On The Past: A Retrospective

The Appeal of “Natural Born Killers”

Homelessness in Germany. A New Wall Imperilled

On The Present: M. Nourbese Philip on the Aftermath of the Just Desserts Shooting

Black Women and Carnival... and more
A simple, self-generated mandate after ten years: to be borderline...and self-conscious enough to investigate what that means. We’d also like to continue to be lively and provocative, Canadian and international. We’re committed to the politics of representation—and to how race, gender and sexuality are mis/represented in mainstream media and pop culture. (So-called high art, too, is not above critique.) Some things to look forward to from us in 1995 and beyond: we’ll be on the Internet; we’ll have regular columnists; we might even have a co-op/hotel project that comes to fruition. Stick around, please... for ten more years.

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In 1983 some of us took part in a reminiscence project organized at York University on "The Alternative Press in Canada," which explored various journals and magazines operating outside the corporate mainstream of Canadian publishing. Those included This Magazine (represented by Susan Green and Rick Salutin), The Canadian Forum (represented by John Hutchins), Farley Magazine (represented by Karl Jorgenson), Imprint (represented by Glenn Gallant), The Body Public (represented by Marc Wilson), Last Part (represented by Patrick McFadden and Ron Murphy), Shades (represented by Sheila Wasserman and Paul Williams), C Magazine (represented by Richard Holose), and Vie en Rose, The Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory (represented by Arthur Kosak), as well as alternative newspapers in Canada (represented by Andrew Arnold, who was editor of the Free Press in Vancouver and Program/ParaProgram). Even the student presses were there (the editors of Eclecticz at York who are, for instance, now the editors of Azure). So was Liz Atkins from the Canada Council. None of these magazines at least six did not exist anymore and one, C Magazine, was in an electronically routed form.

Some of us who had tried to establish a Canadian Studies association (kathlyp and discussion groups) and had been active in the magazine scene (if we had worked with different magazines or journals (I Capitol and The Future, but in many ways the conferences shared some of the same basic ideas we had an appreciation for the alternative movements and began to explore some of the issues and problems that were common to us and to our respective communities and cultural scenes. That, in turn, led to the formation of Ten Years of Border/Lines, a project that brought together writers, editors, and activists in a series of workshops and discussions. The project was an attempt to capture the spirit of the time and the diversity of voices that were contributing to the development of the alternative press in Canada. It was a way to document the rich tapestry of cultural production that was emerging during this period.

In the ten years that followed, the project evolved and grew, and the collective budget continued to grow, allowing us to fund more interviews and research. We continued to publish the magazine, and the format gradually shifted from a print-based publication to an online platform. The contributors included a diverse range of voices, from established writers and activists to emerging talents. The essays, interviews, and analyses covered a wide range of topics, from political and social issues to cultural and artistic expressions. The project was a testament to the complexity and richness of the alternative press in Canada and the varied ways in which it contributed to the nation's cultural development.

In conclusion, the project was a significant accomplishment, and it continues to be a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history of alternative media and cultural production in Canada.
“Love of the Same is necessary for there to be love of the Different. And from this point of view, it is true that the mother-daughter relation is the most complex and much more potential, productive...”

— Interview with Luisa Acosta —

“By removing the lace bustier and stockings, bracelets, hair ribbons, objects upon which the fetishism of Madonna, the stripper, are pinned, the structural function of these fetish objects is destroyed, for they no longer clothe her back.” Revealing the naked body and genitals of Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone, is, well, not pornography.

— Monika Gagnon —

“In grade school I learned our notable 9th grade brushing and read Kaye Keene comix ‘In My Room’ with the Beach Boys. At consent I went to mass every month and fantasized about Marianne Faithfull up through grunge called paradise validation, determined friends burned pleasures and fans of our chandeliers (folksinger-songwriters) but the Stones had put the touch on me so I deserted, eschewed in Angloromania, so close yet so far away West of the Main, love arrived: ‘Indecent assimilation of the dominant model is a typical language attitude of the colonized, the bourgeoisie being the class most affected.”

— Suzanne Lechtken-Henderson —

“Both Quebec and Catalonia, the situation suggests that little respite is in store for those who feel that there are specific national communities worth defending. These Quebecois who expected that economic progress would obviate the basis for national demands should look at the history of Catalonia, whose development demonstrates that such a pattern cannot be taken for granted. In fact, despite unequal and even diverse patterns of development, the specific national concerns experienced in Quebec and Catalonia today are fundamentally similar. To the extent that those concerns are born out of resistance to operations of delimitation and marginalization on the part of larger central states, their respective responses will have much to learn from each other. At first Catalonia may be tempted to look toward Canada for glimpses of a more generous federal system and Quebecos toward Spain for a peak at the minority national bourgeoisie. But in the long run, I would suspect they would do better looking at each other, learning from their respective interrelations with their central states. Thus they may plan the political and cultural forms of intervention that will make their collective futures viable.”

— Robert Schwarzbart —

“Telemarketing is a contemporary instance of the interplay between speech and writing, and of our belief in the presence and precision of speech and verbal communication over the inadequacies of the pen and the written word. The phone gives you the minutes of the undivided attention of the other which you must use expeditiously: make your sale, disguise your intention, for telemarketing – aural sex – is capitalism’s ultimate calling card.”

— Kim Sawicki —

“I will not place the word race in quotation marks as Gates (‘Writing’), (‘Talking’) and Tzvetan Todorov have suggested because, although I believe it is important to point out how racial difference is constructed, I do not believe the concept can be disentangled entirely. It persists as a mode of ordering: gates in particular still works with an idea of ‘black’ as being essentially different from ‘white’ at the core of his writings. Although he wants to locate black criticism in culturally derived manifestations, he still refers to ‘black’ or ‘white’ authors and critics. This seems to constitute something like race.”

— Cameron Bailey —

“As same tourist development proceeded, its geographical focus shifted from natural features of the landscape to ‘artificial’ ones like golf courses or African animal safari parks. The reasons for this are complex, and for the most part they may have the need for the industry to differentiate its product. In order to reach a market familiar with the development of the tourist industry within the valley. Initially tourism was to rest on the marketing strategies of the tourist industry as well as the vagaries of local weather and land speculation. All these changes led to new fields of study like tourist motivational assessment and scenario evaluation, which by the 1980s had become the subject of intense scrutiny within the industry.”

— Alexander Wilson —

“With the rise to power of Pierre Trudeau in 1968, the pressure was on to settle the Indian lands ‘problems’ once and for all. Accordingly, Trudeau and Jean Chrétien, then Indian Affairs Minister, concocted the ironically-named White Paper policy. Its objective was to complete the job of assimilating the Indian people by placing them under the jurisdiction of the provinces. They proposed repealing the Indian Act and amending the constitution to eliminate all references to Indian people.”

— Christine Plante —

“ Corporations like Petro-Canada may call themselves ‘prudently Canadian.’ But the same federal government that owns both Petro-Canada and Canadair Post did not hesitate for an instant to employ scales to attempt to break the strikes by Canadian postal workers in the summer of 1987.”

— Tom Wayne —

“In (practical) audiophonic terms, Lacan’s thesis allows us to understand a range of listening behaviours described by those studying the social behaviours of audio consumers: why, for instance, many people listen to the radio or other audiovisual equipment in darkened rooms or just prior to sleep; why listening adds digestion; why music becomes commodity production in factories and commodity consumption in shopping malls.”

— Bruce Babber —

“Justice Markov, in a remarkable departure from conventional courtroom practice, allowed the Halds to give testimony in traditional oral fashion, without lawyer intercession, and it is this element which drew me to the text. Working from the printed transcript (for which I thank the Council of Halds Nations) I attempt to ‘hear’ Diane Brown’s words in a way that might, hopefully, give them meaning in the white Eurocanadian context of this magazine.”

— The roader might situate her or himself, in approaching this text, as a kind of caseworker on an ongoing intertribal, intercultural conversation. Part of the problem of intercanadian aboriginal communication and discourse is the question of place: here, and therefore where, does the discourse happen? On the printed page, the oral, which is essential to the way of speaking, is rendered mute. On the other hand, if the text that oral testimony produces does not get “out” beyond the specific location where the words happen, its political potency is reduced.”

— Herb McLean —

“I really am asking writers how we can develop and popularize a language of reproductive freedoms, how can we convey the subtle and complexity of our concepts? We need to hear from media workers how we can influence the media to take up our frame of reference and how we can stay on the media’s agenda, even when our issue is not “hot.” I think cultural workers exploring how theatre, poetry, fiction, painting and other media could portray women’s strength and independence as they fight to control their reproduction can make a significant political contribution to the change movement.”

— L. Lee —

“The moist, wet, inner pink spaces of her mouth had become a tender womb to bad words, any words – mother’s cuts, picks, ticks – the words were embezzled deep inside Miranda filling up all the secret places and spaces created by the forbidden. Like Chaucer’s modern version of the words had plunged her depths – mother’s cuts and all. No one, not even the guardian of space and words, her mother, could take them or any of her words from her. They’re all mine now. Miranda thought as she lay in bed, remembering how she had panted and her forehead had broken out in sweat after she was done swearing.”

— David Treadwell Phillips —

“Many small businesses, ‘Bait Words’

— Joyce Barry —

“The message implied by the promoters of the Wall fragment is clearly a thinly veiled ideology. Capitalist free market ideology asserts itself by offering itself to the consumer, it’s like catching one in a fishbowl with one hint that there might by any choice. What makes it a collector’s item is not really that it is in limited supply; it is a collector’s item while only it still contains an aura of the Cold War. In its commodity form it’s sold as if it were a cultural treasure. In the examples on display at the major shopping malls you’ll find it enclosed in a velvet drawstring bag.”

— Joye Nelson —

“Quebec, Agriculture II - Monoculture

— Christine Plante —

“…ad for the Aga Khan Institute, Dalhousie University...”

— Christine Plante —
“Cultural Studies Now and in the Future? Within the academy, what should the future of cultural studies be? Should it aim to become a "discipline," thereby imparting a set of skills to students and perhaps reconceptualizing the university, yet probably capitulating to the forces of commercialization and institutionalization? Should it remain instead a program or center, thereby regaining its radical edge, yet probably remaining highly eclectic and peripheral within the university?”

Jane Feuer, "Cultural Studies and the Culture of Academia"

“My friend Karen (who is in this class) and I decided we would get together on the full moon, which happened to fall on the day after the class on Goddess Religion and celebrate our womanhood and the fact that we are goddesses. We got together and talked about how CUNT is beautiful and how we are unified and proud of beautiful CUNT. I drew up her birth chart and we looked at that, and then I spilled my guts about the problems I have been having with my boyfriend and how I don’t really feel like I have been treated much like a goddess lately. To my surprise, tears came as I told her the story (it is very hard for me to cry), and she hugged me and gave me a back massage. We talked about what I could do to patch things up with Steve and she said, “Angela, you are a Goddess!” Then she took my fancy cartography pen and on a piece of paper she wrote GODDESS, boxed it up, and gave it to me, saying, “Go talk to him.” I did, and I told him everything that has been bothering me.... Since then he has treated me like the Goddess I am. A Goddess appreciates herself enough to not need anyone worship her, but loves herself enough to ask for what she needs, and if she is rejected, she loves herself enough to leave. Well, Steve and I are still together and he has dubbed me the Honorary Goddess of "Black and Tan" beer at the Lion’s Brew Pub. I have never had a more bonding experience with a female than I did yesterday with Karen under the full moon.”

Jane Kalbesser, “See Jane Play, see Dick Run”

“...my brief excursion into the prostitution of Hawaiian culture has done more now than give an overview. Now that you have heard a Native view, let me leave this thought behind. If you are thinking of9. Hawaiianizing your homestead, please don’t. We don’t want or need any more tourists, and we certainly don’t like them. If you want to help our cause, pass this message on to your friends.”

Hematic Kay Jones, “Lovely Hills Lavish: Corporate Tourism and the Privatization of Hawaiian Culture”

“...In Cronenberg on Cronenberg, Cronenberg states that he felt so close to Burroughs when writing the screenplay that had Burroughs died he could write his next novel. The limit to this fusion is quite explicit—Cronenberg implies that it is his heterosexuality which disconnects him from Burroughs and which forces him to make his own very different Naked Lunch. This oedipal dissociation gets rehearsed throughout the film.”

Danny O’Quinn, “Now in Naked Lunch”

“Hallelujah! It works. We blew the shit out of them. We blew the shit right back up on their own ass. It works. We blew the shit out of them. They succumbed in their own shit! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord for all good things. We blew them into fucking shit. They are eating it. Praise the Lord for all good things. We blew their bats into shards of dirt, into shards of fucking dust, We did it. Now I want you to come over here and kiss me on the mouth.”

Harold Pinter, “American Football: a refresher upon the Gulf War”

“...When the first leather jackets and Elvis pompadours appeared on the streets of the barrios, the over-fourty guardians of culture, nervous that Mexico City’s youths would arm themselves with submachines and roar Harley’s through alleys of elegant zones or establishments like La Marlin Breton in The Wild One, mounted an all-out assault. Films like The Blackboard Jungle were pulled from movie theaters and newspapers banned the populace of the dangers of rocknroll/novio; gang violence, lax morality, and, especially, the destruction of the culture national. Maybe the single thing the government, the Catholic Church and the Monarchy left could all agree on was that Mexican Youth was impervious to the Protestant, decadent and individualistic North.”

Rubén Martínez, “Contra el Roceser”

“...the state: The subject area of "homosexuality, lesbianism"—Library of Congress designation, HQ75—is not only a region within a map of the logic of power, but also a place and time made physically concrete. Here, the discursive taxonomic abstraction is made articulate within a non-discursive institution.”

Hilary Hackett, “Boys and The Apocalypse”

...one cannot be a Latina without recognizing one’s African heritage; without it, we are content with the Mexicans, or see “American” simultanea, not Latinas.


“...one Hundred Starting Points of the Post-Modern...”

“...100. Yuri Kochiyama spaced flat space, 1961, orbit and weightlessness make time and space more relative than anyone has experienced before.

99. Paolo Soleri’s case-house studio, Scottsdale, Arizona, 1961, and his search for “Archoldness” (architectural ecologies), the paradoxical blending of high tech and the ice-cold.

98. Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, 1961, the attack on artificial, ordered, impeding city planning begins.

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


95. Michel Foucault, Volière et déviation, 1961, reempowering madness.”

Dennis Seversohn, “When Devo Post-Apocalypse”

“...the high living of the 1980s gave way to the recessionary 1990s and the world needed a new sexual orientation to give meaning to the decade. The media seized upon lesbians. They were the perfect image for the scaled-down, nesting 1990s. Their sex was safe and their relationships were long lasting. According to the media, lesbians had shed the negative image that had plagued them in the 1970s—Women, and in the intervening years, lesbians had apparently discovered sex. Nair and Amoreco. And the media was ready to discover them.

Rachel Ciesz, “Lesbian Disc: I had pretty and witty and gay”

“...the arrival of Hong Kong money in Toronto has reconfigured power relations within the Chinese community and has also somehow changed central Chinatown. Conflicts developed among class lines during the late 1970s when the new elite entrepreneurial class tried to take over Chinatown’s development. Before the 1970s, Chinatown and its political, economic and cultural life were influenced by social workers and community activists, and a relatively small group of wealthy merchants whose authority relied mainly upon kinship. Both groups were inward-looking. With the new entrepreneurial class, business is business—capitalist production and profits are central concerns. It is in part this mentality that generated the modern residential/commercial buildings such as the Dragon City and Wanhsia Centre standing today at the southwest corner of Spadina/Dundas, the outcome of a compromising development project in the late 1970s. The entrepreneurial class’s original vision of a “commercial Chinatown” was to turn the heart of Chinatown into a multimillion dollar commercial/residential complex consisting of expensive boutiques and high-priced condominiums, its realization would have deprecated hundreds of garment factory workers’ jobs.”

Alister Li, “One Pace, Very Slowly: Reifying Chinese Identity”
Knocking ‘Em Dead
Natural Born Killers

KILLING IS COMMON IN THE CINEMA. BEING A WITNESS TO MURDER HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN A FAVOURITE AUDIENCE ACTIVITY. WE’VE BEEN THRILLED BY IT IN ACTION MOVIES, BEEN SCARED BY IT IN HORROR MOVIES, TRIED TO SOLVE IT IN DETECTIVE FILMS AND SAT THROUGH ART MOVIES TRYING TO UNDERSTAND IT. WHAT’S DIFFERENT ABOUT THE REPRESENTATION OF MURDER IN NATURAL BORN KILLERS IS A COMBINATION OF THE SHEER NUMBER OF KILLINGS, THE MODE IN WHICH THEY ARE SHOWN, THE MORAL VALUE ATTACHED TO THE ACTS AND A PARTICULAR TYPE OF AUDIENCE RESPONSE.

This representation of the serial killer and the use of this figure as a symbol of the social and personal decay that will bring forth the apocalypse are not restricted to American culture. In the last few years, and in masterpieces, the mass murderer has been the focus of Belgium’s Man Bites Dog, Spain’s Kika and Quentin’s Requiem pour un rêve sans cœur. These films are each rooted in their own national cinematic cultures and the films draws on different narrative traditions to tell their stories. Both Man and Requiem, for example, borrow and playfully fictionalize cinema while Kika’s director employs viewer’s usual repertoire of emotions. The point is that this trope is present in films from different high-industrialized cultures and that, despite their cultural specificity, these films present the serial killer as a symbol of the end of community, order, progress and reason.

In American cinema the mass murderers/serial killers have been a stock motif in suspense or action films. The Dirty Harry series, to name but one, could not exist without them. The social threat they represent is the context in which Harry is permitted to be dirty. One could even argue that the mass murderer as antihero also has deep roots in film history. Frank and Jesse James killed dozens. But the narratives needed to give Harry, Tony and Tyron Power cause and right. Likewise Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway killed as many people as Bonnie and Clyde as Brad Pitt and Juliette Lewis do in Additions, but the former were glamorized even as their actions were condemned, while the latter are deplorized even as their actions are offered as temporary pleasures.

Though there are many different types of films being made at the moment, I don’t think there’s been as much noir in American cinema since the post-War years. But it’s a different shade of noir. Films like Romeo Is Bleeding go beyond noir into a subliminal and hip nihilism. The message may be one of exhaustion and despair, but the mode of telling is honed and...
exciting. Though the serial killer appears across genres, there are generic considerations (if not determinates). The killer is seen in different guises, turning the pages from the cute Serial Man, which drew on camp for comedy, to the sociopathic Hannibal, Portrait of a Serial Killer, which drew on documentary for a more disturbing edge. The figure of the serial killer is the shadow of the individual in the millenium. We might have several theories about why society is so fascinated with serial killers. Some have suggested that this fascination stems from the terror and fear that serial killers represent to normal people. Others have argued that serial killers are a reflection of society's own darker desires and impulses. Still others have suggested that serial killers are simply the result of a flawed criminal justice system. But whatever the reason, the fascination with serial killers is a phenomenon that is not likely to go away anytime soon.

The final scene in the movie is the murder of the detective by the killer. The detective is shown in a state of shock and terror, unable to believe what has happened. The killer, on the other hand, is calm and collected, seemingly enjoying his work. The juxtaposition of these two reactions creates a powerful emotional impact on the audience, making them feel more connected to the detective's experience and more afraid of the killer's actions.

