatory Research Group has produced three new resources about women and microtechnology. All the resources address health problems, isolation and deskilling as effects of microtechnology on our lives. "Who's in Control" is a 30-minute slide/tape show which portrays women caught in the changeover to microtechnology. "Short-Circuit: Women in the Automated Office," and "Short-Circuit: Women on the Global Assembly Line" are two booklets. All are available from the Participatory Research Group, 229 College St., Toronto ON M5T 1R4 (tel. 416-977-8118).

**NEW ZEALAND** -- Taranaki Artist Co-op, TACO, offers free studio, gallery space and living quarters for working artists. For more information contact Tom Mutch at 22 Down St., New Plymouth, New Zealand (tel. 85446). Write, phone or arrive.

#### CONFERENCES

In terms of conferences, SCANNER wants to gain a wider and more general audience for activities which are listed in specialized journals.

**WOMEN WORKING FOR CHANGE** -- Health, cultures and societies. June 11-15. National Women's Studies Association Eighth Annual Convention, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Info: Paula Gray and Jeanne Rice, Coordinators, NWSA 86, Office of Women's Studies, UIUC, 708 South Mathews Ave., Urbana, IL 61801.

**THE STUDY OF CULTURAL SIGN SYSTEMS AND THE PROBLEMS OF CHANGE IN SUCH SYSTEMS** -- June 22-July 18, International Summer Institute for Semiotic and Structural Studies, Northwestern University. For further information contact: English Department, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60201.

**WELLS UNDER REVISION** -- July 24-27. The H.G. Wells Society, South Kensington, London. Contact: Christopher Rolf, Language and Literature, Polytechnic of North London, Prince Wales Rd., London, U.K. NW5 3LB.

**SPLIT SHIFT: A COLLOQUIUM ON THE NEW WORK WRITING** -- August 21 - 24, Trout Lake Community Centre, Vancouver. The first North American conference on contemporary fiction, poetry and drama about daily work will feature 18 writers, editors, publishers and educators concerned with an accurate presentation of daily work in literature. Sponsored by the Kootenay School of Writing and the Vancouver Industrial Writer's Union. To register or for more info: Kootenay School of Writing, #105, 1045 West Broadway, Vancouver BC V6H 1E2 (tel. 604-732-1013).

**STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL** -- State of the Arts/The Art of Alternatives -- June 9-11, Commodore Ballroom, 870 Granville Street, Vancouver. An international conference for artists addressing topics such as: How do artists organize? How is art production supported in various countries? Do women artists have equal and viable access to the support mechanisms of art production? For information on registration and accommodation during the conference in Vancouver contact:

Vancouver Artists League, Box 3980, Vancouver BC V6B 3Z4 (tel. 604-684-1413).

**MARKETING AND SEMIOTICS** -- New Directions in the Study of Signs for Sale -- July 10-12, Northwestern University in Evanston, IL. An international conference to discuss new techniques for understanding marketplace symbolism and for producing more penetrating insights into marketing in general and consumer behaviour in particular. Write or call: Jean Umiker-Ebeok Research Center for Language and Semiotic Studies, Indiana University, Box 10, Bloomington IN 47402-0010, (812) 335-619 4.

**THE 2ND WORLD CONFERENCE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED RADIO BROADCASTERS (WCCORB)** -- July 25-29, Vancouver. The first conference, held in Montreal in August 1983, was attended by some 600 participants from 36 countries representing all the continents (and was written in the first issue of *b/l* as "Radical Radio: An Emancipatory Cultural Practice"). Vancouver's co-op Radio is the official host of WCCORB-II, which will focus on furthering means of international exchange between community broadcasters, and developing global themes such as the use of radio as an instrument of world peace. The conference will officially take place in French, Spanish and English. For more info: WCCORB-II, 337 Carrall St., Vancouver, BC V6B 2J4 (tel. 604-253-0427); or AMARC-II, C.P. 250, Succursale Delorimier, Montreal, PQ H2H 2N6 (tel. 514-524-7831).

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE** -- July 28-31. Southern Illinois (SIU). This year's theme will be "Capturing Community Initiative: Issues, Needs, Challenges" and will bring people from a cross-section of educational backgrounds, academic disciplines, and community-based organizations. Community development is a participatory, proactive approach to overcoming inequities in the allocation of community resources and power, rather than passive acceptance of the status quo. In addition to presentations and workshops conducted by community development specialists from Canada, West Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, and the U.S., several keynote speakers, including Peter Berger, sociologist and author of numerous books and articles on social change, religion and empowerment, will highlight the conference. Call or write: attn: Jnan Bhattacharyya, Local Arrangement Committee, SIU at Carbondale, Carbondale, IL 62901, (618) 536-7521.

**CANADIAN CRAFTS COUNCIL CONFERENCE** -- August 14-17, University of British Columbia. National and

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THOSE  
WHO USE  
AND ABUSE  
AND ENDANGER  
THE REST  
OF US.

