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DECONSTRUCTION AS CULTURAL HISTORY/ THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF DECONSTRUCTION

Deena Weinstein
Michael Weinstein

Among those diverse writers who are conveniently gathered under the post-structuralist umbrella, Jacques Derrida is, perhaps, the most serious. The Derridian critique of "the West," a critique of the logocentric discourse into which he intervenes, purports to be radical in the sense of getting at the root of what the West means. He performs that critique according to the standard of seriousness that he believes has been set by the historical West, that is, the privileging of metaphysical inquiry. It may seem paradoxical or even perverse to call Derrida serious when he urges one to be playful. Yet play, for him, is the consummation of textual work which liberates him from the hegemony of metaphysical absolutes, what he calls "master-names." Derrida transmutes the practice of metaphysics into the play of master-names. He pits them all against his unique word "*différance,*" which holds the place occupied by master-names, not to control them in a new metaphysics pretending to mirror an ulterior Being, but to permit them to play within and between texts. Derrida takes metaphysics, which was meant to provide an opening of Being to language and of language to Being, and encloses it into self-dependent textuality. The deconstructive move is either postmodern play or modern seriousness, depending upon one's perspective.

Derrida's thought will be understood here as paradigmatic of the contemporary moment of western culture, specifically the culture of the

modern West. The aim will be to historicize his thought, not in order to fit it into a teleological pattern that shows it to follow from previously temporalized moments, but to expose it as an intelligible development from an earlier thought on similar themes. That prior thought will be Georg Simmel's emblematic critique of the serious business of metaphysics. His critique did not cause deconstruction to be thought and written according to some mysterious dialectic of ideas. Rather, Simmel anticipates the deconstructive move, which makes his modernism and his reflection on history particularly appropriate for a rapprochement with postmodernism. His hyper-modernism provides the historization of postmodernity.

Simmel, the playful modernist, will be deployed in this writing to situate Derrida's thought in a modernist discourse, and Derrida will be deployed to extend Simmel's discourse on and of cultural history into the current postmodern moment of western culture. The result will be a Simmelian history with Derridian content and a Derridian deconstruction with historical import. The extrinsic intention of this writing will be to configure what is called postmodernism in a cultural history.

Central Ideas/Life

In his late work Georg Simmel stood on the boundary between cultural history and metaphysics. His most ambitious philosophical work, *Lebensanschauung*[1], deployed the hot discourse of metaphysics, seeking a Derridian master-name to define that which is present and extra-linguistic, and using that word, "Life," to control his text, as Derrida says, "from the outside." But in "The Conflict in Modern Culture,"[2] his last work, Simmel deployed the cool discourse of intellectual history to interpret all master-names, including his own, as "central ideas" that characterize cultural epochs. In his cultural history the master-names were not, as they were for Hegel, tokens of a progressive struggle of Being to achieve self-lucidity, but operators functioning to integrate the diverse regions of culture. Central ideas work culturally to bestow meaning on human pursuits. As long as they perform that function it does not matter if they have named some ulterior Being accurately.

Simmel did not make as clear a distinction between metaphysics and cultural history as was made above. He sought to control the text of "The Conflict in Modern Culture" from the outside by appealing to his metaphysics of Life as its foundation. In order to make Simmel's text available for informing Derrida's writing with an historical dimension that text must be deconstructed to free cultural history from its metaphysical foundation. At the outset of "The Conflict"[3] Simmel discusses "the ultimate reason why culture has a history," summarizing his metaphysical thesis that "life, having become spirit," perpetually creates forms in

which to express itself. These forms, "which become self-enclosed and demand permanence," eventually fail to satisfy life, the essence of which is a "restless rhythm" opposing "the fixed duration of any particular form."[4] What might be called normal history for Simmel is the ceaseless supplanting of one form by another over time: when life is constrained and frustrated by a regnant form, it creates another in which to express more adequately its current condition, in an unending process. When, however, life becomes conscious of itself as form-giving activity, as it does in Simmel's metaphysics, history enters an abnormal phase. Life, acknowledging that no form can ever provide permanent satisfaction, rebels against the submission to any form, putting a tragic stalemate into play, since the rebellion against form cannot cancel the essential need of life to express itself in form. The conflict in modern culture is that of life against itself, of form-giving activity against submission to its own creations, leading to chronic frustration and dissatisfaction.