The movie ends with a shot of the killer's face, looking directly into the camera. The effect is chilling and powerful, leaving the audience with a sense of unease and fear. Overall, the movie is a masterful piece of storytelling, with a well-paced plot, well-developed characters, and a truly terrifying villain. It is a must-see for anyone who loves the horror genre.
Mickey and Mallory. The film shows them doing the most horrible things, but it does so excitingly if not beautifully. Murder is horrible, but we sometimes gape with pleasure when we see it. Some of the situations in the film (Mallory killing her pimp, Mickey because he was too eager and gave her the worst head she's ever had in her life; Robert Duvall's character becoming a killer) elicit the same kind of nervous laughter as do films such as Reservoir Dogs and Blue Velvet. Yet, in order to engage with the plot of the film andbuild suspense, we are asked to share their point of view. The major characters they kill are ex-convicts. The detective kills his partners during sex, the widow is arranging their murder, and most of the minor ones are mostly bad white trash and thus dispensable (the contempt in which poor white people are held in contemporary cinema is at least another article if not a Ph.D. dissertation). Mickey and Mallory are victims and scoundrels. There is no other way for them not to be.

Natural Born Killers is depressing. Yet I found it riveting to watch. The film is a sensational, minor spectacle. It's the work of artists with a substantial command of the medium at their disposal and only the most cursing banalities to communicate. The future is murder. It's a bit shallow. If that were the message only in Natural Born Killers, we could dismiss it. But it's cropping up across genres, throughout various media in many "First World" cultures. In one of the last songs in the film, Ira Cohen warns us that "the wizard of the world has overslept the threshold and overturned the order of the soul." Unfortunately, artists are more interested in representing the crumbling of the old order than in imagining the construction of new and better ones.

José Ilenko is a lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Warwick.


India Now!

At the Toronto International Film Festival

by STEVE PEREIRA

Assessing the Films Screened in this Segment of the Festival — Hits, Misses... and Programming Oversights

There was an unfortunate tendency towards the erotic impulse; advertising copy that offered cinemagoers from 'far away lands,' press conferences, that were heavy on atmosphere, listener music, walking through the corridors with the smell of sensuous but very short on substance; program notes that ignored 'caravans and elephants and timber-cloths'; introductions to films that invoked a colonial legacy (Nik G prosthetic introduction of the film 'Bollywood' to the audience as 'the jewel in the crown' of the program). Then there was an inexplicable lack of work from women filmmakers—the twenty-three directors represented, just two were women—an embarrassing ratio given the number of women now producing exciting new work in India. And ultimately there was nothing particular exciting about the work presented. This was surely not the best that India has to offer. I do believe the programmers, though, when they say they chose "the very best films we could find." The question is a matter of who was doing the looking.

What the India Now program at the Festival did offer, as promised, was a representative sampling of the types of genres of work that are now being produced in India. Separated into three rather broad categories, there was the commercial, mainstream cinema as seen in the work of Mani Ratnam, the independent art cinema, as in Gowtam Ghose's (The King) or Aparna Gopalkrishnan's (Servile); and finally the independent documentary scene, the best known exponent of which is probably Arvind Patwardhan (Father, Son and the Holy War). On the commercial front, for the past couple of decades India has been leading the world in film production, with the commercial film Mills spinning out an average of eight hundred films a year. Consider that, on any one day, a film star in the
commercial film industry will go from a moribund stage for one film, to an afternoon shoot for another, and a night shoot for the third. The next day will see a similar schedule for a completely different set of films. Commercial films have become the matrix of Indian popular culture, both in India and in diasporic Indian communities from Nairobi to Frankfurt. Bombay, center of Hindi production, is still the center of the commercial film industry in spite of the fact that films are now being made in all the major languages used in the country, and the southern states, including Tamil Nadu, which produce the largest number of films.

It is a credit to the programmers of the festival that, in a field dominated by Hindi production, they choose to focus on the work of the prolific and accomplished Tamil filmmaker, Mani Ratnam.

This was surely not the best that India has to offer. I do believe the programmers, though, when they say they chose "the very best films we could find.

The question is a matter of who was doing the looking.

Mani Ratnam. We are talking about commercial films here—often regrettable. Or, rather, desirable as any Hollywood, Schwarzenegger or Cruise vehicle. Except that, never to do any thing by halves, any one Indian commercial film will be a combination of a number of Hollywood stereotypes—drama/action/triller/romance/comedy—that it is a musical is a given. While there is an overt attempt to engage in contemporary socio-political issues (as Ratnam does with the politically volatile Kadhalan theme in Aaja, or with the issue of arranged marriage in Nenjamundrum), as with most commercial films, the issues tend to become gists for a cinematic mélange that reduces everything to personal, individual, dramatic action. For those not reared on such films, they are definitely an acquired taste. For those who grew up with them, you might have yourself, but they are an absolute delight.

The independent cinema—the art house cinema circuit—is, as in the independent arena anywhere, an attempt to provide an alternative, in this case, to the dominant "crazy-dance" film. Running in its inspirations from the avant-garde school of filmmaking to a social realist imperative, the films are seen as a site both for formal experimentation and for social critique—a cinema of social significance and artistic sincerity. In her recent book, National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema 1971-90, Sunita S. Chackravarty says of the "new cinema" that it has an interest in linear narrative, "realistic" mise-en-scène psychological portrayal of character, the "motivated" use of songs and dances las and when required by the context of the film, explicit scope of sexuality, and a discomfort with the workings of the Indian political/social system. She also notes that "one of the ironies of India's new cinema is that while the filmmakers belong, for the most part, to a middle-class English educated elite, the audience they wish to reach is rural and/or urban working class.

While there was a strong showing of independent work in terms of numbers at the festival, the selection was a mixed bag, which worked with varying degrees of success. Gautam Ghose, for instance, whose exquisite Boomer on the River Padma screened at last year's festival, disappeared with this year's entry Patlaag (The Ride) despite the fact that it is a renowned trip of actors, the talented, shaggy dog duo of Shahab Ali and Om Part, here with Indian heartthrob, Shirajgun Sathi. Aamir plays a cleaning woman, a widow now stranded as the mother of a local gang (Om Part). Her teenage son, Soora—country naive and perennially spends his days flying his kite above the grayowing of the small noisy town. Things get complicated when, as Soora gets drawn into the gam's activity, a new police inspector (Shirajgun Sathi) comes into town determined to clean it up and a worm of politicians get caught up in the resultant machinations. As with Boomer, Ghose's film works best in its character study, in the early part of the film as it focuses on the lives of the widow and her son and the small defeats and victories of their lives.

Unfortunately, a third of the way through, the film changes its scope, attempts a saturation of small-town bureaucracy and gets mixed in a melodramatic tangle that never quite sorts itself out.

On the other hand, among the films of the Wing's Buddhasday Dusgama's film, is eminently more satisfying. Again working within the premise of a rural/urban dichotomy, Character is a sensitive, affecting story of a handicapped in rural Bengal. Lakender, in the best rural tradition (see Soma, above) is a simple, honest, raise man. He is the descendant of generations of handicapped who catch elusive birds in the forests of Bengal to sell in Calcutta markets. Deeply affected by the deaths of his first child who bared a dead to go to a "broad blossom tree" the day he died, Lakender begins setting free more birds than he sells and a whole new world of experience and more attention is drawn to the birds he is supposed to capture. Faced with impoverishment and unable to understand his preoccupation with birds, his wife begins an affair with a motorcycle-driving luserman and eventually leaves Lakender. Alone, he begins to retreat into his world of birds until, in the final ethereal scene, he is enveloped by his family of flocks. character has the gloss of Lynchian and realism of the best of the poetic realist tradition. Shots are languid, the lighting moody, there's lots of evocative play with light and shade.

Other films were a great deal less sentimental or nostalgic in their depictions of rural life, opting instead for depictions of lives of casual and often delirious besantry, portraits of the dark undercurrents that permeate village life. K. P. Sani's Ilaiie (Dances and Themes) is a case in point, though it suffered a great deal from its overbearing earnestness. Sani gets points for subject matter: an examination of the oppressive patriarchal life of a small village. Like Ghose, his strength lies in capturing the small details of village life and in the details of character. Using the beautiful Kerala landscape as a backdrop, the film focuses on four young women who work in the same weaving center. Close friends, they have their small rebellions against the relentless version of the world they inhabits—sabotaging a potential arranged marriage, lighting back at the sexual harassment by local huntsmen. But as Sani shows it, the tradition of patriarchy are so ingrained and so pervasive that the women are completely convinced by it. One of the women goes through with her arranged marriage, is abused and kills herself. Unhonored by the village for acts of petty rebellion, two others are also driven to suicide. There is already an issue at side here, and there is a story to tell, but the sheer relentless of the message makes it difficult to respond to the film. Sani's attempt to salvage the film by imposing a code that has the men go through an attack of remorse is ultimately unsatisfactory. Assuming that systemic oppression involves guilt in the perpetrators is simplistic on one end of the scale, optimistic on the other.

Much more nuanced and far more interesting is Jodhpur (Gapolal) and his Songs, winner of the international critics' prize at the International Film Festival of India. Gapolalhast's earlier film The Wallih, a poignant tale of a romance between an imprisoned writer and a woman he loved but never on the side of a wall, was screened at the 1985 Toronto Festival. Set in a small village in Kerala, Sauravi is a study in character, character shaped to a large part by caste, economic and power structures. Tommi is a migrant rebel not his squatter's existence, until he is forced into becoming the dogpoo for a local landlord—a man given to drunken rages and extreme physical brutality, including the continued rape of Tommi's wife. When things look like they cannot get any worse, the landlord gets Tommi involved in a plot to kill the landlord's own wife and uses him to help in what is ultimately a botched escape. Sauravi is the fascinating film on a number of levels. It is an absorbing look at the hierarchical dynamics of village life and at the development of power relationships. Particularly interesting is its focus on a protagonist who is alternatively prophetic and pathetic. Even as the abuse escalates, and his own life becomes more and more fraught with danger, Tommi seems to get increasingly attached to the tenant he serves, sympathetically grateful for the small kindness offered him. Among other things, this dynamic makes for an interesting metaphor for colonial relationships.

Speaking of colonial relationships and another take on the rural/urban dichotomy. As a preface to Dev Benegal's English, August, I would like to offer two quotations. The first is from Mihmed Jamal, who, in a commentary on Harif Sareesh and My Benjamin (London: Routledge, 1985), says, "New Orientalist best describes the way the Asian community is incorporated within contemporary culture by Asian intellectuals who have been launched by the British university system." The second is a quotation from the novel by Uptonas Chatterjee on which the film was based. The spectator is a character in the novel named Sathe, a political cartoonist. In the novel he is a sarcastic voice of reason; in the film, however, he comes across as having something of a cynical balloon. Sathe describes a cartoon he is drawing, which shows a man sitting at a typewriter with the Statue of Liberty in the distance: "I wanted to suggest an Indian writer writing about India, after having spent many years abroad, or living there. There are hundreds of them—well, if not hundreds, at least twenty-five. I end this long intro into full with one mixed-up culture and writing about another, what kind of audience are they aiming at? Why that their India is just not real, a place of fantasy, or of confused metaphors, a sub-continent of poms. All their Indians are caricatures. Why is that? Because
film. Agastra (Gangsta) is the son of the Governor of the State of Bengal. Born into a world of urban, post-colonial privilege, he has been educated in the finest schools and brought up in the cosmopolitan whirl of Delhi and Calcutta. As is typical of his class, who speak and think in English, his range of reference is almost completely western; he invokes Tom and Huck and visits on occasion, his parents to Queen Anne while driving, a la Wayne’s World. His father, Marcus Aurelius, is by his daily dose of wisdom from the classics, just out of university. Agastra has joined the Indian Administrative Service—the most influential and powerful cadre of civil servants in the country, the governing elite. As the film begins, August is sent off for a year’s training to Madras, a small town in the backwaters of central India, where for the first time he is to come into contact with rural India. An innocent abroad, brought into contact with the “real” India for the first time, August is in for a whole new experience, and, unable to deal with his reality, returns into a world of daydreams and romantic fantasies.

My quarrel with the film, in the first instance, is that the story is told from the perspective of a hip, urban westernized Indian and is designed to identify with equality hip, urban westernized Indians and Westerners. Everybody else comes off as being hopelessly provincial. It is a town populated by pompous bureaucrats and sympathetic missionaries, bored housewives, comic-book policemen and sinister servants, a nation of caricatures and “goons,” no more. The set is particularly infuriating about this is that the film has deliberately taken on the mannerisms and subtleties of the novel to achieve this effect. In the novel, August’s central concern is the state of Britain that afflicts him—has no real ambitions, no desire, and, remarkably thin, chefs at his own parading parade. That is the reason for his retreat into himself: he is also continually of and uncomfortable with the alienation from his own culture and the loss of perspective that characterizes the screen. He says to his sister, a school chum also serving her time to Madras, who is besotted with Western culture, that he is “just not one more urban Indian; an ordinary man, an American’s general in the Third World.” The line never makes it into the film; instead Bhatta is presented as a further validation of August’s perceptions of the town and its people, and rural India by implication. English, August was made for Western audiences. It was shot in English (with the help of French financing) and there is no way that the Indian censor board is going to pass the film with its reality and truthful view of the Indian cultural market. It will probably be a great success in the West—unfortunately.

Another film designed for the West and the elite art-house circuit is Sunita Devi by Shakti Sawar. It was perhaps one of the most controversial films at the Festival. In what is perhaps a Festival first, there were reports of the real life heroine of the film threatening to sue the film’s producers and the Festival if the film were screened. Word was, depending on who was talking, that she had either refused to see the film or that the producers had refused to allow her to see the film. Sunita Devi tells the story of Phoolan Devi—a sort of contemporary Indian Robin Hood. Escaping from a history of poverty and abuse, Phoolan Devi became the leader of a gang of men who lived的真实 on jeans and villages, and threatened government forces for years. By the time she was finally captured and arrested in 1992, she had achieved cult status and the title Phoolan Devi (Godess of Flowers). She is now married to an MP and is running for office herself. The film is based on her bestselling autobiography and is a tremendous film in many ways, carrying an emotional punch from the opening frame that never lets up until the credits roll. Seema Biswas as Phoolan Devi does a tremendous job in what from all accounts was a harrowing role. Apparently she was so unnerved by the brutal scenes of the sexually ravaged Phoolan Devi. The profound social and political circumstances—the tension between caste, the fight over land that had so much to do with the gang warfare—are given short shrift. But then the film is really no more than what it was meant to be: an action thriller.

The documentary, Around Pathanwan’s, was the most compelling. Father, Son, and the Holy War in Pathanwan’s ambitious follow-up to his previous documentary, in the Name of God—the vibrant film that documented the religious wars that erupted in 1990. Father, Son, and the Holy War attempts to trace the roots of the fundamentalist violence that has become so much a part of the Indian landscape. The documentary is divided into two parts: Part One, “Tribal Fire,” refers to the fires that are burning up Indian society. In one chilling section, Pathanwan interviews a brother and sister men related to a woman who committed sati—the ritual self-immolation of widows that is now illegal in India, but that is becoming more common as the violence that is in fundamentalist fervor. The men have killed the sister, in their view, her act of religious conviction. In another section, the filmmaker interviews a school teacher who was savagely attacked and his husband killed in an apparently random attack. Punctuated by scenes of carnage, this section is disturbing, compelling; it is Pathanwan at his best. Part Two, “Sister (Sharmish),” is more ambitious and works less well. Here Pathanwan looks at the cult of the maulvi that has always been present in Indian society, but that is now taking on ominous ramifications. He looks at the roots of violence that have historic antecedents in the warrior society of the past and are now being newly allyed by the Schwarzenegger-Stallone/Silkk Hagen school of martial arts that has made its way into Indian culture. Pathanwan’s overall concept is an interesting one, if a little facile. Five thousand years of patriarchy does not fully explain the sudden explosion of fundamentalist fervor that is now erupting all over the world. His skill as an editor in capturing the kinetic intensity and fervor of life on the street. If you are looking for real images of India, look to Pathanwan.

Steve Pereira is the ex-editor of Dead Panthers, a South Asian cultural festival and a writer and artist living in Toronto.

by Joan Davies

The most prominent casualty at the Jewish Community Centre is the Leah Posluns Theatre, whose entire 1994-5 season has been axed. The theatre, formerly designated as North York’s official theatre, has been shut down indefinitely for the first time in at least 17 years.

The main reason is that ICC directors have spent a $2.4 million endowment fund set up for the theatre to pay the operating costs of the centre. Bernie Ghet, president of the Jewish Federation, which is trying to sort out the centre’s financial situation, says that without this support, the theatre has now become a financial burden. . . . Sources say staff at the Leah Posluns Theatre are outraged at what has happened. They claim the theatre has always been solvent, and the endowment fund—capital raised or donated by businessman Wilfred Posluns—should never have been touched.

(Henry Miekkiewicz, Toronto Star, August 28, 1994)
If I had wanted to invent a news item to start this piece, I could not have done better. We have been told repeatedly by federal and provincial agencies that if we want culture (e.g., movies, theatres, dance, film, etc.) there should be no sufficiency, that the government should have no part in the dance of the nation. If we dance, we must dance to the market. The saga of the Jewish Y shows how the market dancers and ignores a large segment of the community.

In their urge to abandon the respon-
sibility of government in Canada, initiating the United States and Britain, have chosen to ridicule the idea that the state should have any part in funding any aspect of culture. Robert Fulford, using a state-subsidized network, organized a programme through the fall of 1993 on CBC’s “Ideas” on culture and the market in which most of the major speakers argued against the state having anything to do with culture. The programme did not, of course, include schools or universities which are integral to culture, and was, in most cases, funded by public money. When we talk of culture now, we talk of the state backing off its support. Yet the state spends increasing monies on culture. In Toronto, the SkyDome was built almost entirely with state federal and provincial money, although it was made to look like a triumph of private enterprise. The Winter Garden Theatre was heavily subsidized and so was the New York consortium of theatres and concert halls. The O’Keefe Centre is currently being rebuilt with some state money. The figures here are astronomical by the standards of this magazine. Yet it is this magazine and many others like it which are being squeezed until the pipes squeak. Why?

Two instant answers. Governments are not afraid of giving money in order to turn culture into a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder so that the spectator is seen to be culture. It doesn’t matter who brings the spectacle: we will provide the venue. Toronto must become the spectacle capital of the world, and hence we will get tourist dollars from those benighted souls in Buffalo. Backed by federal and provincial agencies which allow the multifaceted segments of the city to focus their energies on an even more than create a culture of engagement. The second instant answer is that governments have given up on the idea of providing subsidies by which those organic intellectuals or creative artists who are opposed to its everyday concerns might do their thing. The issue we face today is how to make culture down-sized, but under whose auspices, and for what reasons.

In the Victoria Commonwealth Games the Australians came out on top because state and private funds worked together to make sure that they would be on top. And we are not in Kenya I discovered that one of the few very lively cultural centres was sponsored by the French Government (France) but this is a former British colony. Every country is apparently under the gun because of the IMF, the World Bank and the Bond Bond crises of the late 1980s, but each works on different cultural priorities. It seems not to matter whether accountants such as Paul Audley in his report for the Ontario government or the more recent report. The Business of Culture, by the provincial cultural advisory group producers figures which show how much the cultural industries, collectively or separately, make, the various Canadian governments decide that culture must be down-sized. Whatever this means in terms of cultural priorities, the service industries industry. In culture it means that the cultural products must come from elsewhere and that there will be no investment in cultural.

But to promote down-sizing, there must be an ideology, a stance, to which the public is not only than the position of the loony right is clear enough and hardly deserves intellectual discus-

dion, although their power for mischief making should not be underestimated. Their position, represented by the likes of John Crichton and John Reisman, is that it is a purely ideological one in which the market controls all and ‘minority’ views will ultimately be snuffed out because they will no longer be the laws of exchange.

This is coupled with a paranoid conviction that organizations such as the CIC or the Canadian Council are necessarily controlled by the ‘left’ because they are subsidized by taxing.