AND THERE ARE  
THOSE WHO  
STAND UP  
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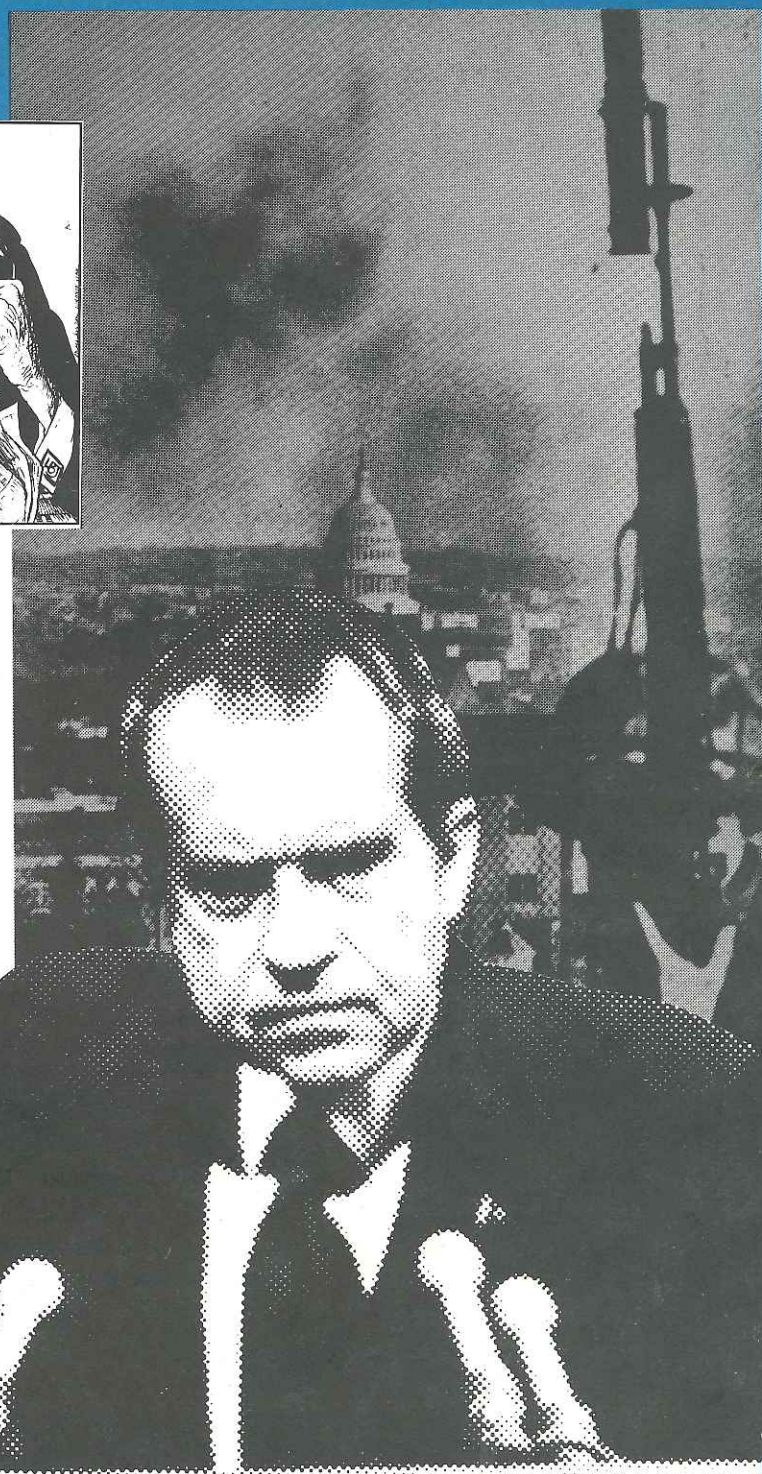
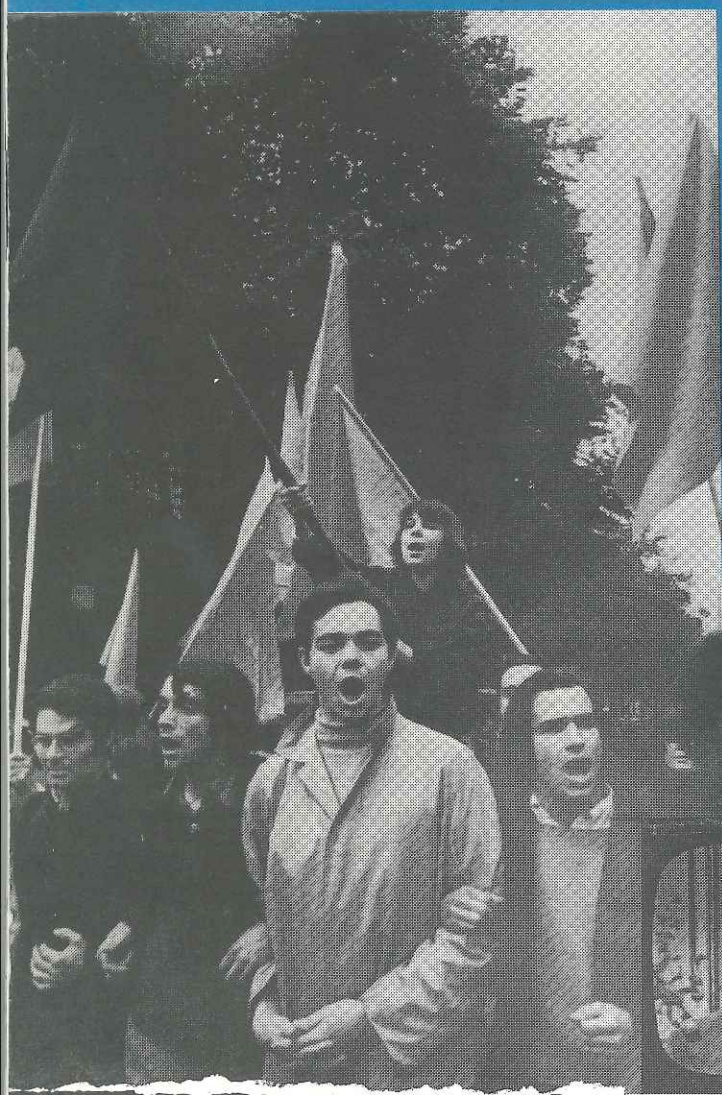
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