The deconstruction of Simmel's text finds its purchase point in that text's nostalgia for a normal history. At the root of normal history is Simmel's understanding that history has been a dialectic of illusion and reality that he has succeeded in demythologizing. Prior to his writing, history has proceeded with life creating a series of forms, each of which was thought to define a Being that comprehended and fulfilled life, though actually it was only expressing vital impulse. Metaphysics has been life's veiling of itself in myth, but in Simmel's text it becomes its own demythologization, revealing its presence to itself. In Derridian terms, "life" is the master-name of Simmel's "metaphysics of presence," controlling all of the differences in his text from the outside. Indeed, Simmel often capitalizes "Life," using it to embrace the interplay of life and form, as though he were able to get beyond the conflict. According to Derrida, metaphysics, especially the tradition of modern rationalism from Descartes to Hegel, always tries to get outside the conflict or play within the text by embracing it in a name. But that name, for Derrida, is "logocentric," articulating dispersion in a specious unity. Simmel's "Life" provides no such unity, but merely names the dispersion specifically as a "conflict." His metaphysics is the self-denial of the pretensions of logocentric writing within the affirmation of the logocentric form. It is almost a deconstruction of metaphysics, but not quite. It stalemates logocentrism by proclaiming that Being (Life) is inherently opposed to itself. It is an anti-logocentrism, a vital skepticism, which remains bound to logocentrism through nostalgia expressed in the form of tragedy. Being, for Simmel, is tragic. There is a reason for the differences, even if that reason is Life's inherent nonconformity to rationality. A deconstruction of Simmel's text lets go of the tragedy by decapitalizing life and leaving the difference(s) between life and form to play within the text. "Life" becomes another master-name to be taken up into cultural history.

In the deconstructed text of "The Conflict" life and form are no longer mediated by privileging life as Life. Uncapitalized life may, indeed, be the

generator of form (and there may also be a dialectical opposition between life and form), but there is no greater Life, controlling the text from the outside, to inform that opposition with tragedy. In the play of the text, life has its pretensions to self-expression and form has its pretensions in expressing life. What allows these differences to be is unnamed, the place of Life in the text being taken by the permissive prohibition *différance*. Tragedy need not be eternal and is freed for interpretation as a moment of cultural history.

What does cultural history become in Simmel's text if it is lifted out of its foundation in his metaphysics of presence? It is no longer the struggle of life with or against form, but the successive displacement of master-names or "central ideas," each of them controlling discourses and practices in the various regions of culture. Simmel, indeed, anticipates Michel Foucault's[5] discussion of "epistemes" by defining cultural history not as an intelligible order but as "the displacement of an old form by a new one."[6] The deconstruction of his text opens the possibility that the contradictions and paradoxes ranged under the master-name "Life" are characteristics of the discourse controlled by that master-name and are not indicative of a permanent structure of Being, albeit the structure of destructuration. "Life" itself may be subject to displacement by other "central ideas" or there may have been an end, for the time being or indefinitely, to "central ideas." Simmel's own cultural history, relieved of its foundationalist backing, opens the way to just such possibilities, to a post-structuralist or Derridian reading.

Simmel's discussion of central ideas as cool cultural history has strong resemblances to current post-structuralist interpretations of language, discourse, writing, and text as modes of cultural control. Divested of the metaphysics of life, the central ideas are operators in discourses and texts that perform the function of regulation through centric unification. Simmel brings the notion of central ideas into his text after he has laid the foundation for cultural history in his metaphysics of life. As he turns to cultural history proper, "the arena of the history of ideas," he makes a textual jump that will make him "range a little further afield." In fact, he enters a new field, grounding cultural history in a specific cultural object, the master-name of metaphysics: "In every important cultural epoch, one can perceive a central idea from which spiritual movements originate and towards which they seem to be oriented."[7] From the viewpoint of the metaphysics of life the central idea is a product of "Life's" tragic struggle, but from the standpoint of cultural history "Life" is but a central idea, to be analyzed in terms of its intellectual content (the idea of tragic struggle) and its adequacy in fulfilling the requirements of a central idea, the rules by which a central idea is constituted. Simmel's text stalemates itself by grounding cultural history in Life and then by making "Life" a moment in cultural history. Deconstruction is not an operation imposed on his text, but a move that is proper to it and a name for what happens within it.