More and more interesting, because they see themselves as the voices of the cultural establishment, are the columnists who have been totally sucked in by market rhetoric and anti-intellectualism. Fulford, Michael Coren, John Benley Mays and sometimes Bona Shuwa Panhale have done a job, over the past year or so, of building a negative sub-

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The other aspect of this campaign is the sheer anti-intellectualism of the exercise. In different ways over the past year, Mays, Fulford and Coren have weighed in with piers which attempt to show that academic scholar ship consists of unearthy prose orga nized by totalitarian thought police whose object is to denigrate great art and literature. Emily Carr gave occasion to rage in wild swipes against post-structuralist critiques of her work. In neither case did they refer to a body of work, but rather to single examples of writing which they disliked. That the issues have been thoroughly discussed in Parallellogram and various gallery catalogues is never recognized. The critical sardines by these writers are merely the sardines of the market. Fulford and Coren seem to be engaged public politics at which they disagree. The name of the game here is to demonize any politics that seems to come from the left, label it politically cor rect and academically obtuse and then ask why the state should be funding such rubbish.

The ultimate problem with all this is that it is couched in the language of "common sense," but this is precisely what ideology is all about. Because, in the end, what this type of chatter does is for those who really do want to "downsize" culture, it is to make the creation of opinion that makes it legitimate. The language may seem civilized, but the consequences are brutal.

Jean Davies is a Borderline collective member.
In my Lipovci Austrian village, the present trend to build Flemish style model homes, complete with balconies and flower boxes, started around twenty years ago when Tyre was pocketing most of the for-
gotten Shmura. When my foreign-born mother received notice from
her town, she was stunned. “What on earth are they doing?” she
asked plaintively. “They’re building houses just like we did in Our-
town, but on stilts!” she exclaimed. She was right. The original
structure, balconies with flower boxes in the addition, a moved
house in the front, and she can’t keep up with the new neighbors.
Batteners and flower boxes, together with a spliced popplewood of
the backyard, the entire area of an Afghan interior, present an
image of a generic Austrian identity which
may be so successful in attracting tourists as in catalyzing foreigners.
Surely if what is coming to the market, the trend can disassociate
with authenticity, When I left Austria 20 years ago, Germany had started
to harness Austrian designs, and their sales have returned from
Austria.

My grandmother, who was a typical German (Volksdeutsche) refugee after WWII, lived accordingly to a profoundly regulated bureaucracy of
Catholic ethics and social ranking. In the course of searching for a
medical explanation for my grandmother’s belief system, I came across a
bit of ethnic cleansing: “... she shall pour water over you and you will be
cleansed: I shall cleanse you of all your dirtiness and all your idiosync-
sisms,” says God (Ex 30:19-20) in the context of gleaning His people....
From all the foreign counselors, and bring your home in your own land.

The ethnic intent to recreate a society that has been disempowered
over centuries was given a new and sinister meaning during WWII.
Rather than retaining the ethnic Germans who had settled centuries
together through Central Europe to a stable Western Republic, Hitler inten-
ded to wipe out his Reich to include all people that contained pockets of
Germanic language groups. Any ethnic such as SubSlavicians and the
Batani-German present settlements since the Middle Ages were in
occupied by the new powers, the Hungarian kings and the
Austro-Hungarian empire; they also went through numerous religious
conversion.

My grandmother’s homeland had once been part of the Austrian
Empire and was resettled after Prince Eugen’s victory against the
Ottoian Empire. Never having been quite adjusted to Santa-Croatian
socially, the Donaumachtians of the Kingdom of Croatia, along with
those in SubSlavicians, Batani, Poland, etc., were more than supportive
of the new movement that guaranteed them language and other rights
and would bring them “home.” “Wissen ich Reich” was Hitler’s slogan.
(The cost of millions of human lives, more recently defined as ethnic dam-
age, was not mentioned.) Toward the end of the war, they realized that
the Reich was not going to come to them after all, and millions fled to
Germany, Switzerland and Austria, where they were not welcomed. Of
those who did not want to give up their lands, over one hundred thou-
sand perished in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Romania and Poland
after the war.

Some of my family’s members went directly to Germany, where they
quickly joined a prospering working class. Later picked up by
foreigners who were dealt compensation packages from the government.
Austria was less generous. The refugee spoke a different dialect and
were 18th century clothing; the women wore
skirts but not trousers. Back then, they sold their goods at the local market
dressed in old-fashioned costumes.

During my last visit to Austria in 1993 I found the countryside inundated with proliferating images of an orderly, clean, pure, authentic, folkish homeland
whose inhabitants are struggling over more with the authoritarian politics of the neo-fascists and their charismatic leader, Jozef Hidler. His anti-Semitic
stingers is “Austria is not Canada.” Hundreds of thousands of Austrians had signed Hidler’s petition against accepting refugees (anomalous peoples, foreigners).

Among those who signed was my father, an eco-communist party member, who at the same time is providing lodgings to a young Bosnian family in his
small farm house. The contradictions inherent in my father’s actions reflect a confused nation under pressure to define its identity. Neo-fascist cultural assimi-
lations look backward to an embattled Golden Age; they skillfully ignore dialectical changes in the ethnic makeup of the nation-state and its Slovenian, Slovak,
and Hungarian minorities. They also seem unaware that diversity of class and geographic regionality are reflected in architecture and folklore.

Orders help... keep a good house

BY INGRID MAYROFNER

The idea for this large size billboard project originated in an attempt to deconstruct concepts and aesthetics of "order" as personal (familial) and polit-
ical (state) relations. Dealing with issues arising from my family’s experiences, the work dialogues around my grandmother’s obsession with cleanliness, her
horror of God and submission to His will. Images of my grandmother’s life, as an infant, parent, mother, refugee, inevitably surfaced. The work
also follow my family from Croatia to Austria, Germany and Israel.

22 Border/Lines
The International Urban Elite and the Culture of Instant Transmission

The Nation State is passé, the mega-city is omnipotent. Alex Ferentzy studies the implications of this shift.

With the consolidation of the cities as the nodal points on the dispersed board of international capitalism, there has emerged a culture specific to these urban centers.

What Steifeld and Strange in Rival Firms: Competition for World Market Shares call a "privileged transnational business civilization," is not merely a passive recipient of social pressures, but is actively engaged in a process of creating culture simultaneously delineating its identity and establishing barriers to deep entry to outsiders. While many such barriers are spatial and economic, others present themselves as the site of a competitive enterprise in cultural definitions. In order to understand these endeavors, we have to clarify the changes and continuities between current practices and those that were apparent in earlier periods. In this way we will be able to specify what is new, what is an exaggeration of previous trends and what assumes a different form in relation to what some have called the informational mode of production.
I am leading up to that most annoying yuppie phrase of “doing lunch” which goes further than merely having lunch and exaggerates the level of activity yet again.

In his classic essay, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” George Simmel argued that the sheer number of formal, rational and abstract intellectual permutations that the urban dweller living in a money economy must perform as part of his/her everyday activity, combined with the frequency of encounters with strangers, fosters a mental attitude that is abstract, rationalistic and aloof.

Simmel explained the role of money in this process of fostering a rationalist attitude. Inasmuch as money represents an abstraction that is rationally manipulable and removed from where and how its value was produced, it lends credence to a notion of the existence of an abstractive reality that is graspable in a rational and detached manner.

Language is the scene of an ongoing power struggle that demarcates the above shifts; its rearticulations of meaning signify intimate political battles. Every GRID knows this. As does that self-named hobo-tourist Rob Mary Daly. To look at current words and expressions it is necessary, yet again, to get a sense of where they come from. Without this historical perspective everything seems simply to fall from the sky for no particular reason.

So, we have two processes that are both in play. The idea that devices that introduce the introduction of a verb between the participants in an event and the event itself. Perhaps it is more obvious in the way that “to dine” becomes “to have dinner.” As the verb becomes a noun, it is objectified; it becomes the object of the action and the people become the actors. The event is mediated by the verb “to have,” introducing an element of possessiveness into the utterance. While the event is now possessed, it is also at a greater distance. What is this little possessive word that has come between us and our dinner? In a society that validates the act of possessing it should not be at all surprising that the emphasis should be on consumption rather than on the experience, just as earlier the expression “to take one’s dinner” expressed the alienation situation. I am leading up to that most annoying yuppy phrase of “doing lunch” which goes further than merely having lunch and exaggerates the level of activity yet again. The doing of “doing lunch” operates as a signal of a certain status and a way of being in the world which must push the object of its intentions more heavily than merely having lunch can indicate. It is also a magical act which attempts to make all the paraphernalia and non-instrumental aspects of life disappear. Perhaps most importantly, the agreement to do lunch marks a deal between parties that the event will be contained within the codifications of the professional elite. Though they are laughing, there is no need to fear that they will lapse into a temporarily passive state, that the social encounter might be non-instrumental. No, they will do it.

Niko’s slogan “Just Do It” universalizes this doing into an order-word. The command to “just do it” sets things rolling and organizes the world by giving this kind of senseless activity priority. It is in relation to this order-word that we must approach the meanings not only of GRID/S and Maps, but also of those paranoid schizophasics who look at the world-order, perceive the order-word, and transform it all into a new whirled order.

This splitting of expressions into their component parts has other related effects, particularly in those areas of human life which can only be expressed in qualitative terms and which Simmel spoke of as “irrational, instinctive and sovereign traits and impulses.” I am thinking of moods, emotions, desires, beliefs and delusions. We say “I want an apple” or “I want to have my supper pierced” or even “I want to go home,” and we abstract from these different desires a unified transcendental DESIRE. They are separated from their situation and then reunited in the abstract. Of course this is still Platonic thinking. The myriad different tables participate in the ideal form TABLE, which is their deepest truth, their essential nature. This is evident in the study of emotions where every anxiety, fear or panic is said to reflect the universal condition of which it is a more important particular. As we deceive ourselves by giving away of its validity outside of its adaptability to our technocratic purposes, we create a metaphysics out of our very alienation. And because it is a metaphysic it is apparent in our language and unavowed in the world. We find we “do it” to the world or to others, without in some sense doing it to ourselves.

This process generates a plane of abstraction (the set DESIRE. Desires of apple, desire of supper, etc.) which is available for analysis. We have seen a large expansion of the territory (moods, thoughts and emotions which are of no immediate value to our society) which is first problematized through positing the impossible question “what is your anxiety exactly like?” and then retroactively to the process of capital accumulation through the experts’ privileged access to the plane of abstraction, where every anxiety, phobia and panic can be clearly delineated and approached in a rational, instrumentally manner.

Though I deny their rational character, there is no denying that these classes of analysis have become what David Harvey calls “concrete abstractions.” It becomes impossible to approach them from outside their cultural existence, from a purely rational dialectical standpoint. Quite the contrary, it is here in the power of their cultural existence that they must be encountered.

Such concrete abstractions are no longer understandable in the monolithic forms that typified modernism. They have moved, along with everything else, to a systems-theoretic rationalism and so it is not surprising to find a host of cybernetic terms invading the language of society. I am thinking here of keeping in touch, touching base, networking and so on. They all affirm the importance of maintaining contact, of being a point on the grid. Within this grid there is a space of flows, and we delineate ourselves if we think that there is no politics in this grid and that a little seduction will make everything alright.

The vast society that is problematized in this manner is also a cybernetic...
I am thinking here of keeping in touch, touching base, networking and so on. They all affirm the importance of maintaining contact, of being a point on a grid.

The only way to follow through to the question of the truth of an experience is to chart a path back through the grid. But the grid can only be navigated with the kind of educational and social skills which make radical feedback unlikely, or in any case provide the individual with the kind of resources which make unwanted external control improbable, though as the history of psychiatry continues to prove, by no means impossible.

The demarcation of the point on the grid is not merely a technological-informational complex. It is being carved into city landscapes. According to Marvi Castells in The Information City,

The new industrial space and the new service economy organize their operations around the dynamics of their information-processing units, while connecting their different functions to disparate spaces assigned to each task to be performed: the overall process is then re-integrated through communication systems. The new professional-managerial class colonizes exclusive spatial segments that connect with one another across the city, the country, and the world: they isolate themselves from the fragments of local societies, which in consequence become destructured in the process of selective reorganization of work and residence.

In the movement from a society to an information society we see a reduction in the distance between the economic and the social. The number and complexity of abstract-national calculations increase tremendously in an information economy since the means of information exchange involve learning technically specific processes (using automated tellers, logging into databases, programming your VCR, playing video games, etc.) and entrapping them with considerable exactness. So it should not be surprising if each of the above elements is best understood as an exaggeration and an extension of earlier developments, rather than as an entirely new form. Taken together, however, they do present a distinct cultural complex which takes its meaning from the shift to an information economy and reflects an attempt to legitimate the views of those groups that have privileged access to the new technologies and its social-economic organization.

The emerging international urban elite expresses its alignment with the dominant orders of the day and is continually poised to re-align itself along the possibilities of its flexible specialization and, from there, to transmit its functional-imperative unhesitatingly, with no internal resistance, all the while presenting itself as a clear, smooth package of this same political positioning: it is refined and capable of the most subtle transmutations of its aesthetic or ideological nature. The guest is to be fully immersed in the flows of the grid: to have the channels cleared of all extraneous material and to create a social space out of this same sensibility, to create a society of smooth transmitters.

Alex Fenetery writes about the cybernetic asylum.

Excerpts and Commentary on Dreaming of You
Garrett Press Gallery,
Toronto, July 2 - August 20, 1994
An exhibition featuring works from over 75 artists to celebrate and remember the charm, talent and generosity of David Busch, Robert Flint and Tim Joooyin.

David Morrow's "Couplings," a parody of "HIS" and "HIS" merchandise, features towels transformed with "TOP" and "BOTTOM" as well as "Stallion" and "Cock."

There are about 5 billion people in the world. 5 billion tears, assuming the average tear to be 2 ml, would be 10 million litres of warm salt water.

Cry me a river.

John McLaughin's "Sleeping" parodies promotional merchandising themes usually aimed at children of television program and movies.

Hamish Buchanan in "Mourning Cap-Veil of Tears" has taken a cap (recent staple of young gay fashion) and attached a veil to it. Definitely hostile couture rather than the off-the-rack prototypes of Morrow and McLaughin.

by Steve Reinke
uring the summer of 1993 David Brodsky and I spent five weeks in Germany. It was our first visit since before the Wall came down. We travelled all over the country, talking to people in an attempt to gauge their mood in the aftermath of unification. One of the most noticeable changes was the vast number of homeless people everywhere.

What had caused this explosion in homelessness? What has the government done to alleviate it? And what have the homeless and their supporters tried to do on their own? Before I address these questions, some political facts about "post-Wall" Germany may be of use.

The well-documented euphoria that erupted when the Wall came down soon dissipated for many people into anxiety and bitterness. People in the west with whom we spoke used terms like Amoklauf (outrage, 'out'), and 'occupation' to describe what had happened to them. Westeners saw that despite the promises of Kohl and the CDU, they would be paying a lot for the changes, while in the former East Germany it's clear that many have lost more than they gained, including housing guaranteed to the constitution. Unemployment, at 7.4% nationwide, reaches over 50% in some parts of the five new eastern states ("January Unemployment Figures..." Kreutzmann), where many people found that their jobs and their companies had simply been abolished by the new government.

Other factors at work include the rise of openly neo-Fascist organizations and an alarming increase in anti-foreign and racist incidents ranging from harassment to murder. There has been a huge influx of refugees, from Third World countries and from war zones such as Yugoslavia, who came to Germany because of its liberal asylum laws, which are now under attack from the conservative government. There is also a large emigration of ethnic Germans from Poland and the former Soviet Union who by German law have a right to citizenship. In this situation the peace soon began setting the disadvantaged groups against one another. Right-wing recruiters play upon the anger and fear of those at the bottom, and some, including homeless people, have expressed resentment towards those seeking political asylum, because the latter are automatically given housing while their cases are pending.

The strong popular reaction among the Germans against racism, violence and tacit government encouragement through inaction has been badly underreported in the American press.

Everywhere we went we saw graffiti supporting foreigners, urging solidarity with refugees and with striking East German miners. Many simply assumed "Ihre Rechte" ("Their rights"), even official organizations displayed posters with messages like "Cologne without foreigners is like the Philharmonic without music." This racism and xenophobia are being addressed clearly and strongly by the people. Public reaction to homelessness is not always so clear, nor so satisfying:

Politicians, particularly on the right, have chosen to make it appear as if the main cause of homelessness were a flood of foreigners into the housing market. But the factors I mentioned have at most exacerbated the situation and given the media a useful symbol to play with. As the majority of left commentators on homelessness in Germany make clear, the real root of the problem is a familiar confluence of government policies, ranging from ineffectual to pernicious, and a real-estate market allowed to rage out of control.

Alex Vitale, in a recent issue of Z Magazine, makes a statement that could be applied virtually unchanged to the German situation: "Government at all levels, the media, and private foundations continue to conceptualize poverty as a personal problem with a personal solution while ignoring the structural economic factors that have created widespread homelessness."

But many of the homeless themselves, resisting the forces that would set them against one another, insist that the causes do not lie within the individual or the victim, but within the system. In fact, the new wave of homelessness in Germany is a direct result of the great affluence of the 1980s and early 90s. As more people can afford, and demand, larger and fancier places to live in, those on the lower end are eventually squeezed out of their homes entirely. Germans on average live in the smallest number of square metres per person since the end of World War II. A comment by a spokesman of the German Homeless' Association shows the prevailing attitude: "There is no housing shortage, only an increased demand for luxury and a group which can't be served by the market." That is, there's no shortage, just people who can't pay the rent.

The Hanging Man: A Report on Homelessness in Germany
Patricia Pollock Brodsky

Border Lines 31
The single greatest complaint is that affordable dwellings have all but disappeared from the lower end of the market, as old buildings—sometimes whole neighborhoods—are bought, gentrified, and sold to new buyers at inflated prices. Some neighborhoods have joined forces to try to resist the enforced modernization of their houses and their sub-sequent eviction, but it’s hard to fight the speculators, supported as they are by German law and the prevailing values in Bonn. German tax law favors such speculation. Much of the government housing subsidies go not to renters, but to landlords. And high depreciation allowances, among other things, encourage unscrupulous developers.

The situation of those facing eviction is particularly hard in the new eastern states. Under G.D.R. law, no one could be evicted. Now renters face not only drastic rises in rents, but the added threat of western investors buying up property cheaply, or of former owners coming back and laying claim to houses that they or their relatives owned before the founding of the G.D.R. in 1949, or even earlier. There is no clear legal opinion on the rights in such cases, and current renters and owners largely fear that they will simply become the "victims of history"—that is, of capitalist opportunism. There are currently enough of these cases pending to keep the German courts busy for decades.

Figures on homelessness vary. In a country of 80 million people, estimates range from 3 million homeless to over 35 million, if in addition to people on the street you count those in temporary or substandard housing—those in women’s shelters, and the over 100,000 drug and mental patients who could be released but are not, because there is nowhere to send them.

There are a variety of so-called alternatives open to the homeless. The very worst off sleep on the street, and in parks, subway stations, underground garages and public toilets. But there has been an increasing tendency of municipalities and businesses to hire private guards such as the notorious “Black Sheriffs” of Munich, to chase people out of these areas, with dogs and clubs if necessary. In many cities people have banded together in "Wagendiefarfe" squatters’ villages of abandoned cars, converted vans, gypsy wagons and construction shacks. In Berlin one such village stands in what was once the man’s land along the wall. Some cities, notably Frankfurt am Main, have negotiated with squatters to provide them with alternative sites for their settlements. Hamburg provided toilets, a cook, a wagon and social workers.

But these gestures are rare. In some cities the homeless continue to seize and occupy empty buildings, a practice that began in the late ’60s. But there are fewer and fewer houses to be had, as gentrification proceeds.

The "temporary" dwellings, provided by federal and local governments include shipping containers, abandoned barracks, industrial sites; Cologne even put an unused Rhine ship at the disposal of a homeless agency. The most common procedure involves housing vouchers that allow a person to spend the right in a selected cheap hotel or moving house. The landlords of these places have a reputation for brutality and exploitation; some are known to be pimps. Others simply make a profit by charging exorbitant rents, since the government picks up most of the bill. The number of rights allowed at any given place is limited. Critics complain that these government policies keep the homeless on the run, unstable, and in constant flight past of staying anywhere long enough to become part of a community.

A study in addition, during the last ten years the federal government has almost entirely withdrawn from the construction of substandarded housing. Very few new apartments are being built—estimates of the shortfall range from 1.7 to 3 million—and almost none at the lower rent levels, or with government control. These dwellings that are subsidized initially can go onto the open market after ten or twelve years, at which time the landlords can sell them at a profit or rent them out at market rates in favour of a more affluent clientele. Such "yapification" of neighbour-hoods is a major source of homeless-ness. Even people with "normal" incomes often can’t find a place they can afford. In addition, Bonn has recently passed a number of cuts in social welfare benefits, which naturally hits people without a place to live the hardest.

A variety of self-help and advocacy groups have been formed, many of them created by the homeless themselves, out of a recognition that it is futile to hope for a solution from those who had created the problem. These alliances tend to see the situation in the same light as Alex Wylie saw it—as a structural problem that demands structural changes to solve it, adding to the consumer's lack of control over doing, but the lack of work, money, educational opportunities and health care. "People on the street in Germany have a life expectancy ten years shorter than the national average." These groups demand that lodging be a constitutional right, not a commodity. In a strong statement in 1993, the German Federation of Labor (Union) branded deregulation and privatization in the housing market, and demanded rent ceilings and affordable living space for all, under permanent government control.

In addition to actions directed aimed at obtaining housing, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to raise consciousness and hope of staying anywhere long enough to become part of a community.

Among these is a movement to move from the last ten years the federal government has almost entirely withdrawn from the construction of substandarded housing. Very few new apartments are being built—estimates of the shortfall range from 1.7 to 3 million—and almost none at the lower rent levels, or with government control. These dwellings that are subsidized initially can go onto the open market after ten or twelve years, at which time the landlords can sell them at a profit or rent them out at market rates in favour of a more affluent clientele. Such "yapification" of neighbour-hoods is a major source of homeless-ness. Even people with "normal" incomes often can’t find a place they can afford. In addition, Bonn has recently passed a number of cuts in social welfare benefits, which naturally hits people without a place to live the hardest.

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A movement to move from the
Welcher von diesen Soldaten muß nicht in den Krieg?

According to the judgement of the State Court the church authorities have the right to remove the Wailing Wall from the Cathedral forecourt. We are appealing against the court decision. You may send a letter against revocation of the Wailing Wall to: Cathedral Chapter, c/o Domprobst Berhard Hornich, Masurenkleister 5, D-50667 Cologne. Copy please to Klagenmauer, Bonnkleister 4, D-50667 Cologne.

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A MAGAZINE AND MARK'S GRAVE

by Gary Genosko

L

_ein drove a 1931 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost. Among Lenin's precious things, it is less well known than his brain. Fleeting in formality, the latter has been poked, stabbed and sliced at the Moscow Brain Institute since his death in 1924. According to the pseudoscience promoted by German neurologist Oskar Vogt, Lenin's morphology was said to reveal something of his cognitive ability. But there was, in the end, nothing extraordinary about Lenin's brain. Soviet doctors would have learned just as much about Lenin's intelligence by examining his car._

Lenin's body will soon, by all accounts, leave its glass sarcophagus in Red Square and enter the safe of St. Petersburg. If Lenin is buried, then one of the best advertisements for the success of pickling bodies will be lost. It is rumored that the Scientific Research Institute in Moscow will offer the service for a mere quarter of a million US dollars. Happy customers abound: Che Chai Aih, Georg Dimitrov (Bulgarian Communist Party), Augustino Neri (Angolan CP). Of course, Mao is embalmed and is still on display. The Chinese, like the Russians, guard their secret recipes. While the sale of Mao embalms abounds in his hometown of Shaoshan in Hunan Province, his cerebral bath has not been offered to more peasants.

The celebrated muralist Diego Rivera was thrown out of the Mexican CP in 1939 and began, if we are to believe recent revelations about his life, as well as that of his colleague and friend Ivan Moszkowski, to pass information about Communist activities and Soviet involvement in Mexico to the KGB. He may also have been involved in the first failed attempt to assassinate Trotsky.

London is a gold mine of socialist ephemera. Mining of all sorts is, however, in decline in the U.K. Still, the daily-dally-sell over the masses of international leftism and report the latest scandals with gleam. What were Lenin's last words? "Good dog." What is the name of the Czeckoslovak nationalist head of the Committee for Stalin's Body who has recently demanded its return to its "true" soil in the Carpathian Mountains? Arcim Ushakowsky. The left would be wise to invest in a post-post-marxist edition of Tertullian Peristyle. Instead, with the death of the plus, projects such as Marxism Today, we have attempts such as Red Pepper to "spice up the left." The deadline for making a pledge was December 10, 1993, and the first issue of the magazine was now on the stands (May 1994). Many investors in this project of the Socialist Movement came from the legal community and could claim up to a 45% tax rebate. Whatever happened to the tax-happy principles of Marxism? Is leftist culture now only a tax-avoidance scheme? In the tragicomic alphabetic page, "A Z of the Left," in New Statesman and Society (25 March, 1994), it is reported that Hitler's weight has risen almost $30,000. Red Pepper is "not to be confused with Socialist" (the formerly newspaper launched by the Socialist Movement in 1991. Closed after 14 issues, having lost $135,000, most of which had been raised by Hillary Wainwright. It was only four years ago that New Statesman and Society lost the "battle" against left-wing newspapers. Left-wing newspapers have now been excluded, leaving the Daily Telegraph as a "true" left newspaper."

Few miss the irony that Ernest Spinner is buried close to Lenin, reminding one of another famous British couple, Marks and Spencer. The English National Heritage Blue Plaque in the department store "in memory of the first department store in the world," an act of vandalism, presumably perpetrated by some radical group. The Blue Plaque could probably be put aside, or the department store could change its name to "Lenin's Department Store." The Blue Plaque could probably be put aside, or the department store could change its name to "Lenin's Department Store."
Philip Corrigan examines the way the "Right" tries to turn loss of privilege and loss of institutional control into a universal social malaise.

Fear(s) of Loss

In the Fall of 1990, I came across the first (as far as I know) advertisement for the National Association of Scholars (from a recent *New York Review of Books*). The language of that advertisement — although somewhat contradicted by the subsequent activities of the N.A.S. (including their newsletter *Accuracy in Education*) — could not have been gentler: All these debates about inclusive/exclusive canons, curricula and courses could be dealt with, they argued, by "admitting" the importance of sexuality, ethnicity and (did they dare to use this word?) class within the capacious humanistic canon which had to be defended (the implication here, which becomes overt later, was, of course, "against the barbarians").

I do not know of the interconnections between the N.A.S. and other purity organizations such as U.S. English, but I suspect minimally some overlap in membership. The N.A.S., anyway, appears after a decade of major attempts from the centre — from the U.S. Office of Education — to "tighten" the forms of curricula

What the "Right" Fears Most!
and pedagogy operative within U.S. schools. Not distinct in its movements are also appeared, of course, in Canada. All such movements are critically engaged in different ways; violent (contradictory) value-objectives. Many, for example, took for their contrasting other what they regarded in the "most successful" social formation — after this was Japan — and compared the rival schools negatively. Other organizations, with a directly economic character, surrounded and commercialized the moral-economic values of organizations like the U.S. by valuing skills and training (rather than values and education).

All that being assumed to date, I do not propose to signal the seeking (and thus violent) psychological contradictions within ruling classes and the middle class allies, except to argue that this is, along with so much else, a source of their social fear. These white male hetero-sexual middle classes within the Occident are not, of course, alone in their historical experience of social fear. What it new is that they had not expected to feel afraid. They had thought their version of what the historical experience of the post-eighteenth-century world meant (for them), that is to say their history, their Culture, their Literature, their Art, and — be sure — their Education, represented all that was The Best of the West, and it was theirs. It was good to behold. "We" (a term which I find increasingly unusable) have all been taught to embody quite different forms of social fear. For some is distinct minority; it is a mannered fear easily recognizable as a mania, white, clean, mannered and utterly distinct from the labourers of the millions that make that life possible. We have to stop thinking of manners and morality as features which are supplied or acquired, to be added to or used upon already somehow distinct (social) bodies and their articulation within powered relations and structures of authority and command.

Are our social fears quite different from Their social fears? Indeed not! They are dialectically interconnected: the more we (differently) question, interrogate, demand, the more fearful They become; the more They police and surveil and regulate and structure, the more we (differently) make to be afraid. We all (differently) bear multiple marks of being desired, and every such mark (learned often long after we have been so branded) is a scar, a wound. We carry within and around us multiple bodies. The fruit skin, bones and physiology that enable us to keep drawing breath: the marks within and on that skin that enable differences "socially cultured" to work; and the markers of dress, realization, behaviour, manners, (social) and varieties connected to the notion of appearance and representation — these are all governed by rules that we often learn (differently) by the historical experiences of those occasions when we (differently) demonstrate infractions of this (their) social grammar.

I have never believed that what it is to be the captive (read: regulation of hearts and minds: what matters is how persons behave. Organizations of the Cultural Right which is now so imperceptibly involved in forms of governance that (1) we should not locate it beyond state forms (2) we should thus recognize that what is taking place is a "Revolution in Governance") do not necessarily desire restriction of access, of numbers, etc.; to their citadels. They want, however, to ensure that the "social grammar" of their commanding ruling institutions works to continue to make Their rules regular, reliable, respectable, rational — that is, normalized.

On the Historical Experience of the Occidental Upper and Middle Classes

As various statistical data show across all OECD countries, the upper 10-15% of the earning/wealthy population has done very well indeed in the last twenty years. Nonetheless, Edward Luttwak realized, in his sharp analysts "Why Fascism is the Wave of the Future," (1990s Review of Books) that the upper/middle classes are uneasy, feeling their citadels have been invaded and transformed. All sorts of expectations have been interrupted, all sorts of "givens" are no longer given, a range of institutions no longer appear to be "their" institutions. The English Sunday Times, for instance, very stupidly described the National Union of Teachers Annual Conference, in an editorial, "The Barbarians Are No Longer At the Gate; They Are Inside Our Classrooms." The writers present in their social fears the wild threatening around to find a case — which cannot, of course, be the very specific de-socialization created by the allegedly new forms of capitalism ("making money") they so favoured. Not being able to define the economic for the more complex range of political-economic institutions without which their God "The Free Market" could not last for an hour, let alone a day. They have to turn to a personalized enemy, a nameable enemy, an enemy with a face and a body: The Enemy Within, the Other who has (somehow) infiltrated us. "Us:" note that these displaced or feeling displaced-middle classes always claim to operate through the personhood of Nation/People. "Us" next for their historical experience is that it was all Them, it was their country, it was Their culture.

Terified of a future that is no longer Theirs (forget that the present and past was not really Theirs either, we are not talking rationally here) and re-presenting the truth of a past (claimed as theirs that never actually existed), they are caught in that trap so well analyzed by Wilhelm Reich with regard to

Fascism. They promote a restorationist myth: old values, old ways, Victorian values. Back to Basics, more "English" period dramas/old films from the U.S.A. with hardly a non-white face in them. They prefer Australian soap operas to two major English-produced soaps, Easies and Brookside, which they complain, are too realistic; the latter engage black people—families, gay and lesbian issues, debt, violence, suicide, and so on.

Get A Head! Forget the Pain

Place all of this in two other spirals: first, that education is continuously argued as the way to "get ahead," yet the competition from myriad others (lower depths, outsiders, Others in general) is squeezing out "us"; second, no government can "deliver the goods" (or The Good). Governments complain that they are caught in the boom/stump cycle of capitalism. They are also caught in what I termed the early Soviet period called the scissors crisis: the more you make productivity, ah, efficient lowering the necessary reproduction costs of labour as we old-fashioneds call it, the higher you raise the socially necessary support costs for such a working class. Thus, there is the required direct and indirect taxation to pay for such supports for life. Above all there is the reproduction of class society, whose work falls most heavily upon the non-males in any given society. So, the female headed household becomes normal, across all OECD countries, as the census tells, the cause of the social war that the middle classes feel themselves to be losing.

Unable, as I said earlier, to name any of this, they have to turn to culture (and more generally, morality) to name their fears, sotto voce, and their target populations: these barbarians others in "our" midst. This transfer of a possible social, economical, political or cosmological analysis to "the cultural" is hardly a new phenomenon. Is it? Not only since Raymond Williams’ mid-1950s analysis of Culture and Society but in any halfway adequate analysis of any struggle the linked nature of cultural/political/
economic(social) relations and structures is obvious. When, for example, English women and men wished not only to read, but also to discuss, the Bible in their own language—in that periodical formatting we call it “human” —their “civilized” was at first seen as that are more a religious matter—but quite rapidly, and in an entirely paradigmatic manner, they were given a form of “the social order.” It took many, many years, until, as one Welsh Methodist explained to me, any person could stand before his Go without intermediaries.

So the social fear has always been there, long before a properly historically sociological middle class existed, the fear of radical dechristianization, the fear of dilution, hence dilution.

**Fearful Dangers/Dangerous Fears**

What is it all about? In many forms, it is a project of restoration. This entails both a claiming/claiming back of what has been lost (for them) and, inequally so—the re-establishment of modes of social discipline and deferential obedience which they imagine to have been true in the “Golden Age.” They wish to restore. More bluntly, there is a sustained attempt to frighten the majority of people alive today. What they see as fearful dangers epitomize for the majority its attempt to work out its fears upon the bodies of working women and men. One pattern of this which has gone unremarked for far too long involves their utilization of seemingly “good things” against which nobody could argue: everyone should be “literate” and “numerate”; “more people” should have “better” education and training. As always and again there are extensive historical struggles from which much must be learned; these seemingly technical, quantitative assertions are in fact “filled with a certain content,” they embody certain values. Most importantly is the use of “the numbers game” regarding “access” where the simple employment of general statistical indicators (as indeed with fiscal indicators of spending on X, Y or Z) can disguise radically deep social, structural and relational patterns. As the OECD found for the 1960s/early 70s “boom” in post-secondary education, it benefitted wider ranges within the middle classes. Analysis has also shown a storing and regression in the late 70s and early 80s of the proportions of the excluded majority in gaining access to a socially and occupationally significant post-secondary education. Where there have been changes within the social forms (and social grammar) of cultural production and educational provision they have occurred through a consistent resistance on the margins. This is crucial. For it is such changes at the margins (within what they claim to be their culture and their educational institutions) which are taken to be so devastating, so threatening, so indicative of the “new barbarians” and the “coming anarchy” that a new Crusade or twenty must be launched to “save Civilization!”

**Fearful Dangers/Dangerous Fears**

**Finale: What (Once Again) Is To Be Done**

While they talk of the fact that their radicalized monetarist capitalism would produce, through a trickle-down effect, a rise in well-being for all, there has been a bloody deluge of laws, rules, regulations, administrative inspections and constant re-constructions of our lives, both in varieties of state interventions and in the range of social assets/providing institutions. In England, to take the example I know best, there have been 144 Acts of Parliament since 1979 reforming/changing local Government and, over the same period, there have been 800 new pages of Statute Law on Education. A third area of massive legislative activity has been the “reform” of trades-unions and workplace relations. The consequences of these changes in terms of the constant re-working of social relations and structures is what we have all been living through.

What began as a Cultural Revolution, then required (after 1983) massive institutionalization, has now (after 1990) or so entered a phase of Permanent Revolutionizing. Within this routine hurricane the platitude calls for Victorian values. Back to Rassie, Chris Valera, and other standards of moral regulation appear somewhat ineffective. Also different devils are conjured up. Worried about “crime”? Why, it’s the fault of the parents, or the teachers, or the schools, or the religious bodies, or the television, computer games, music, pop music, youth—ah yes, that’s it, it’s the fault of youth that they are, um, youthful, well, sort of. . . Well, dammit, it is somebody’s fault! Nothing to do with poverty, inequality, fear, loss, unemployment, flexibility of labour regimes, withdrawal of social provision—no, not at all: on that They are very clear.

As Lenin once put it, even facile and stupid answers to serious questions have to be taken seriously. When both capitalism and their way of life, their civilization, appear not to be working, they will only cope by naming causes external to the contradictions within capitalism (as a way of life and death and civilization). Unable to face the evil at the heart of capitalist civilization, their Thrashing around becomes wilder. Whole peoples can be condemned, can be erased from the new world order, a world in which, fearfully for them, there seems to be no order and those who wish to give the orders are not infrequently disobeyed.

The only strategy against the cultural right must remain that of “in and against”: a defensive strategy that is also quite militantly offensive (in all senses). To make the contradictions ring, to make their myopia gape, to allow the celebration of differences rendered as strength and not as disadvantage.

Philipp Cotevian is a writer living in Exeter, England.
Foucault, The Conference Subject:

by Mike Gane and Nicholas Gane

The London "Foucault Conference" was widely advertised as an opportunity to "engage with, review, debate and develop Foucault's Legacy." It attracted an unexpectedly large audience: instead of the anticipated 250, over twice that number attended, some 500 from overseas. Anticipated leaflets everywhere talked of the importance of "the Foucault spirit." It was soon evident that a central question was going to be the possession of the spirit of Foucault. The many Foucault clones already had the body.

What can one say about the first speaker, Francis Ewald? Immaculately dressed and groomed and "Director of the Foucault Centre in Paris," he presented Foucault as admirer of Gandhi. We listened in astonishment as the new image of Foucault unfolded: Foucault interrupted the vast spaces of time through the disruptive word, the word which fused past and present.

James Miller, author of a widely read intellectual biography of Foucault, next read a long paper on the "problems of the philosophical life." The audience, expecting fireworks, was astonished to learn that "to be a philosopher entails living one's life in a certain way." Foucault was important because he wanted to enter the ancient project, "now through..." Instead of talking about Foucault, Miller argued at length against Rorty's "agentive" critique of this idea. Why, asked Miller, did Diogenes Laertius think it important to know that Zeno liked green figs and sun bathing? Clearly it shows that Zeno lived the contemplative life. When we look at Foucault we can draw on Ann Stienbrink, said Miller, for here we have a life which is a "contemporary melancholy." At the end of his life Foucault had arrived at the hope that all of us could live the philosophical life: it will be the day we all become "melancholy". He cited Foucault: "Why should the pump be in the house be an act object, but not our life?" While Rorty would regard this as absurd, said Miller, it is certainly in line with Ralph Waldo Emerson's "never mind the nible; never mind the defeat: up again, old head." Were the audible groans from the audience expressions of disappointment or collective gasping for oxygen in the claustrophobic lecture hall?

Colin Gordon, looking uncomfortable in smart suit and tie, spoke haltingly from his brief notes - seemingly taken from his own recent publications. At last some discussion of Foucault's work: the effect was amazing bland, even bloodless. How wise Foucault was! And how balanced Gordon's assessment. The microphone was next passed to Kate Soper. Had it been turned down before? Her voice was of one possessed. It was rousing loud, Foucault's work is simply devoid of reverence to women's feelings. His conception of the subject is an unquestioningly masculine one. His later work is abstract and offers no solution to the question of power and resistance. Perhaps to have expected some attempt to relate Foucault's work to these questions in feminism was expecting too much. The main speakers, Ewald, Miller, Gordon and Soper presented such long papers, they effectively used up the time planned for questions from the floor. Resistance? None here. Only mesmerism. "All? Wake! Refreshment!" The chance to get out and to get some liquid was accompanied by disgruntled murmurs of disbelieve. Stuart Hall was there as non-speaker, and he was heard to mutter "strange! strange! bizarre!" But the want was perhaps yet to come: the meeting rooms for the surprise sessions after lunch were full to overflowing, well beyond any fire or health regulations. Opening the windows was not possible since the London traffic simply drowned all communication inside; but keeping the window closed meant the temperature soared well beyond 40 Celsius. The sessions we attended (a modest selection from those on offer) were extremely mixed in interest and quality. John Rajchman asked whether Foucault had been buried by liberalism. Michele Barrett outlined the difference between Foucault and Marc Foucault critiqued materialism, class interest, progress, ideology. She then discussed the questions faceted by feminism in dealing with Foucault's notion of knowledge, especially his refusal to describe the emotional content of experience. What of the conference? Mark Perryman, the main organizer, boasted, "The bald old man would have been proud of us."