Simmel states that although the central idea of an epoch is "modified, obscured, and opposed in innumerable ways," it "represents the 'secret being' of the epoch."[8] The structure of that secret, the uniqueness of the central idea as a cultural object, is its joining of "the most perfect being, the most absolute and metaphysical phase of reality" with "the highest values, the most absolute demands on ourselves and on the world."[9] The central idea performs the same function for spiritual culture in general as the master-name performs for the text of metaphysics: it exerts control over spiritual culture from the outside by purporting to give spiritual culture a foundation ulterior to itself and a regulative aim beyond itself. For the metaphysics of Life, the central idea is an expression of life through which life interprets itself as other than itself, according to the contents taken up into a form. But for cultural history the central idea is a mode of discipline through which spiritual culture is organized. Having discerned the form of the central idea behind its shifting historical contents, Simmel deconstructs it, just as Derrida deconstructs the master-names. He notes that the central idea is constituted by a contradiction: "Whatever is unconditionally real does not require to be realized nor can one evidently say that an existing most unquestioned being is only supposed to come into being."[10] Here the tragic Simmel cedes to the playful Simmel. Remarking that "*Weltanschauungen* in their ultimate perfections do not concern themselves with such conceptual difficulties," he advises that whenever ultimate "is" and absolute "ought" are joined "one can be assured to locate a really central idea of the respective world view."[11] As a cultural historian Simmel is a deconstructionist.

The major portion of "The Conflict" is devoted to a discussion of how the central idea of "Life" can interpret the spiritual culture of the West in Simmel's own time, the early twentieth century. He notes briefly how "being," "God," "nature," "ego," and "society" have successively displaced one another as central ideas in western history, but he configures no orderly progression of them. When he turns to discuss the central idea of "Life" he treats that idea as an expression of philosophical culture and not as his own master-name. Retextualizing the discourse of "Life" as a phase of cultural history, Simmel repeats his metaphysical theses but now takes an ironic distance from them. He concludes his remarks by placing the movement toward "Life" as a central idea in "the most general cultural perspective." In that context "Life" indicates "a turn away from classicism as the absolute ideal of human culture."[12] As "the ideology of form," classicism "regards itself as the ultimate norm for life and creation."[13] It is the binary opposite of "Life," the most direct contender with it for cultural mastery—indeed, the master-name of its ideology is "Form" or perhaps "Culture." Here Simmel deconstructs his own metaphysics by stalemating its hegemonic pretensions. He remarks that "nothing more adequate or refined has taken the place of the old ideal," but then reminds us that "[t]he attack against classicism is not concerned with the introduction of new cultural forms:" "Instead self-assured life wishes to

liberate itself from the yoke of form as such of which classicism is a historical representation."[14] Although Simmel believes *that* "Life" is the central idea of his time he does not here believe *in* that idea, as he seems to do in his metaphysics. He knows that it excludes the discourse of classicism, of the regency of "Culture," and in "The Conflict" he places himself in the "arena of the history of ideas," where "Culture" is King. As Derrida advises, one should compare title to text. Simmel's metaphysics of Life is an incident within "The Conflict in Modern Culture." And the text stalemates the metaphysics.

Considered strictly as a central idea, "Life" is not adequate for the requirements of such an idea; that is, it cannot join the "is" and the "ought" because "oughts" are always constituted in forms and the idea of "Life" "wishes to liberate itself from the yoke of form as such." The idea of "Life" prescribes that the form-giving activity, which is essential to "Life," never submit to any of its own creations. Yet submission to "Form" is just what a central idea is supposed to engender. "Life" is that peculiar central idea which deconstructs the notion of the central idea as a cultural operator. Rather than unifying culture it disperses it into the manifold loci of its creation, signalling an end of cultural discipline and control. As Simmel traces how the idea of "Life" has worked its way through the spiritual culture of his time he illustrates how the form-giving activity strives to possess, indeed absorb, its creations in a frustrated effort to be simply itself. "Normal history" has ended and perhaps with it the idea of history itself.