An indication of the interest provoked by this conference was that one book stall sold more than eight thousand dollars worth of books. On the evidence of the conference, one could ask just how many people were really understood Foucault, in what he was doing. The "Foucault Conference" staged what might be called the Resurrection of the Subject known as "Foucault." Had Foucault been there of course he would certainly have wanted to talk about something else, but who raised this, the vengeance legacy? Perhaps Mark Perryman is right to think of organizing a new conference for 1985 on "Postmodernism," for this conference effectively reformed Foucault's old bones: RIP.

Two tapes from the conference are available from:

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Between a rock and a hard place. It’s a position all too familiar to Blacks, and the aftermath of the recent robbery and shooting at the Just Desserts restaurant poignantly, at times starkly, positions them there yet again.

Shock and consternation are my clichéd responses when I first hear of the robbery. Black or white I wonder anxiously, but at 7:30 in the morning the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) is being coy and giving the barest of details. A few hours later, upon reading the newspapers, my worst fears are confirmed. The police are looking for four people—all young, all male and all Black. The repercussions to this particular crime are going to be severe—I feel it instinctively.

During the days that follow I listen avidly, obsessively even, to the radio. The air literally crackles with venom and vituperation as callers vent their rage over the atrocity. Legal immigration rules, being soft on criminals, Black crime, and the easy availability of guns: these are but some of the reasons given for the crime. Deportation, the keeping of crime statistics, the lifting of citizenship, gun control; some of the solutions. It becomes difficult at times to tell the difference between the audience of the CBC and that of other radio stations. Wherever you turn the dial, the anger and hostility towards Blacks are the same. (The only variation is that some people preface their statements with disclaimers such as “I’m not racist but...” before going on to exposè their racism.)

Interspersed among these comments can be heard the recitals of Blacks passionately disavowing any responsibility for the crime. Surely able to control her hysteria or conceal her hatred, one vigorous caller to the CBC’s Metro Morning demands to know where the Blacks are now. She is one among many who assign a group responsibility to all Blacks for this crime. As if we carry a collective burden—a shared guilt for all actions of all Black people. Where are the Blacks now? Where are the Blacks now?

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What to this collective burden we are being asked to carry: what is the source of the responsibility that is being fastened on Blacks? Is it because the victims are white and the robbers Black? Not hearing the same kinds of demands made when White victim and perpetrator belong to the same race, it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid the conclusion that the groundswell of antipathy and revulsion against the crime appears to have more to do with racism than with the race of the crime itself. It is difficult. If not impossible, to avoid the conclusion that the at times palpable desire on the part of some to hold Blacks accountable and responsible—yes, because the killing is a cross-race killing. Because a Black man killed a white woman. Why doesn’t White on white crime cause the same consternation.
The challenge for Blacks in the aftermath of the robbery was how to respond to the upsurge and outpouring of racism in Toronto. The church led it as it so rightly should have been challenged, without appealing to_container a broad act. As always, between a rock and a hard place.

How many times in a newspaper article tells its readers the suspects are Black? Too many times. Hypocrisy? Not on my part. Perhaps—or perhaps not. I read the article and notice that it is the combination of the description of the suspect’s clothes—"dark"—and the suspects themselves—"Black"—that succeeds in conveying the impression of ever-eluding Blackness. Why doesn’t an initial eyewitness account describing the suspect as "an external person" ever appear again?

Listen to news reports and talk shows, bear the demands for crime statistics based on race, for a more effective immigration system, for better deportation practices and, never having to witness a tragedy, I recognize the markings of a lynching mark all the same. I see the strange fruits, the dark fruit of Billie Holiday swinging in the wind—black flesh parading at the end of a rope. Sure, brothers, fathers all with looks alike, faces of the blotted up video photograph where the screens have been published. These images are vague, blurred and fade to translate does not prevent the police from urging us to use them for identification purposes. Too bad there has to be a trial. And always the fear—of standing alone, being isolated, being in the pit of the stomach.

Where are all the Blacks now? All over. I meet them—brown young men and boys in groups of two or three—and know the media have succeeded because I notice them, suddenly aware of their presence—their Blackness, their ridiculousness. And I witness them, how many others do and will not find a way to confront the victim, Ms. Leiminos. What if but Black man had shot another Black man? It would probably have been seen as Black on Black crime, possibly even a "fellow-citizen." What if that Black man had shot a white woman? Given the representation and portrayal of Black women as either sexual, alluring Aunt Jemimas, or even-sexed vampires, the media would have had some difficulty portraying the image of sexual purity and innocence it was able to use with the victim, Ms. Leiminos.

In these "politically correct" times even crime takes on a book-quality, nearly confronting race, class and gender—even sexuality.

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In a trendy, upscale establishment.

What if a Black man shot a white woman at Eglinton and Ossington, June and Finch, or in the Jungle, all Black neighbourhoods, and not at Davisville and Avenue, a stone’s throw away from the wealthy areas of Forest Hill and Yorkville? Nothing ever, have shootings in the far east neighbourhoods—and they have happened all too frequently—or in ethnically defined neighbour-

bourhoods such as Chinatown attracts intense media attention. Editorial and opinion pieces stress the class aspect of this particular crime, suggesting again that it is class rather than race that explains the difference in media coverage.

Fact is a Black man killed a young white woman who was about to be married to a man.

What if that same Black man had killed a white woman who was lesbian? Could or would the media have portrayed images of her grieving fiancée and their aborted marriage in the way they did? Marriage is, after all, the culmination, in fact theconsummation, of heterosexuality in our society. An abhorrent life is always to be mourned. The most infamous abhorrent life can bear the same glow, or is mourned in the same way.

Fact is a Black man killed a white woman and there is a bounty on his head.

Blacks are dangerous—carrying in one ear—small drums. His face stares at us all of us from the wanted posters on Sun newspapers—arm-amalgamated—wanted dead or alive. Stamp feet, stamp feet—blowing in the chilly winds of Toronto and in some classier Green streets, in the more articulate positions, the one, shrill to condensation, echoing his voice:

Fact is a Black man killed a white woman and there is a bounty on his head.

The hunt for meaning is on—trying to make sense of meaning in a nonsexual world. What meaning can one give to Georgina Leiminos’ parents who have lost a daughter; to a lover who has lost a loved one? What makes sense except a mor of anger against fate, against those who did it.

Call and response—in a rhythm that mourns the death of one young woman and of hope for belonging of a people who have been here for over 200 years, the tragedy unfolds as does the tragedy—identifying the other chorus responds:

 \[ \text{we didn’t do it! we didn’t do it!} \]

 \[ \text{we are not responsible!} \]

 \[ \text{we are good Blacks!} \]

 \[ \text{we are hard-working Blacks!} \]

 \[ \text{we are not Jamaicans!} \]

 \[ \text{we are Jamaicans but different!} \]

 \[ \text{it’s the fault of those Jamaicans!} \]

 \[ \text{it’s the education system!} \]

 \[ \text{it’s us!} \]

 \[ \text{we Blacks must take responsibility for this crime!} \]

The hunt for meaning: The strains of "Oil Man River" grow stronger and I recall how for 18 months prior to the opening of "Show Boat", the media repeated on how 112 aided and abetted Black Canadians were to their opposition to the show’s pro-

duction. Politically correct, censorship, Nazism, witch burnings, too American, too Black? One of the great wastes of talent and of the media—these some of the media’s responses. With few exemp-

tions, opposition to the production was not understood and sel
does sympathetically presented. How much did this unsympathetic coverage lay the groundwork for resentment against Blacks?—is needed so much so that circumstances to leap into flame like some tinder-dry forest touched by a match.

It is because we understand how fragile and precious our public image has become and how little the positive acts of our best affect us as a group, and how much the negative acts of the few shape public opinion about us—(that we are not surprised to have caught the Showplace Band.) We estimate that the validity of the opposition to the show had to be graced in this way.

Further, the successful conviction of Black activists, Dudley Lawrence and others, has been a classic example of the way in which the robbery, offered more proof, to those who were looking for it, of the internecine criminality of Blacks.

The revelation that Omell Grant, one of the suspects in this robbery, was a landed immigrant who, as a result of criminal convictions, had been ordered deported but on appeal allowed to remain in Canada, introduced the third element—inmigration—into what passed for a debate on race and crime. Crime, it appears, is a foreign invasion: it all happens out there, over there somehow, among others, not us, and Canadians of colour.

Crime, like employment, now has to have the requisite Canadian content: that it be placed in a context where its perpetration should be returned to their country of origin, regardless of how long they have been here. This Canadian content is defined by the Canadian nationality of the criminal, which is defined by the group to whom he is Canadian. If after being in this country for three years as a landed immigrant and taking citizenship, your Canadian status cannot be overtly questioned. However, this is not the case for someone like Omell Grant, who came here as a child—and was-twelve or someone who may have spent most of his/her life here, but through an oversight failed to take citizenship. Even citizens of colour and many like them—Black and women—may be regarded indiscutably by their experiences in Canada and within Canadian institutions is conveniently erased in this debate.

That the public perceives crime to be on the increase is indisputable, although Statistics Canada reveals that there has been no increase in the last few years. That means that if anyone is comfortable with now circulate in our societies is equally indisputable. That the immigration bureaucracy, like most bureaucracies, is clunky and needs to be overhauled also appears to be undeniable. But focusing the debate on the misgivings of the immigration department has provided a mechanism whereby a discourse that is essentially racist can take place. Within this pernicious discourse of race, crime and immigration very little possibility of reorientation; -Black, crime, and immigration = Black. And Black = nothing.

If faulty procedures have complicated this in other and recent crimes, the debate would have undoubtedly been more focused more on the nature of crime statistics, and even the possibility of lifting the citizenship of individuals (as in talk show host recommended). Predictable debate like the general one would be to allow whites to believe that they are purging their country, their territory, their psyches even the threat and danger that Blacks represent for them, while the aspect of whites in itself is a blight on Blacks is the belief that being the owner of black skin, they are in Canada only as noncitizens. How long does it take to believe? Never. If not Black. Not in Africa where Europeans continue to evict disproportionately large tracts of land in countries such as Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Not in the Caribbean where Europeans are fast reestablishing themselves as landowners. And most certainly not in Canada. Where there is a debate as to whether the state has been granted for at least 200 years. And what is the debate raging as to the essences of sending back to us where we don’t belong—Europeans and white Westerners exercise the privilege of German tradition. They have the guns tough, the only property needed—a white shirt. Shortly before the recent elections in South Africa news reports revealed incoming trends into Israel, Portugal, and England in the days before it proved to be victorious. So too in Rwanda where a heavily armed column of Belgian troops rescued 18 footprints, including the FAPA itself. The state of the world the election proved to be peaceful. Many of those footprints had lived the better part of their lives in Canada and were the last days of the career of occupying colonial forces.

But the fact is, a Black man shot a white woman and Toronto is buying it. Black is Black.

Terror is when a state kills a Settler Tomlin man, Camilla Machiauthan. (How many of us remember her name, or even knew it when he was killed?) In Toronto in June 1993.

Terror is when a white man killed Machiauthan and the media gave it the barest of coverage.

Terror is when a white was, after attending a neo Nazi concert, attacked another Tamoul man, Sirivahan Vinashratam. late one night also in June 1993.

Terror is when a man so badly hurt Sirivahan Vinashratam the latter is now physically handicapped and brain damaged.

Terror is when this white man attacked Vinashratam because he was South Asian, had a dark skin and, therefore, according to the white man, didn’t belong in Canada.

Terror is in these crises, at least one of which was motivated solely by racial hatred, did not garner the attention from the media the shooting of Georgina Leotendu.

Terror is when 3,500 white did not attend the funeral of Ginadial Machiauthan or express outrage at Sirivahan Vinashratam’s injuries.

Terror is the Police Commission did not re, as it did after the Jauten Rees incidents, and should be the increase in hate and racially-based crimes after the killing of Geonal Machiauthan, or burning of Sirivahan Vinashratam.

Terror is that official at either the provincial, municipal or federal level has made a statement deterring the increase in racist attacks against Blacks or Asians.

Terror is a Black man shot a white woman.

Terror is the race is gonna pay.

White Western governments have always used racism, if not openly then by implication, as a means of social control to keep Africans, Asians and Natives in their place. In this way no member of government in Canada—municipal, provincial or federal—has public condemned these viciously executed racist attacks such as the one against Sirivahan Vinashratam? (The Minister of Justice, Alan Rock, has, however, introduced legislation to increase sentences where racial hatred is a motivation). How then do we explain the fact that the burning of Vinashratam—a clearly racist motivated attack—was not arrested in the Ontario Parliament, yet the Jauten Rees shooting was? How do we explain that shortly after the latter robbery, the City of Toronto attempted—unsuccessfully—to introduce a municipal law sponsored by the mayor. The law would have forced groups of more than three people to gather in public places. The proposed legislation was designed to fight crime, but, as argued above, we understand that “crime” in the words of Black, it becomes clear who is the intended target of this legislation was.

The legislation was introduced by elected politicians who has been aby assisted by the media. It’s difficult to know to whom the firestorm response to the Jauten Rees robbery was whipped up by media, or whether the latter was merely responding to public sentiment. I suspect both aspects play a part in the coverage. What is missed is that however, is that, in a capitalist society where the media’s role is to sell advertising, there is no incentive to dampen any ideological issues. The OJ Simpson case is an over-determined case in point. If, however, we accept Chemistry’s argument that, along with entertainment, one of the media’s role is to indicate certain values in the larger society, the coverage of the Jauten Rees Shootings, particularly in areas of race, crime and immigration, is a very good case in point. The value laden messages are at times wide large, at times sub- textual, but always present. The top ten television shows in Canada; the immigration department is allowing Black criminals into the country and the public is not questioning this. Blacks are a source of crime; Blacks are not Canadian, but immigrants to this country; to be Black in this country is to lose your jobs—the list is endless, infinitely malleable and always derogatory of Blacks and of other minority of colours.

In the aftermath of the Jauten Rees robbery, Black has been presented with no appearance at all possible context: reject the accussed suspects or take responsibility for these crimes. That rock and hard place yet again. To say, as many did, that we are not racist is to say we are all racist. The question at stake is the stable door after the damage has been done. In the eyes of white society, we have to make the right choices. We have been found guilty and held accountable. But in our real life to distances ourselves from this crime, we engage in reparative acts; acts that are not in the Ontario Parliament, yet the Jauten Rees shooting was? How do we explain that shortly after the latter robbery, the City of Toronto attempted—unsuccessfully—to introduce a municipal law sponsored by the mayor. The city would have forced groups of more than three people to gather in public places. The proposed legislation was designed to fight crime, but, as argued above, we understand that “crime” in the words of Black, it becomes clear who is the intended target of this legislation was. The legislation was introduced by elected politicians who has been aby assisted by the media. It’s difficult to know to whom the firestorm response to the Jauten Rees robbery was whipped up by media, or whether the latter was merely responding to public sentiment. I suspect both aspects play a part in the coverage. What is missed is that however, is that, in a capitalist society where the media’s role is to sell advertising, there is no incentive to dampen any ideological issues. The OJ Simpson case is an over-determined case in point. If, however, we accept Chemistry’s argument that, along with entertainment, one of the media’s role is to indicate certain values in the larger society, the coverage of the Jauten Rees Shootings, particularly in areas of race, crime and immigration, is a very good case in point. The value laden messages are at times wide large, at times sub- textual, but always present. The top ten television shows in Canada; the immigration department is allowing Black criminals into the country and the public is not questioning this. Blacks are a source of crime; Blacks are not Canadian, but immigrants to this country; to be Black in this country is to lose your jobs—the list is endless, infinitely malleable and always derogatory of Blacks and of other minority of colours.

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It is in this respect that these young men are ours—fully as much as we are theirs. Thomas was part of the Black community in Richard Wright's novel Native Son. They represent a loss—a deficit in more ways than one. Did they not do their duty? Did they not live their lives? Did they not suffer? Did they not have a sense of community and self-worth? Did they not have a sense of belonging? And did they not have a sense of responsibility to their community and to each other?

To say that these young men are beyond the pale and have nothing to do with us is to engage in the same practice that white society engages in—pretending that crime is somehow out there, over there, having nothing to do with us. But while being a part of us, they are also a product of white society. They are the products of the policies which continue to wreak havoc on Black communities. Would we say the same of white society? Would we say that the policies which continue to wreak havoc on Black communities are our responsibility? Would we say that our actions and inactions are responsible for the suffering and death of Black people?

Failing to see ourselves as the root of the problem, we continue to fail to understand the root of the problem. The failure of many systems, the oldest of which began as long as 500 years ago, when the workings of capital and the profit motive, through the slave trade, destroyed the resources of Africa—their families, their culture, their language, their ways of life. The failure is further nurtured by immigration practices that encourage the spread of separate and unequal communities. The result is to create more problems for Black students, often streamlining them into death programs, securing these failures. A shabby economic system, weakened by the processes of trade, per-

meated by racism, sexism and classism, which demands that where they do exist two parents must work, and where they don't; that women must work long hours in support of their children, imposes further stress on families. The criminalization of Black youth by a policing and a criminal justice system creates a sense of disempowerment which in turn creates a sense of not belonging. And this most recent mass response to questions the right of Blacks to remain here exacerbates this sense of alienation. Further, increased criminalization, as has happened in the wake of this most recent robbery, will only serve to justify those instances where abusive exercises of police power occur.

To those who ask what Black communities are doing about crime, I answer—what they have always been doing—indicting an enormous number of volunteer hours in remedial programs and organizations in an effort to stem those very types of acts. Volunteer hours and social work, however, cannot and will not do it all. When an economy is in recession, while education fails to educate Black youth, when racism continues to affect the hiring of African Canadians, and when the policing of African Canadians becomes synonymous with harassment, dysfunctional and criminal activity will continue to flourish.

Exhausting the more deeply held racist attitudes towards Blacks will be impossible without genuine commitment on the part of all levels of government. In the hurrying of attitudes on both sides in the aftermath of the last elections, that commitment will be harder to create. Among politicians it has been noticeably absent. If anything, knowingly or unknowingly they have been fueling anti-Black sentiments.

All of this, however, is not to lose sight of the tragedy of a young woman. It is not to lose sight of the faces of young Black men and women who are suffering. It is not to lose sight of the lives of young Black men and women who are suffering.

M. Nourbese Philip is a writer and a poet living in Toronto.
In Black male culture women can be reduced to hitches and body parts, as in Snoop Dogg’s Dogg’s house.

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1. The Caricatured Body

In an article entitled, “Hedux in Brazilian Carnival,” Monica Bocetti writes about the visual and verbal codes which distanced the carnivale event to nakedness and also eroticize nakedness to pornography. It is these women who are reduced to sardine, making them objects for male consumption and recontextualizing the central messages of female sublimation encoded in carnival.

In Carnival, then, nudity is transformed into a series of symbolic and metaphorical images of the woman as an object of desire. Her physical charms are presented ranging from the parts of her body — face, legs, arms, butt, T-shirt — to her representation as an erotic object as a whole through fragmentation and commodification and also to allow for the display of female agency. One has, therefore, to make some distinctions between questions of representation and the male gaze on the one hand and the ability of women to transform those representations into something else.

2. The Commodified Body

The commodified body of women, then, is the dislocated, dismembered, and decoromatized body of the woman in the commodification of the Caribbean in tourism. Still, I am thinking of ways to recover the body of the woman through fragmentation and commodification and also to allow for the display of female agency. One has, therefore, to make some distinctions between questions of representation and the male gaze on the one hand and the ability of women to transform those representations into something else. The question of “wearing” can be located at this juncture. For example, in the popular dance-cult-scape, “Dollar Wire,” some clever Caribbean women give a price to each of the genitals of women, with the lowest equivalents going to the side to side, the rear being assigned a bit more value and the full frontal assigned the least value, with each part of the body emphasized by the word “dolar.”

As someone who gloriously participated and mastered the movements, I had to ignore the assignment of cash value to relational positions. The trickiness lies in the primary contradiction for women: allowing for their power and deciding the functions of carnival which have been appropriated by dominant discourses.

It is precisely here where the female body can become part of a series of photographic representations. Thus, those who exploit Black female bodies by capturing their backs on the ground mine a struggle and therefore mark the distinctions I want to make between the horizontal and the vertical in terms of the use of space, gaze and position and the ways these relations work to dissect and deconstruct the Carnaval. The Caribbean female body on its back retreats, in distinct ways, the imperialist entry into the land, the lay of the land as feminist critics would say. The Caribbean, in its diverse manifestations, has to be read as exotic space, with its primary mode of dislocation and the provoking of sexual orifices for a series of strangers to use. ‘We are here just to serve you’ mode of touristic consumption becomes, then, in this context, a way to appropriate and colonize.

3. Taking Space, Freedom and Self-Actualization

If dance is a language, then it is not so much the physicality and sexuality of the dance itself, but what it represents that is most critical. The problem, then, may reside in the use and the coherence of the Caribbean/female body. The concept of “taking space” in Afro-Caribbean dance is not to break down the understanding and only allow some agency for Black women, particularly when dance is allegorized with sexualized women. Taking space is best understood as taking not simply physical space, but also mental space. Taking space means resistance to the previously restricted, particularly those racialized/ghettolized confined spaces. A
few important parallels can be made at this point. One would be with a Tsimshian version in which the dancer negotiates the road, creating space. In this particular context, the dancer is able to negotiate, among a variety of other dancers, his/her own particular dance space. Another example is limbo in which the space metaphor is graphically expressed in terms of a below and after with either side of the limbo bar or pole offering a space of physical freedom. The pole which has to be negotiated represents slavery, the slave ship and the physical gesture of middle passage piled on with fire, lowered to the ultimate; it requires physical destitution and finally transcendence.

The calculations of the use of space by gender, size, age, for slave ship passage and the use of the Black female body as space to maximize profit through reproduction are significant. The maximizing of space by oppression for material gain meant the constriction of space for Black women. The semantics of “taking space/making space” references, therefore, become clear in each of these dance formats. Central to “taking space” is the ability to understand this space. It is not necessarily making big movements that make the statement, but how showing bodies can enlarge space. For dancers, how they position themselves becomes important. This leads to such questions as: what is the space used for? How does one negotiate between manipulation and agency? What is significant about island locations is the ability to use circumscribed space.

In that context, the butterfly, itself already a sexual symbol, is simultaneously a movement of limiting space/making space. The space being referred to is the space between women’s legs and the space between islands. This is not an empty space for discoverers, navigators, colonizers...men.

One final aspect of this representation that has to be presented is the idea of staging. The staged format for dance and, thus, for spectorship can be seen in the raised floor of, for example, Rio carnival. Staging makes space; it is not the grounded, carnival of resistance with people “taking space.” The stage carnival becomes more of a site of containment with distinctions between vertical and horizontal impact. The prostrate butterfly, immobilized and staged for calculating gazes, in the end is not a figure of resistance.

Dust has a right to settle. Milk the right to curl. Cheese the right to turn green. Scott and Fusi are rich words (p. 3).

Dust sneaks in like a lover over the body of my own.

Dust knaves the limbs of my arms.

Dust plays with the small hands of my breasts.

Dust is my every crease.

Dust carresses the skin of my tulle, cloth.

Getting into my every crease.

Dust reinforces me that life is naturally sticky.

Dust is obviously having an affair with me.

Dust and grease exist outside of this woman’s identity, unlike for many Black women, for whom waking up often means thinking of the pot and the broom. Nichols, then, deconstructs the stock association of grease. She also attempts to “sing the body reclining,” i.e., take space in a way which is directly counter to expectations for Black women.

4. Triangular Representations

The problems of representing Black female bodies, we have said, are amplified at the level of the use of Black women’s bodies in history. The black female body in Western culture has existed either in the context of eroticization or abstraction. Our bodies have been clothed, subdued, transported, paraded, flayed, pierced, discarded, possessed.

So, how does one reclaim that female body now in the context of recent history? On the one hand, it is possible to lend the physical control that women take in attempting to do with their bodies as they please. But is it what they please? Or is the female body still doing what it is trained to do?

Some developing new representations of the female body, taking place both in dance and in other cultural forms, present a reclamation of the body for its own purposes. Also, representations of the Black female body in African contexts reveal some interesting “taking space” contexts and positional gazes, outside of Western formulations of the contorted body. Grace Nichols, in Lazy Thoughts of a Lazy Woman, examines the notion of laziness. This challenges colonial/racist critiques of Blacks as lazy and redirects the political implications of laziness for both women and Black people, on whose backs and with whose labour capitalism took pace. Thus, when Black women’s labour is consumable, laziness becomes a resistance to our exploitation, unless it is labour in our own benefit and as our choice.

In Nichols’ poems, “Dust” and “Garce,” which begin the collection, the assertion is that these elements, i.e., dust and grease, which have been related to Black women’s jobs, are allowed to be, exist unmarred.

Sing the body reclining

I sing the swaying back of self

I sing the cushioned head

The fallen arm

The swelling breast

I sing the body reclining

This reclining female body becomes a “tandem contingent,” “stalwart as a river...as a wayward ree,” all representations of resistance. Still there is a different intent in this reclining body in the sense of its own definition; not the body reclining as it waits for something/someone else, the phallicus and so on, but the body existing in its own right, not to serve. Thus she concludes:

Those who scrubs and scrub

Incessantly

Corrupt the body

Those who dust and dust

Incessantly

Also corrupt the body

Nichols is similarly clear about the representations of Black female sexuality in its own right and in all its triangulated implications. The Black female body for her is expressed in the language of a certain geography and oppressive history.

My Black triangle

Sandwiched between the

Geography of my thighs

In a bermuda of face atoms

Forever sitting

And relaxing

The world

For Nichols, the “Bermuda triangle” gets re-presented in terms of female sexual space, public, rural, localized but also bastardized in resistance to phallic, misogynistic, imperialistic and colonizing impositions. The social construction of space between women’s legs, always making space for something/someone else, has to be overturned. Island space; women’s space are all imagined spaces of absence/preence. Caribbean ocean spaces cover the unfathomable existences, unseen except by the daring, but nevertheless still with their own palpable existences and histories. The ocean is a place of escape when Island spaces become too confining.

The shock to men is that none of this may be about them at all. Black female space becomes a space of life and rich moisture, a delta of fertility, creativity, life.

Caryl Rivers Davies teaches at State University of New York, Buffalo.

Border/Lines

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Rethinking MARXISM
A Journal of Economic, Cultural and Society

This is the journal to maintain interest and debate over the exploratory power and social consequences of Marxist economic and social studies. To this end, it publishes material that seeks to discuss, debate, and extend Marxist theory. The content of the journal includes theoretical and philosophical (methodological and applied) essays as well as more concrete empirical analyses - all work that has led to the further development of a distinctly Marxist Economics. Contributions are encouraged from people in many different places and from all walks of life. It is the editors’ belief that Marxist approaches to social theory are important for developing strategies toward radical social change. It is particularly for entering class formation and the various forms of political, cultural and psychological oppression including oppression based on race and gender. Research that explores these and related issues from a Marxist perspective are particularly welcome.

ARTICLES OF INTEREST:
The Dialectical Transformation of China: Debates over Class and Social Development, Adrian Hatcher • Research Directorate, Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley • Revisiting a Critical Theory: The Relevance of Postmodern Critique, Earl H. C. Galway and Aural M. Zakin • Mexico as Social Engineer: The Birth of Tampico’s Culture of Asian, Pacification

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YOUTH CULTURE has been one of the driving forces that has kept cultural studies...
rap and hip hop?”

...
does not address the concession that exists among many young people. To address that concession one must be willing to live with contradiction, recognizing that aspects of popular youth culture are not necessarily counter-hegemonic. If we were to follow Lotz's argument we might end up thinking that hip hop culture is youth culture today. While it is true that hip hop culture carries much weight, it should not be taken to produce narratives of youth culture that place hip hop culture as over-determining youth culture. Discourse around Gen Xers, Slackers and grunge rockers are mainly concerned with young white male youth who seem to be lamenting that they will never wield the same kind of power to organize the lives of others as their fathers did and still do.

Many such authors in Monophonic Fields use rap as the point of departure to address youth culture today. While rap as form and hip-hop as cultural practice/lifestyle have been an articulation of the urban black subculture, hip hop is marked by profound effects for popular culture. Culture, not merely commodification, can mean that we see what they see as the strain of blackness, exhibiting the symptoms of fear of a black planet. Rap's power as an articulable form that focuses onto the agenda questions of political nature, does not mean that rap is dropping 'science' for all.

Nishino works with rap as an analytical base, "The State of Rap: Time and Place in Hip Hop Nationalism," (2008). Louis Decker argues that two different forms of nationalism exist in rap music. He identifies three keys to a nationalism that heartens back to black nationalism of the 1960s and appropriates the images of folks like Malcolm X, Angela Davis and so on, as exemplified by Public Enemy, and 2) a nationalism that is Afrocentric and sees Africa as the true source of which its politics will ultimately be expressed, as exemplified by X Clan.

Decker analyzes the lyrics of P.E. and X Clan to demonstrate how groups that are different in political influences both gain access to a broader audience. They are both groups produce a kind of voice that is at once accessible and limited perspectives. While his exercise is an interesting one, Decker's project does not address the overall problematic of a nationalism politics but instead focuses on the "language of nation to manifest a history of social opposition and struggle which can energize the movement toward black empowerment and independence." (1990) We could continue that the use of rap as a concept tool continues to produce a disabling politics of incompleteness and domination, and thus frames Decker's argument in a weak position.

After dealing with the politics of the 'boys' that Decker terms to the music and videos of Queens Lefflath to recapture some moment of possibilities in what he terms nationalist rap. Decker wants to hold to the discourse of nation, but by mov- ing to Lefflath he is forced to jettison nation in favour of a discursive gathering a flurry of bodgers. I would contend, however, that Lefflath's rap—especially "Ladies First"—defines nation as we know it to be the relation to his nationalism. Instead Lefflath's music is disarticulate, or what Paul Gilroy calls a black 'Atlantic' cradled by the Live Love from England raps on a similar album and specific song and Winnie Mandela's image in the video—suggesting that questions aside that exist beyond the strict confines of nation to address the more interesting and complex realities of transnational experiences. This is the difference between the historical relations, practices, anxieties and duties that the best rap evokes.

The dispossessed in further explored in George Yudd's 'The Tunification of Rits'. Yudd writes of the ways in which subaltern youth in Brazil have begun to disrupt and challenge the mythic idea of racial harmony in Brazil through their cultural identification. The funkans, popular to be popular, dance for the resolution. Their music calls for resistance and to dominate. The ways in which they acquire African American music circum- vents the traditional capitalist mode of sell-at-consumerism and instead operate as a form of resistance in much of the form of a "chant." Those with access to North America and in particular New York, in the music, which quickly makes the music in various reinterpre- tations. Yudd's description of the pro-

duction and consumption of funk in Brazil echoes the development of sound-system culture in the Caribbean and its exportation to S.A. that fueled the formative days of rap.

However, the narrative that Yudd paints of rap and hip hop culture in Brazil is one of state cooperation and support. The state, in collaboration with rap artists and DJs, has supported a number of youth programs. It is not the same case with funk, thus the funkans are the targets of state harassment via the police. "The Funification of Rits" is a solid article that demonstrates the relation of the black Atlantic and the transnational sharing of black expressional cultures. The funkans subvert the spaces that are frequently used in Brazil to produce national myths of ocean- ness (samba halls and soccer arenas). Thus the funkans are in the forefront of denouncing national cohesion as the state apparatus tries to literally force them through harassment, murder and lack of radio-play of their music—out of the national imaginary.

Monophonic Fields comes on the heels of Black Noise, but they are vastly different books. Not simply because one is an edited collection and the other is not. Rose in Black Noise clearly demonstrates the emergence of rap music and hip hop culture as oppositional to the violence of an industrially based North America. Her discussion of graffiti is of partic- ular importance to the complexity of her book. By insisting on locating graffiti as an important part of hip hop culture, Rose is able to demonstrate in a much stronger way the relationship between the politics of hip hop and the processes of industrialization and post-industrialization in America. For Black Noise the issue is not whether youth have an organized political consciousness but how the music calls for resistance, how the youth forces us and them to live life differently, putting new encounters on the road to street hip rap.

Mitchell Fields, in trying to address the vastness of youth culture, falls short of an attempt to demonstrate that youth culture is not always filled with potential. Yes, there is a crisis of inarticulate- yminds. Yudd's description of the pro-

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Mitchell Fields, in trying to address the vastness of youth culture, falls short of an attempt to demonstrate that youth culture is not always filled with potential. Yes, there is a crisis of inarticulate-
The neo-Nazis are dangerous, but their capacity for violence is nothing beside the punitive power of the state.

The implications for the Left are two-fold. First, the attempt to render the world rational and transparent inadvertently results in a "white-knight" society in which negativity has become obsolete. This is tantamount to elevating the ground on which the Left stands because, for Baubrillard, the Left intellectual’s domain is the negative. Secondly, the further societaly gives in to this direction—the more "politically correct" it becomes, the more susceptible it is to enormity, vital attack and mass abjection. The system suffers from unrepeatable returns of unidirectional negativity. The system of catastrophe, random violence, terrorism, epidemic, epistemology, and other "extreme phenomena." The Right is perhaps better situated to take advantage of this because it meets its discourse of order on the question of catastrophe rather than their dissolution and exchangeability. In any case, the Left is in the position of adding fuel to the fire when it tries to address these issues. It is useful to note that the word "political" is without resonance in the context of the Right.

This is not an apologetic challenge to the Left, but one that leads us on an uncertain direction. For Baubrillard, the question is to find a way of politicalizing in the terms of the relationship between the symbolic and the real, and this is a way of doing so. The analysis of coal is a case in point. When the Ayatollah Saddam Hussein is seen as a demon to be destroyed, according to Baubrillard, he is spoken with a power that was much greater than some of simple material or military weight. "Power rests not only on the use of symbols as a means of domination and control, but also on the use of forces as a means of domination and control, and on the use of symbols to legitimize power as a means of domination and control."

Baubrillard is certainly speculative and hyperbolic, but in the manner of a machine of the logical hypothesis and the recent past, from which things have only just begun to be understood and to which we have only just begun to be exposed.

Baubrillard’s critique like this is compelling but elusive. It is compelling as an explanation of the paradox of the limit of the symbolic (the "false") and of its recuperation for Left criticism. The individual’s subjective moment of understanding and decision is convincingly shown to be too late to discuss. Baubrillard is certainly speculative and hyperbolic, but in the manner of a machine of the logical hypothesis and the recent past, from which things have only just begun to be understood and to which we have only just begun to be exposed.


BY Nicole Shukin-Simpson

class "amorphous" and "wild" women (25). 

Laying both literary and filmic study, Donaldson situates the overlay and the slippage within race and gender, making visible the latent ideologies that mark color-

rational interactions. 

While Donaldson trains a critical eye upon the colonialist copolymer likening "wild" women to a "materialist feministic Semiotics," Donaldson examines the abstract commod-

ification of "woman" within postmodernist discourses. Only gadflys postmodernist feminism onto the body of woman's experience does Donaldson see a way in which societies might stop exchanging woman by changing man. Men, there is a necessary and timely attempt to heal, but not necessarily to end, what she describes as "the eternal battle of domination and the flak-laden ethos of feminism." (126) Donaldson both complicate and humanise organisational feminism. Her horticultural tropes of gadflys (and, late, garden) pace a feminist vision that remains unfulfilled in the soil of woman's experience without falling fully into the dangers of pan-nationalist identity. For gadflys is a metaphor that equates beauty with hybridity. The book contributes to today's theoretical discourse through its careful attention to feminism and difference, situ-

ating race and gender within the historical and ideological contexts of film and literature, and ultimately working out a theoretically 
stable stance that offers a productive non-

solution to the shifting intersections within and among woman.

Nicole Snook Simpson is studying feminist and psychoanalytic trauma at the University of Calgary, Alberta.

Big and, you trendy topic. Throughout the year we had been discussing concepts of voice and exclusion, and we studied a range of texts in order to understand it. I remember one discussion in particular which may be pertinent here. One student (a bright white woman returning to school after four years on the overseas academic scene) became a workaholic) comprised of never learning about "her" culture in the midst of all our newfound consciousness surrounding affec-

tivity and race. Discussion that day focused on the edge of what we defined as traditional history—history that seemed li-
tile introverted in "everyone"'s culture, truth be told, and preferred instead to concen-

trate on the acts of a relatively few "great men," and a convicted sense of "great civilization." (shame women). Hopping the race issue could shed valuable light on a year long misunderstanding, I listened as my students quoted each other's word of the changing times. They argued on the fact that we were studying Jeanette Armstrong's Slash and Ceci Feder's No Man's Land (for secondary school in the way the OEB Heritage Series, which has been coming out with sixty second Canadian视图 for years, now seems to be redefining the status of popular gen-

programming by producing pieces on a Winnipeg suffrage leader, Canada's first female doctor, the underground railroad, the Chinese labourers on the Transcontinental Line, and Native Canadian oral trad-

ition. The picture which brings me, is, in a round-

about way, to my take on Sharon Bata's The Perfection of the Morning. I'm from Saskatchewan, a fact which probably explains my attraction to this book for review. I know the territory. Bata is trying to describe. This text is about building a relationship with nature: on the Open Range, in Cape North, Ontario. She is writing poetry everywhere in prairie fiction. Bata's story follows her "apprenticeship" in the often harsh, certainly unfamiliar, world of her second husband's ranch. His place is the far north of southwestern Saskatchewan—a rural world in the true prairie sense of the word. It's all about living, the fact that some of the most poignant passages in the text come when Bata is describing
You'd be hard pressed to fit this book into any of the categories or sub-genres that fall under the non-fiction rubric.

I guess I am most disappointed because all of this might have provided an interesting sort of pseudo-account of "the fundamental interconnectedness of all things." After all, the humanising Nature is capitalized throughout the text and reflected in the great battle name of the soil. But neither Butala's prose nor its tone reflects the typical postmodern irony at how so many fragmented narratives play off each other, and often lead to contradiction. She is either unable or unwilling to theorize properly the contradictions that arise as she meanders through First Nations issues, eco-feminism, and the economic demise of the traditional family farm. Finally, these issues co-exist even more unsympathetically than the people from Butala's isolated little community just south of the Cypress Hills.

The Perfection of the Morning is an atavistic novel in which the present, the social, the natural, the mythic, the historic, like the rural people she describes, Butala must forge her connection to the harsh landscape she inhabits. Unlike your average urban reader, she cannot treat her environment as an "issue," she and her adopted community must live with it. It is not even possible to locate myself inside my body because the building (the house, the air-conditioning, fluorescent lights, removal from the natural world) are disrupting my normal way of functioning in the atmosphere. Still, we have learned little about the Native version of events, here, and we learn even less in the many strange moments of dream analysis, which, when they're not turning on the Native experience of spirit animals, make recourse to various tired theories from Jungian psychology. The narration is patchy, perhaps gestaltier at times, the pieces don't fit together nicely the way, say, a quilted comforter might.