The irony within Simmel's cultural criticism is that life is "self-assured" and yet doomed in its rebellion against form. The tone he takes when he describes expressionism in art, popular mysticism in religion, "the new morality" in sexual relations, and pragmatism in philosophy is one of ironic compassion, not tragedy. He reports on the tragic conflict; he is not a partisan within it. At each point he stalemates the movement towards "Life" with the counter-play of autonomous form. Expressionist art is a denial of the necessity "for the identity between the form of the cause and that of the effect," of the assumption "that a successful artistic response must be morphologically similar to the stimulus that evoked it."[15] Instead of representing the stimulus, the expressionist follows the inner impulse evoked by that stimulus, creating an exteriorization of feeling rather than a publicly available meaning. Similarly, the pragmatist denies autonomous standards of cognitive validity and interprets truth as a function of success; the "new moralist" rejects the general forms of erotic gratification (marriage and prostitution) in favor of free love; and the popular mystic replaces faith in transcendent order and obligation with the feeling of piety. In each case the cultural moment of high modernism is an assertion of life against form, a denial of the autonomy of form. Simmel's final judgment on all of these cultural tendencies is that they display a wish of life "to obtain something which it cannot reach": "It desires to transcend all forms and to appear in its naked immediacy.

Yet the processes of thinking, wishing, and forming can only substitute one form for another."[16] The reign of "Life" as the central idea is contingent on the desire that it expresses. Were that desire to be displaced by another there would be a new central idea or, perhaps, none at all. Or, perhaps, the desire for a central idea might simply be lost.

The command of "Life" that life submit to itself is self-contradictory because life is formless and yet inherently creates forms. This is not the same kind of contradiction that attended all of the preceding central ideas, which, from the viewpoint of "Life," made certain contents of "Life" its origin and aim. "Life" has no aim to reach, but it is not adequate to itself when it is made to be its own object. Its contradiction does not produce an illusion that permits it to sustain itself, but is the frustration of all illusions, ever repeated as long as it retains "self-assurance," which is its own illusion or, better, delusion. Is cultural history still in the moment of "Life?" Has "Life" been displaced by other central ideas? Does culture now do without central ideas? Enter Derrida, the postmodernist.

Master-names/différance

Considered as an exemplar of a moment of modern cultural history, that of high modernism, Simmel epitomizes the struggle between romanticism and classicism for cultural supremacy. Although Simmel described his moment as one in which self-assured life struggled to liberate itself from the yoke of form, a view of that moment from the current epoch sees it differently. Simmel's own thought is hardly self-assured, but is, on the contrary, agonized by frustration. That frustration took material shape in the ideological warfare and wars of ideology of the 1930s and 1940s; for ideology is merely political expressionism, the effort, as Jose Ortega y Gasset argued in *The Revolt of the Masses*, to do without standards. The moment of high modernism is that of the agony of the West, the final revolt of romance, fighting under the master-name Life, against constraints of the mind. Freud's Eros/Thanatos, Unamuno's Reason/Faith-Life-Experience-Imagination, and Simmel's Life/Form were the counters in that serious game. That game ended after World War II and may have been replaced by another that defines a postmodern epoch. From this epoch, high modernism appears for philosophical culture as a war of classical and romantic words, not as the tragic destiny of the romantic words. As a high modernist, Simmel's thought is Janus-faced. He has made the conflict between classicism and romanticism self-conscious and has shown that it cannot be resolved. But then he enters the conflict as a partisan, on the side of Life, transmuting irreconcilability into a tragic essence of Life. Simmel the cultural historian adumbrates conflict. Simmel the metaphysician enters into that conflict on one side. But the metaphysician fails to achieve victory over the cultural historian.