The theme of Butala's book is strong point in its favor. Still, I can't say I wholeheartedly recommend this book to your average urban cynic, especially. While its prairie grid is compelling, the project as a whole feels naive. Again, I think this problem is linked to the shift in genre.

The Perfection of the Morning is not just a novel, and a large part of the confusion that clouds Butala's more typically mature narrative style can be traced to the way this book treats non-fiction like an open door, a prize no-one was waiting to be broken and settled without thought to previous inhabitants, or its deceptively flat terrain. You'd be hard pressed to fit this book into any of the categories or sub-genres that fall under the non-fiction rubric. It's not unlike social history, since the majority of the narrative is dedicated to Butala's own very personal interactions with the landscapes of the southwestern Saskatchewan. Her text's subtitle doesn't help either: An Apprenticeship in Nature. "What apprenticeship?" my academic training quibbles me. If this isn't a complete autobiography, why add all the information on Native history, or the quotations taken from anthropologists and psychologists? "And, yes, I suppose "apprenticeship" will have to be addressed. After all, non-fiction is as taught with the political and anthropological terminologies of the day, as "authentic" as any still-respecting contemporary novel. Butala's text captures historical details, but doesn't contextualize the facts she uncovers in Speculation on the aboriginal peoples of the region, the time of the treaties they signed and their migration from the area. Late in the last century after the buffalo disappeared, no-one made it past the realm of speculation, and the information about the nature of the native's self-discovery, to give her credit. Butala admits to reservations about wandering into Indian territory. But she doesn't still my doubt. "I think of Aboriginal people whose entire lives were an interaction with Nature," she writes, "It seems to me so close as to be self-evident that living directly on the earth as Native people did, with constant, direct contact with the natural world, in the past instead of on a floor lifted from the earth by current basements, would make different people of any of us." A fine tension plays between this perspective and the analysis of a visit to the urban buildings of Calgary after Butala has spent a number of years "living wild."

Boyece Davies is one among many currently charting and mapping the sites of convergence and divergence of black diasporic identifications. Boyce Davies's reading of black women's texts across a wide range of "epistemological memory" neither homogenizes nor reducizes black women's experiences to a unified, simplified reading. Her archetypical re-reading of black women's multiple, conflicting and shifting subjectivities might be understood though the author's own migratory practices. Her is a travelling intellectualism that resists "travel writing" as a black women's genre of resistance, self-affirmation, doubt and the possibility of community. Boyce Davies's text would read well alongside Paul Gilroy's 'The Black Atlantic'. / R.W.


An excellent overview for Anglo markers of the ongoing debates in Latin America over the meaning(s) of postmodernity on the periphery. The purpose of the volume, the stated editors, is "to present a "regional" variant of postmodernism than to rethink the concept itself, which risks being colonized by Anglo-European postmodernism..." Also in a more genuinely international framework. In this process, the collection introduces North American readers to a number of important South American theorists, including Nelly Richard (editor of Revista de Crítica Cultural, Buenos Aires) and Efrain Varela (editor of Praxis del Vocabulario). Praxis del Vocabulario is a Latin American version of the journal of the same name published in Colombia, with significant contributions by Latin American scholars,...


This collection brings together articles by media activists and theorists from Latin America, Africa, Asia and North America which both celebrate and problematize women's alternative media projects. The volume is organized into two areas: first, it brings together the experience of many committed media activists whose work is little known; second, it is a review of much of the liberatory potential of cultural studies by media activists and theorists from Latin America, Africa, Asia and North America which both celebrate and problematize women's alternative media projects. The volume is organized into two areas: first, it brings together the experience of many committed media activists whose work is little known; second, it is a review of much of the liberatory potential of cultural studies by media activists and theorists from Latin America, Africa, Asia and North America which both celebrate and problematize women's alternative media projects.

Photo by Pema Boyle. "Irací" from 'What She Wants'.

What She Wants: Women Artists Look at Men


In McRobbie's collected essays (a number of them published elsewhere) she consistently and cogently argues for analyses of popular culture that transcends gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity in critical tension with each other. Her well-articulated and erudite arguments for postmodernism.


The purported aim of the book is to examine the phenomenon of 'curing AIDS' from the perspective of the "discursive field" in which it occurs. Unfortunately, the aim is clear, the development of these ideas is not. This book reflects this kind of magical thinking so pervasive in the cultural studies of HIV/AIDS (always buttressed by state readings of Foucault). The book remains in the realm of ideas, disconnected from lived experiences and community action, and it contributes to the immobility of talking about AIDS, wrapping the topic in thick jargon and doing nothing about it. / T.C.


For women to "categorize" men is no necessary, apparently, to frame, if you will, the photographs in question. The absence of a photo of stylistic reproduction of the male nude by the female artist "demands an historicizing and theorizing." Linda Williams, author of Hard Copy, as well as four other pieces, printed justification for the images that follow. In her own words: "I don't categorize people, but I like the way one might as well offer a picture to anti-pornography feminists such as Mackinnon and Dworkin; these are the types of photographs themselves present in tunes as a whole, a formulaic, schematic, ritualized male body. Paris, transcendentizing and anti-essentialist scenarios predominate over over-sexualized clichés. / S.F.

Messecarne International: Ethnic talent for export. (performance/installation)

Coco Fusco & Guillermo Gómez-Peña

Dufiress Mall, Toronto

Nov. 11-13, 1994

'Milagro' Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña recently brought their new performance/installation, 'Messecarne International,' to Toronto's Dufiress Mall. In the press release for Messecarne, Fusco and Gómez-Peña explain that they "perform as representatives of a mythical multinational that specializes in supplying 'exotic human resources' for restaurants, fashion shows, music video backdrops, films and commercials, parties, and singing telegrams." Fusco, the corporate secretary, conducts market research on shoppers to determine consumer desire for exoticism and to suggest a "live action" which might correspond to the particular consumer's needs. Gómez-Peña, the sample of ethnic talent, then gives live action demonstrations for the benefit of the individual consumer and curious bystanders.

Messecarne is the follow-up to Fusco and Gómez-Peña's Quincecentennales internacional/communication in which they were displayed in public spaces on two undocumented Amsterdans from the island of Guadeloupe ("Groogol" in 'what now'). Among other sites, this performance was undertaken at the symbolically charged Columbus Place in Madrid (Columbus took several ports to Spain in 1492, one of whom was on display at the Spanish Court for two years) and Covent Garden in London, where 'exoticological' display had also been practiced. Whereas Gómez-Peña took up the history of European exploitation and commercialization of compared peoples - see Coco Fusco, 'The Other History of Intercultural Performances,' The Drama Review 38, 1, Spring, 1994 - Messecarne takes a somewhat futurist look at the commodification and continued exploitation of 'postcolonial' cultures.

Situated in a busy intersection between the food court and a shopping arcade, Messecarne both fits into and stands out from this commercial private/public space. The slick corporate-style booth could seem has been located in front of the adjacent Body Shop as an anachrony to its 'Fresh, Not Fat' marketing program. Even Fusco's extraordinary cameralegale outfit (red Cap, black Stetson) manages seamlessly into the spectacle of corporate culture as built into the marketplace. Gómez-Peña, on the other hand, That is the illusion. Whether clutching his brand-name, or nutting his President's Choice Ancient Grains box, Gómez-Peña mobilizes memories of another space, of it time of place, where spectacle coincides with commodity. Despite his silence, Gómez-Peña is nonetheless the shaman, the all-seeing, the corporate totem. By explicitly a zone of value, at which social distance exists, that strategy of this face to face consumer/performing relationship, the cringing of this confounded exoticism seems upon the viewer/participant. By bypassing the zones of value, at which social distance exists, that strategy of this face to face consumer/performing relationship, the cringing of this confounded exoticism seems upon the viewer/participant.

Messecarne International will be performed at the Exploratorium in San Francisco in early 1995. / M.H.
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The Joke's on Us

(Our Vancouver artist
was noncommercial, coast
public artist commission)

Q. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN
A COLLECTIVE ARTISTS
PAYS A WRITER
TO WRITE AN ESSAY
ABOUT A PROJECT (a site-specific temporary art project)
TO PRINT IN A MAGAZINE?

A. A NON.
A NON-SOLICITED (well, actually, the NONCOMMERCIALS did solicit the writer, but before-
time didn't solicit the article, so if we paid, we paid in-house to include)
NON-CONVENTIONAL (a nonmonographic, critical essay or advertisement, or is it?)
ESSAY ABOUT
NON-CURATED ARTWORKS (see note, is it non-curated? Non-member collectively chose
a public site for their site-specific work to be on view, or is it another)
BY NON-MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS (solicited artist and non-artists)

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SIGNED ANON.

Susan Edelstein

Final Clearances

Questioning the masked identity which are derived/designed by the consumer-capitalist world of fashion.

"She had heard about a list of clothing that made difference disappear. Slipping on a new person was like stepping into a new pair of shoes. Can money really buy everything?"

red and black vinyl lettering on white cloth

Installed Jan. 4th to Feb. 4th at Robson and Granville. In Vancouver.

City sidewalks, busy sidewalks, dressed in holiday style

In the air there's a feeling of Christmas...

In Vancouver style. The Bally's arrived alongside Robin Street sidewalkers. From which people came through the decorated windows to the Maclean Club Monaco capes, toward the glistening windows of the stores. One can easily imagine the doorknobs as they touch the surface, the sounds of the city. What matters are the beautiful men and women who hold each other close body to body, each other's clothes and smile seductively for the camera. All the images play of being a well-dressed couple.

Leila Armstrong

Season's Greetings

A seasonal greeting for both locals and homophiles, designed to lighten the hearts of some and question the assumptions of others.

"While vinyl lettering on black canvas"

Installed Dec. 31 to Feb. 4 at Robson and Church. In downtown Vancouver.

Susan Edelstein

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Now that's a sale! A couple blocks east along Robson from Armstrong's "Season's Greetings" the compacting queues of a post holiday shopper piled the extreme. But what kind of disguise makes "difference disappear"? Susan Edelstein's bench might allude to the homogenizing power of multinational capitalism--how the gross homogenizers of race and class and gender are (appropriately) gaily covered in the idealized images of fashion advertising. Difference doesn't figure in the sphere of what some have called "consumer democracy"--the democracy in which access to goods replaces commerce. In case anyone should get confused about their buying power, or about what lost by the message on designer-bench concludes with the sign:"Can money really buy everything?" A question that sounds like it's coming from the super ego of a distracted shopper. What is the answer to this?
Vicki Musker
"Cutting people on social assistance deadbeats," indicates one's personal attachment to class.
Black vinyl lettering on white composite
Installed Jan. 94 to Feb. 94 at Robson and Hornby in Downtown Vancouver.

Last autumn the B.C. government did an unprobing into welfare Fraud. They also gave the IR office some overpaid doing damage control on a much quoted remark by Premier Mike Harcourt that promised to crack down on "welfare cheaters and deadbeats." Even if you weren't aware of this controversy, Vicki Musker's bench message speaks loudly and clearly for itself. However with a moral tone that may suggest its speakers belief in a position above or beyond "personal attachment to class." That this ideological slogan is presented on a quotation is either a clever play with the discourse of everyday advertising or an example of one of the most common punctuation mistakes in the language.

Colo Laureauille
Bakbone Descent
Having myself between what I am still presence remains
woven and re vinyl lettering
and cutouts on black composite andrimed principles
Installed Dec. 93 to Feb. 94 at Hastings and Main, in Downtown Vancouver.

Bakbone Descent by contrast, is a bench whose work is more difficult to access. Colo Laureauille situated her bench on the corner of Main and Hastings—a local geographically difficult for poverty, substance abuse, and violence, but also the neighborhood where 35% of the city's First Nations population find support services (e.g. a youth center, a healing circle, etc.). The bench's center piece is an unbreakable mirror meant to provoke reflection on the viewer's own face and the word PERSISTENCE. The mirror and text panel is between cut-out shapes of apples and the two official languages that insist: "This is not an apple" and "Ceci nest pas une pomme." Perhaps the bench makes a question of official culture and language who is really reflected in federal policy? Who is left out? Because the plexiglass of the bench was dirty, the center mirror couldn't reflect very well its obscurity could serve as a time metaphor for the obscurity of the message.

Margot Leigh Butler
Karen Tee
December 95 marks the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.
colour photograph
Installed Dec. 95 to late Jan. 96 (outside it was stolen at Main and Terminal, in front of Thornton Park.

Last year a controversy raged about the proposed inscription for "The Women's Monument." Yet the vast majority of people who hang around the bus & train station on Main Street probably don't know that the little park there will soon host a monument to women killed by male violence; the subtlety of the bench message there certainly won't enlighten them either. There's only an ambiguous photograph—a title, no inscription, just a bit of greenery discernible along the edge of a grey slab through which emerge a few letters (DON). They seem to have been erased, the grey stone fragment scarcely readable, the whole image washed out from any distance, especially at night when you wouldn't even know there's a Benchmarks there. Given that the planned monument will one day stand:
In memory, and in grief for all the women murdered by men
For women of all countries, all classes
All ages, all races
We, their sisters and brothers,
remember and work for a better world.

The image on the bench is a suggestive metaphor for our society's memory of violence against women—erased, obscured, ignored, legible to only a few in "the know." Then the thing was stolen.
Because the image was so obscure, I doubt that the act was inspired by misogyny or as a random act of vandalism. The theft of property certainly reads into the logic of the piece too. Or perhaps Margot Leigh Butler and Karen Tee have fans—which may be about art, or may be about stalking.
Their subsequent collaboration on the same site was much more readable and it was not stolen.

Kim Brown
Margot Leigh Butler
In Living Memory:
In Memory
Skin Memory
Skin Memory
Color photograph
Installed Dec. 95 to April 96 at Main and Terminal, in front of Thornton Park.

In Living Memory is a photographic image that seems to have zoomed in to the previously obscured message which in retrospect appears to have been a totemistic. This one reads:
I remember when we walked in fear for men's violence, she said.
We were drenched in vigilance.
We have been learning by heart.
We are still shedding forgetting.

In Living Memory Again it is not a message to be read while driving by the bench. Someone standing there however, someone who is attentive, might recognize that it's "vive" and "fee" and "ne" that were not readable in the first place. Which suggests that this memory of violence, though forgotten by "official culture" is written on women's bodies and "by heart."

Lorna Brown
...impaired mobility. (chronic)...
...impaired memory. (acute)...
Black vinyl lettering on hardboard, yellow copier
Installed April 96 to late May, at Main and Terminal, in front of Thornton Park.
(Computer recreation of piece by Lorna Brown)

Feminist concerns about violence being written on the body are also addressed by the next benchmark on the same site, Lorna Brown's...impaired mobility. (chronic)...It too was stolen not long after it appeared. Is it the neighborhood? How can a "benchwrecker" get paranoid after awhile?
Taking it to the streets: the signs, the times, the benchmarks

Jacqueline Lanson

O

selected bus-stop benches around Vancouver these days, that slogans, photographs and)

graphic designs of real estate or sexy ads have been replaced by the slogans, photogra-

phs and graphic designs of an artist's collective. Instead of restaurants and pubs that promise a party, instead of the anti-choice organisations that promise to help if you answer yes to their "Pregnant? Disoriented?" the anti-makeover benches make very different promises because they are something totally new: political writing.

Although the bench art is not all monolithically based, its graphs, images and texts can nonetheless be read as a kind of language. Not quite advertising, and not even painting our graffiti, the ASSOCIATION FOR NONCOMMERCIAL CULTURE has left its mark, thus constructing a writing that yields, and yields itself in, reading and rewriting.

Their BENCHMARKS project title is semantically suggestive. It suggests at first an immediate reference to surveying (i.e. the surveyor's marks...to indicate the starting or other point in a line of levels for the determination of altitudes over the face of a country). The title thus promises that this project will read and rework something; perhaps instead of altitudes of a topography, some of the attitudes of this area — a cultural topography of attitudes — sometimes provocative, sometimes unexamined, definitely heterogeneous.

The mark of a benchmark is defined as "a boundary, feature or line" which leads nonsensically to other meanings: "a sign of a boundary, position, etc." (Oxford which we get monuments, targets for shooting, goals and landmarks) and finally a sign, token, symptom (of something)...a visible trace or impression diversifying a surface as a line, dot, smear, dislocation, scar etc. A benchmark is a poise of reference.

The ASSOCIATION FOR NONCOMMERCIAL CULTURE describes the importance of a referent point in its mandate "to reclaim a portion of the public sphere for commentary from its consumables" (Catalogue 1988). The Note believes that such commentary can facilitate "a critical awareness of ourselves and the possibilities for social change. They have been public art in a number of sizes. Collective member Margot Leigh Butler believes that public art and public uses are "charged" (with their history, local politics etc.) the thinking of public art as further "charging" this space. (Sheker's term suggests an electrical charge given the advertising context here, the denoted credit card might also be appropriate.)

Whether they are "charging" a site or raising critical awareness, the assumption underlying both of these perspectives is that when artists use the surfaces of bus stop benches instead of any other media that appears in a gallery space, they are another form of public art. They are operating on the streets, on the non-gallery public, with social and political consequence. Their interventions are thereby meant to subvert advertising; perhaps they might even allow to subvert "high art." According to many critics, this kind of "low art" or popular culture in a better representation of the "cultural life of the people" (and there is, surely, Bannerman's or somewhere in the Vancouver Art Gallery. So public art is supposedly both representative of and also perhaps even good for "the people. While there are problems with both assumptions — i.e. who are "the people" and what is "good" for them? — the BENCHMARKS project can attempt to interrogate consumer discourse that envelopes so many people in consumerism, to breach subvert the eye — sometimes making a full stop in advertising's relentless grammar.

To do so, the artists of the NCC had to struggle a number of contradictions that are perhaps indicative of art's current issues. Firstly, in order to make their art public, they had to pay for "the privilege" of their chosen sites. At first it seemed like a bargain: $5 kicks a month—$55 outside the lower mainland—plus production costs. Because as far as advertising sites go, these benches are overlooked by agencies' leg customers who prefer the 10 second T.V. commercial. Ad agencies don't do "bom" benches because there's no money to be made. Considering agencies get on average a 15% cut, bus stop benches are obviously small potatoes. So it's the small potato business or manager who chooses such a site. The NCC, however, discovered that small voices can make a lot of noise when they slip into the space of advertising.

When, for example, Lea Armstrong decided to send a special Christmas "Season's Greetings" with a lesbian positive message, Goodwill Advertising balked. Sales rep Karin Dhulmclla explained that he had to "handle this situation very delicately." Your Girl Less
Leahs in capital letters on Robson Street was just too “dangerous.” Kaufman insisted, “I wanted the message out there, but it had to be done properly—you know, tastefully. Nothing graphic. It would only attract attention.” Anticipating vandalism, he required the NCC to post a thousand dollar damage deposit, and Armstrong had to redesign the text. After Seasons Gay Pride had been sponsored with letters announcing “A Project by THE VANCOUVER ASSOCIATION FOR NONOBSERVATIONAL CULTURE,” but Dhammikii insisted the letter be as large as a Goodwill Advertising’s 3 inch font. All subsequent BENCHMARKs artists had to submit a pre-production mock-up for his approval. Enter the second contradiction: anticipating censorship from a public sphere, artists may have to work to meet either vague notions of public morality or else “business concerns.” Anticipating public response also has another twist. When Armstrong’s bench was not damaged, Goodwill Advertising claimed the bench got a positive response. So what constitutes a response? And who is this elusive public? Goodwill Advertising, with its 170 benches, isn’t quite sure. They don’t have the funds to make an expensive survey, so the way bigger companies can. But Dhammikii is convinced that bus stop benches let people “know you’re out there. Twenty-four hours a day.” The NCC placed a telephone number (as required by the advertising company) on the benches so that the “public” could make contact, twenty-four hours a day, but more of the calls came from the media, from other seniors or from people who mistakenly kept trying to send faxes. I assume people saw the benches, and many must have responded, but aside from the very active groups of graffiti, vandals or other letters to editors and advertisement, there’s no way to accurately measure the response of the “phantom public.”