The *best* he can do is stalemate classicism. But he *can* stalemate classicism. Postmodernism will not amount to a revival of classical prescriptions founded in central ideas purporting to record ultimate presence. High modernism revealed metaphysics to be a cultural form and no more. In a post-modern period, non-classical culture will be King, if it is possible to speak of cultural regency.

Whereas high-modernist philosophers practiced tragic metaphysics in the wake of the modern comedy of successive classicisms attempting to control romanticism, Derrida, the postmodernist, deconstructs the texts of metaphysics to liberate them from the control of their master-names, so that the words within them can play freely through their differences. That is, for Derrida, what Simmel called "central ideas" are reinterpreted as terms which regulate discourses. It is no longer a question of whether or not the master-names refer to, mirror, or record some ulterior and foundational Being, as they were meant to do; because Derrida's critique of metaphysics aims at definitively disestablishing any such pretensions of language to, in Heidegger's words, "name the Holy." As a critic of modernity, Derrida presents an anti-metaphysics, which denies the metaphysical project of naming Being, rather than a contra-metaphysics, as Simmel's was, which reinterprets other metaphysical texts in terms of a new text with its own master-names, such as Life, tragedy, and temperament.

Derrida's anti-metaphysics is based on a single and straightforward argument which he presents with special lucidity in his published address, "Différance."[17] His claim is that western metaphysics has been founded on the assumption that there is an originary and irreducibly simple presence that thought can capture in a name and that will be able to control all discourses and texts from the outside: every signifier will be derived from the master-name and will be led back to it, fusing ground and goal in much the same way as Simmel asserted that the central idea functioned. Derrida negates the metaphysical pretension by arguing for

> a primordial, and irreducibly nonsimple and, therefore, in the strict sense nonprimordial, synthesis of traces, retentions, and protentions (to reproduce here analogically and provisionally, a phenomenological and transcendental language that will presently be revealed as inadequate) that I propose to call protowriting, prototrace, or différance.[18]

For Derrida, there are texts that bear/bare the traces of that which makes these texts possible but which these texts can never capture, because the extra-linguistic holds itself back from the text, permitting its signifiers to differ in a play of signification. The possibility for such play in the text is grounded in the prohibition of presence: The interval that constitutes "what is called the present" must not only separate the present from what it is not, but "must, also and by the same token, divide the present in itself, thus, dividing, along with the present, everything

that can be conceived on its basis, that is, every being—in particular for our metaphysical language, the substance or subject."[19] Deconstruction is founded on metaphysical negation, not on linguistic theory. It is a metaphysical prohibition that prohibits metaphysics by putting forward the metaphysical proposition that the interval which constitutes the present as present MUST "divide the present in itself." But what grounds does Derrida have for denying a unitary present, such as, for example, a Simmelian intuition of life (Life)? There are none. The *best* he can do is to stalemate the metaphysics of presence, but he *can* stalemate it.

Putting the necessity of denying a unitary present into question deconstructs Derrida's text. Rather than ending metaphysical discourse he shows that it can be prohibited by an alternative speculative possibility to the assumption of that discourse. Yet his prohibition can be stalemated by just the claim that he prohibits. What is at stake in Derrida's thought is not the question of the meaning of Being or even the possibility of raising that question, but the textual politics of freedom and control. Derrida has understood that the master-names of the metaphysical tradition function to control discourses and texts, and, as a partisan of freedom, he seeks to displace them with the word, "*différance*," which holds the place that they occupied, but denies the perquisite of that place to provide the *logos* of the extra-linguistic. There is nothing to stop "*différance*" from being displaced by one of its old antagonists or a new one. Had he pursued a stalemating strategy deliberately he would have argued that the interval which constitutes the present as present MIGHT divide the present in and of itself. But just as Simmel was not content to let classicism and romanticism play with and against each other, and took up the romantic lance, so Derrida is not willing to play off the metaphysics of presence and its antithesis, but takes the side of liberated writing against the written about. His thought is emblematic of a moment in cultural history that privileges ... culture.