Jon Goss, in any case, is a public sphere (and AIDS), talks about its limited impact, about how public art, “in most cases not enough, but better than nothing.” In a society that often collapses the distinction between private and public spheres (58). Perhaps the project’s significance is not the number of people who are already there, or the number of activists on the heart moat of the city’s streets, but the way that the regular user or pedestrian intersects the relentless armies of the advertisements. That is, if anyone notices. Among critics and other writers interested in “street art” there’s a consensus about accessibility. Public art, says Virginia Malowanykis, “seeks to integrate itself into everyday life. It’s not a set of statements that are essentially personal, it’s an art that struggles to be intelligible to non-artists on multiple levels. It takes seriously the concepts of audience and communication.” When such communications are side-stepped, public art ceases to be public; (59).

As a definition, this isn’t very helpful—advertising also takes seriously the concepts of audience and communication. So does Walt Disney, for their matter. And as Derrida has argued, communication is not “a unique, universal, social concept, a concept that can be rigorously grasped and transmitted” (82). Yet “communication” is so often hobbled about as a non-problematic term (and Malowanykis, in her use of it, sounds horribly terrifying to own). Martha Rosler, in an essay called “The Birth and Death of the Viewer,” analyses the notion of the “public,” a little further by distinguishing between an audience and a public. She argues that audience refers “to consumers of spectacles” (59) who have a measure of choice about their looking; the public, on the other hand, has less decision-making ability. This notion of a choiceless public is persuasive—just try to spend some time on a street without reading billboards or other writing.

Depending on their proximity to a curb, the benches are accessible to a “public” of pedestrians if not thousands. Aside from those waiting for buses, pedestrians, rollerbladers, those passing by sometimes driven down cars, bikers and buses, can read the benches. But anyone in the advertising business could tell you, being able to read is not equivalent to being stopped by the thing long enough to get the message. Thus the artists who use a snappy slogan to silence their object may have BENCHMARKs that are immediately intelligible to pretty well anyone, others employ strategies that speak to a narrower range of viewers. But determining intelligibility is no easy task when cultural codes are unstable. 1

Ann Chang’s “Talking” displays the raw of a dialogue in English that recounts a street encounter between two persons being told to “go home” and someone who feels they are

\[ \text{[When suggested in our conversation that some people might find "birth right" controversial, he said that they feel bad to go through him first, that their ad was approved because it merely offered an information service, also "done tastefully."} \]

\[ \text{One could also read this as an example of an aesthetic production's complicated link with commodity production. (Jameson 4)} \]

\[ \text{As someone who has taught undergraduate humanities and composition courses, I admit to bias in my choice of subject sophistication. But if my concern with literacy is overdetermined at 12:30, intelligibility is not an obvious issue for public art. Allowing comes about from the relation between representation and viewer. In fact it should be that's possible not to mean something.} \]

\[ \text{In "Home" enough to designate and attack an outsider or "other." Alongside this narrative are Chinese characters that "will," according to Chang, a rather different variation of the same incident as bilingual renderings are the only ones to get it; Chinese-only readers get one narrative, while English-only readers get another. This piece, a bench on a busy corner at the edge of Chinatown, can be used to talk about the problems of context that are crucial to the entire BENCHMARK project because the social contexts for making sense of this bench are so shifting and diverse. As Jon Goss explains in his intro, the notion of context is as problematic as any notion of text.} \]

...the notion of context frequently overemphasizes rather than elucidates, since the opposition between an act and its context seems to presumed that the context is given and determines the meaning of the act. We know, of course, that things are not so simple: context is not fundamentally different from what it contexualizes; context is not given but produced; what belongs to context is determined by interpretive strategies; contexts are just as much in need of elucidation as events; and the meaning of a context is determined by events. Yet when we use the term context we use it in this simple model it proposes. (Jameson 4)\]

In a summary, Derrida puts it even simpler; "a context is never absolutely determinable, rather as...The notion is never certain or assured." (15). I could go on and imagine any number of viewers for all of the benches—what if a drunk staggered by the green painting of a coach, or a lecherous man jotted the list of lesbian writers or a fundamentalist Christian man "Hate is not a family value" (for whom if a drunk fundamentalist lesbian was any of these)? The questions are meant to suggest, not the last contradiction in the project: that the production of public art has to construct a public and the shapes of that imagined audience or pointed public might be in the end say more about the errors than about the so-called public. (In fact, some might argue that the authors and their constituents constitute their own audience). Yet it's a necessary and interesting contradiction since it points to "the problem of cognitive mapping" that Fredric Jameson claims is endemic to modernity. That is, we can neither map our own positions nor we call the "urban territory" because "capacity to act and struggle is naturalized by our spatial as well as our social condition." (14)

Jameson argues that this urbanistic confusion arises partly in part from inability to achieve critical distance—how can one subvert or oppose any "capitalism" when we are all so deeply implicated within it? Jameson claims that art and other forms of "cultural resistance...are all somehow secretly disavowed and re-absorbed by a system they themselves might well be considered a part, since they can achieve no distance from it" (49). If this were true, were it would be hard pressed to see BENCHMARKS as a subversion of advertising, or of much else. But the project operates safer place. It makes a small breathing space for reflection, for commentary, for critique, and for play. And in a city that still can't quite erase some of its post-hockey-night "urban triviality," the uncertain dimensions of this temporary breathing space is clearly necessary.
A brief history of the Nox

The collective is a non-profit society which was formed by a group of artists associated with the Nox Commercial Gallery in an independent artist-run space which operated from 1984 to 1986 on Commercial Drive. The spring of 1986 witnessed the closing of the gallery and its founding members Kelly Campbell, Warren Murff, Carol Williams and Don Gell were joined by Lynne Brown, Margot Leigh Butler, Daniel Canganes, Amy Jones, Dennis Martin, Keith Martin, Ross Munro and J.P. weaving to form the Vancouver Association for Noncommercial Culture. Determined to make "non-commercial" culture available in the public sphere, they founded the "Magic Box," a permanent physical space as an opportunity to foster a shift in programming strategies, making room for a different genre of art practice, art work that exists outside of the usual, often problematic, confines of institutions as the "gallery."

The last eight years has seen a diverse group of artists from many disciplines conceive and execute innovative projects. These projects have employed various strategies of getting art work out into a variety of publics. Various has ranged from storefront windows to bus shelters, installations moved around the city on the back of a truck, newspaper flyers distributed to 30,000 households contained pages created by 16 artists and works produced as brochures housed at the B.C. Ferry's three representatives some of the previous projects that the Nox has been responsible for.

The membership of the Nox has also continually shifted. At the time of the benchmarks the collective consisted of Lela Armstrong, Margot Leigh Butler, Ana Carol, Susan D. Edelstein, Kona Fair, Suzi Hildreth, Stacia Hoffman, Lizard Jones, Clo Lamontyl, Vidi Mould, Karen Taw and J.P. weaving. As members of the collective, artists act as board members and volunteers: their skills and time to do the administrative work of the non-commercially they also participate in arts in the projects. In addition, the collective invites guest artists to participate in a project-by-project basis.

Susan Edelstein

WORKS CITED


Azarian, rough experience in Tehran, and Canadian beginnings in a drug-store on Sherbrooke Street in downtown Montreal, where he met the brothers Ghanimian who operated flatland Edmonton on a magic carpet ride — five million square feet of dream creation to draw people away from the traditional form of tourism.

According to Michael, father Jacob built a thriving business in Tehran in the forties, moved the family to Canada in the early sixties and urged his sons, Iqkander, Rashid, Bahman and Nader, to attend university, study hard and develop their skills in design. Not even they could have foreseen that their skills would be in dream design, in land speculation for the dissemination not of house lots, apartment buildings or industrial real estate but of fantasies. Edmonton’s aldermen now sell stories of the brothers’ enterprise, and persistence. It is ancient history. I was about to ask Michael which way the beach faced. Would the wind be offshore? But then I realized that wave formation here would not depend on beach configurations but on wind patterns.

Part of the car park was cordoned off, and there were vans, caravans, and even a couple of wide- wheel drive monster trucks, symbol of an international passion become a way of life. I suppose I should think they’ll be favouring short boards for quick action on the waves. "Michael.

A student of the bizarre, he too was excited by this prospect of a new variation upon one of the almost infinite possibilities. It is one thing to construct an artificial sea in a shopping mall, but to stage a first in world sporting competition?

"We walked past exotic birds in cages — macaws, cockatoos, parrots, white cockatoos, flamingoes and even emus and ostriches. A new aquarium filled with grayish fish, the dolphin pool, monkeys, the scissor replica of Columbia’s "Sailor Martin". There was an amusement park with its twenty-story labyrinth of colourful tracks, the Mindbender Rollercoaster, and the Drop of Doom, an ice riot. This in itself is an exercise in nostalgia."

"This is what the oiliers practice, but if you’re not interested in ice skating there is a miniature golf replica of Pebble Beach Golf Course, Par 6."

There were two-thousand-year-old palm trees, and famous streets in facsimile; "The largest shopping centre in the world is West Edmonton Mall" (Gruenish Book of World Records).

"It’s open twenty-four-hours a day, you know, three hundred and fifty days of the year."

We stepped for a beer in the Sherlock Holmes at 1540 Bourbon Street.

The waves were rolling in smooth, electrically "walkways", both above and below ground, that connected the individual units of the development with the mall itself, a series of venues and arcades linked by this gigantic heart that promised entertainment for everyone. Even now, the mall is the largest in the world. It was not until recently that the mall has been opened to the public. We entered the mall, passing through the Arches of the World, and found ourselves in the main atrium.

"How would you go at Bell’s?" asked McIlroy in an interview, presenting the rhetorical question shared by those who followed surfing’s calendar around the edge of the world’s continents and islands.

"Ickled by all this, Michael visited that village alongside the tides and found them to find in other real estate developments in cold country, and although street length repeats the patterns of other places, there are commuter networks,
"It was a sui-gai-sty for excellence, an unmeasured grace."

The curious aspect about Francis Picabia is the absence of a program or a mission or a commitment to any particular genre or style. If anything, he abhomed the notion that style was an appropriate issue for artists to consider. Rather than focus upon a singular style or maintain a singular point of view, it was the purpose of art to extend sensory experience beyond the boundaries of conventional interpretation, and the Kentian mode of specialized engagement with critique. For Picabia, the idea was always the thing. In order for an idea to emerge, the artist must be willing to chance his point of view in order to maintain the necessary dialectical tension with the established order. Metaphorically speaking, there was no need to keep wearing the same shirt. One did not need to herald an opinion etched in stone. Opinions were as cheap as any other aesthetic criterions or process of judgement. The fact is that most aesthetic criterions were not terribly precise or even advanced in relation to narrative incompleteness, the purveyor of ideas, that might challenge the most established picture in the world of art, even within the emerging avant-garde of the twentieth century.

Picabia’s visual polemicism was probably as dogmatic as any other notion of style that he wished to refuse. To challenge the established norm was the focus of his art. Within the core of this poleitical spirit would emerge something vital, something that would offer a pause or an interval by which to gather new significance. Rather than endorsing for a program or art, it was a matter of negating the program. If the artist behind a work of art was the prevenient opportunity to subvert that concept, to begin on another track, to open up the possibility of some new hue of artistic revolution. Given the love of caustic art, Picabia could search out ideas with some mystical alchemy, and then quickly challenge the very basis of mysticism that initially opened the door to his curiosity. Here is a work from 1927 called Agnese Mystique et Bather, an image in which there was the potential opportunity to subvert that concept, to begin on another track, to open up the possibility of some new hue of artistic revolution. Given the love of caustic art, Picabia could search out ideas with some mystical alchemy, and then quickly challenge the very basis of mysticism that initially opened the door to his curiosity.

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soldier. Could the woman be a prostitute? It is difficult to say. Let’s assume she is not. Instead, we are witnessing a moment of romantic encounter. We are watching the two figures at the moment in which the flood-gates of passion are about to swell with their intense desire both inflating the lovers’ bodies. The macho assurance of the man and the cheerful relinquishment of the woman are all part of the myth. The mundane passion is given a larger-than-life venue — a lovers’ space in which the glorification of ecstatic sexuality is about to be performed. The physical detachment of this portrayal is encompassed in the directness of the encounter. There are no layers of meaning as there are in Apion’s Mytiq (Yet the absurd vision is shared by each work.) With M. L’Etranger we have an image that is as blank as a Campbell’s soup can. There is nothing to be read beyond the flash of the sign. The response is based on a particular cultural set-up, a mass mediated approach to the romantic love in a time such as the innovation of war negates any possibility of transcendence.

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"Il homme intelligent se doit avoir gaune s’entreprise, c’est d’etre intelligent!"

There is little doubt that Picabia’s Nietzsche was the zeal-sayer who sublimated the industrial transformation of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it was the concept of a complete transformation in the arts that seemed to obtain the imaginative powers of the artist as it had, several decades earlier, obscured the great philosophical. It was Nietzsche’s apocalyptic intelligence that made sense to Picabia, the notion that a phrase spoken in rhythmic proportion to one’s total sensibility could emit the power of a choral refrain. There was the idea embedded in Nietzsche’s doctrine that the function of thought was determined largely by will, and that the will could sustain the power of language despite any system. The imposition of a system upon thought was unnecessary given the remarkable state of the secondary force. Without volition, language ultimately proved itself insignificant. The task of language was to work out thoughts, to put thought in order, to give thought its own organic substance, and so to any attempt to predetermine its structure. The division between philosophy and poetry was of little concern to Nietzsche. What mattered was the existential ground from which thought might seep into the realm of the spirit. Not that Picabia aspired toward any great ascendency. Rather, it was a desire to come to terms with the absurd and the banal, and to invoke the cynical edge of preeminence in the process. What interested Picabia at the outset of Modernity was his murdering instinct toward the last romantic vestiges as if he was prepared in the spirit of his age.

And precisely was the spirit of the age was the romantic love in a time such as the innovation of war negates any possibility of transcendence.********

"C’est trop bon de se sentir le vent en mon voile de soie."

To know the emprise du temps is only partially suited to the intellect. The question for Picabia is how to free oneself of Duchamp with a couple of abstract intervals in 1908 and 1909 — amazing intervals where something of his imagistic consciousness came into play, suggesting that his concept of abstraction was both decorative and referential and anti-aesthetic. Picabia was no a reminderless painter, but he was a thoroughly imaginative one. As Duchamp pointed out, the only certainty was the impossibility to put another way, a rhythm to his situation of the acid. How to express it in Picabia’s terms? After all, there was a method to his impulse or, put another way, a rhythm to his situation of the acid. He was no longer a writer, of course, but a painter, and a painter, he was fascinated by the two of his cases. Today the mistake is frequently made. The confusion between fashion and being within fashion is a rampant trope. How to express it in Picabia’s terms? After all, there was a method to his impulse or, put another way, a rhythm to his situation of the acid. How to express it in Picabia’s terms? After all, there was a method to his impulse or, put another way, a rhythm to his situation of the acid. How to express it in Picabia’s terms? After all, there was a method to his impulse or, put another way, a rhythm to his situation of the acid. How to express it in Picabia’s terms? After all, there was a method to his impulse or, put another way, a rhythm to his situation of the acid. How to express it in Picabia’s terms? After all, there was a method to his impulse or, put another way, a rhythm to his situation of the acid.
Surrealist, Picabia's legacy was a manifestation of history, a pulsing swell on the horizon of art that era into an interior myth. Sphere echoes the sensation of a riddle, an incomprehensible void, a chain of doubt and neglect, an inscribable and self-indolent morass, a glut of blind stupidity gone amok. Picabia's art is the chaos of Modernity, the voice of the bastard-artist unable to conform to the protocol of disdain and insolence as they had come to hear by his psyche. More than Mavetich, Picabia may have signified the last painting of, at least, the last desire to paint.

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"Un tableau a n'existe pas s'il ne sert pas a transporter au-delà de tous les tabous."

Milwaukee, Wisconsin — a midwestern town nestled mostly by German immigrants in the thirteenth century — a town known for its breweries and baseball. Situated on the edge of Lake Michigan, Milwaukee has an industrial past, snow in the winter, ice in the summer — a very humid town. A few years ago there was an exhibition of paintings by the German artist Sigmar Polke at one of the museums. In an article devoting the art community in Milwaukee, a renowned New York art critic was invited to speak. During the dinner following the occasion one of the wives of one of the trustees made the comment that she did not like Polke's work. When the critic inquired as to the reason, she explained that the work reminded her too much of the American painter David Salle. The critic went on to explain that Polke's use of the transparency technique actually preceded the American's by many years. In fact, Polke was the originator of the method. To my recollection, Francis never entered the discussion. It ended abruptly in embarrassment and the subject was changed.

Of course, the transparencies of Picabia are stylistically different and conceptually removed from either the German or the American; but then to speak of style is something of a misnomer, because not all of Picabia's transparencies look alike. There is a Portrait of Madame Picabia (1927-29) that is considerably different in style from either Sphere or Salome. The Portrait is more direct in the overlay of its contours, similar to Aegaeon Mystique et Baiser. Most of the better-known transparencies from the last twenty are catastrophic in their colouring, largely composed on earth tones, vellum of umbrellas, siennas, ochres that mute the surface.

Although Picabia professed that he was not a Surrealist, he was involved in the making of one of the classic Surrealist films, Exo-ace (1924). The Freudian theme of repressed sexuality is brilliantly repeated throughout the film, including the famous death wish sequence in which the sexual procession is quickly dispersed when the canons cut loose from the wagon and there is the scene with the runaway house. By one or the other the connoisseur makes everyone disappear, including himself, with the wave of a bacillus. This idea of disappearance is again related to Picabia's concept of anti-style which is, in turn, related to the transparencies. As the layering of superimposed historical illustrations enters the surface of the canvas, the former significance of the image "disappears"; that is, the meaning is recontextualized in the process of time. Real time becomes dream time as the sequential cuts in Exo-ace also reveal.

In Milwaukee, the German legacy of art is considered an important part of the cultural life of the community. The exhibition of paintings by Polke was a significant gesture. The overspill of imagery in Polke's work has recently taken another turn. The representation of pop icons — the commercial American look of Germany after the Second World War — has been replaced by more horrible alchemical mixtures of material. The associations are more deeply rooted in the German psyche, more obsessive and unrelenting. Salle's relationship to all of this is quite removed, more detached, more superficial, and ultimately more like Milwaukee. Francis has little place in Milwaukee, even though the transparency technique is grounded there somewhere in the culture of Schiller: "the beer that made Milwaukee famous."

Bibliography


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Sunken Treasure by Stan Rogal

Retired to a secure shelter.
No ship coming in to rescue us
harbored by the glare of a thousand cooled suns.
Cracked in the face of it.
Diamond braids squeezed to cool between the hot hands of the skull.
A surface where words are required to render the rough beast.
Concrete, Somewhere arriving at the green nooses of a treasured Burying, Matter-of-fact fossilizing further & further down.

gorgonian

stair

Secreting precious coral & no cause to interfere.
Nothing so natural in our nature.
Believing one aquarium safely replicates another.
That goldfish are merely food for piranha
that never challenge a pen of liquid glass.
That every oyster contains a pearl.
That all things rise to them that wait.
Bemused by thoughts of simple gathering along a moonlit beach.
Without the weight to imprint sand.
Without the guts to make a trilobite from its chaiselled place.
Flotsam & jetsam cast from woods sunk beyond alchemy.
Afraid, even, to rub a lesson from the cold shoulders of glacial fish
that refuse to recognize the impossibility of their own deep Reflections.
It is death, this sea, that offers no translation for lumberjacks lacking the act of reaching bottom.
Only dissolusion & rust beneath the chuck & above, a mirror
bordered by snakes maintains its story design.