Derrida is a partisan of the freedom of culture, not the cultural freedom of the subject, self, or individual; but the freedom of cultural practices, especially writing, to follow their own ways without constraint "from the outside." To accept the prohibition-permission of "*différance*" is to opt for play against discipline imposed from the outside to regulate cultural practices. According to Derrida, "everything is a matter of strategy and risk" in the text of "*différance*:"

> It is a question of strategy because no transcendent truth present outside the sphere of writing can theologically command the totality of the field. It is hazardous because this strategy is not simply one in the sense that we say that strategy orients the tactics according to a final aim, a telos or the theme of a domination, a mastery or an ultimate reappropriation of movement and field.[20]

The strategic aspect of "*différance*" is the prohibition: it blocks any

pretenders to transcendent truth. The hazardous aspect of "*différance*" is the permission: it leaves the field of writing free from reappropriation and free for play, for "a strategy without finality ... blind tactics..."[21] Derrida privileges "play" even more than he does "*différance*." He asserts that "the concept of *play* [*jeu*]" is beyond the opposition of philosophical-logical discourse and "its integral and symmetrical opposite, logico-empirical speech," designating, "on the eve and aftermath of philosophy, ... the unity of chance and necessity in an endless calculus."[22] "We know," according to Derrida, "that there has never been and never will be a unique word, a master name."[23] The "unnameable" is not "some ineffable Being that cannot be approached by a name," but simply

> the play that brings about the nominal effects, the relatively unitary and atomic structures we call names, or chains of substitutions for names. In these, for example, the nominal effect of différance is itself *involved*, carried off, and reinscribed, just as the false beginning or end of a game is still part of the game, a function of the system.[24]

"*Différance*" is the permission to play in and with the cultural form of metaphysics and, if, metaphysics has been the center of the control of culture and of cultural control, it is also the permission to play in and with all cultural forms. Metaphysics has interpreted itself as a serious quest for the meaning of Being, but when it is deconstructed it becomes the risk of meaning nothing. The purport of Derrida's project is summarized neatly in his interview with Henri Ronse:

> To risk meaning nothing is to start to play and first to enter into the play of *différance* which prevents any word, any concept, any major enunciation from coming to summarize and to govern from the theological presence of a center the movement and textual spacing of differences.[25]

The play is indeterminate and objectless; it is its own excuse for being; it need not be justified: it is culture asserting its autonomy from ... life (Life), not the expressive life of high modernism, but life as the effort to control culture, which high modernism became when it took the form of the ideological bureaucracy. Deconstruction (postmodernism) signals not "the eve of philosophy" but the rebellion of culture against the efforts of life to constrain it. It seeks to turn life, with all its practicalities and purposes into, as Kant called it in *The Critique of Judgment*, "purposeless purposiveness," into play.

From the viewpoint of a Simmelian-style cultural history postmodernism is the riposte of culture against life; it is the next moment in "the conflict in modern culture," which Simmel could not anticipate—the moment of self-distrustful life seeking liberation from its essential frustration by alienating itself in the free play of forms, voided of any import that they might have for any ulterior interests. Derridian thought is emblem-

atic of how the revolt of culture plays itself out in philosophy, which is to say that no claim is made here that Derrida intends to liberate all forms of culture into forms of play. What Derrida does to, with, for (?) metaphysics is being done throughout contemporary culture. The importance of his thought for cultural history is simply the significance that Simmel accords to "central ideas," the significance of metaphysics as control through fusion of the "is" and the "ought" (even when it appears as an anti-metaphysics).

Derrida's text lends itself to the historization being done here. He remarks that

> the efficacy of this thematics of *différance* very well may, and even one day must, be sublated, i.e., lend itself, if not to its own replacement, at least to involvement in a series of events which in fact it never commanded.[26]

It is just such an "involvement" that is accomplished when "*différance*" is made an emblem of the current moment of cultural history. "*Différance*" is not replaced, but retextualized by the stalemating strategy of revealing that it can do no more than stalemate. Deconstruction is not the "eve of philosophy," but the dawn of the philosophy of play, another philosophy among many, but compelling because it is the philosophy of the present, if not of the presence. And here Simmel, in another guise, provides the concept for opening Derrida's text into a discourse on the contemporary cultural moment, a supplement to Simmel's own discourse on cultural history.

Play-Form

In his sociological writings, prior to his turn to cultural theory, Simmel described just the sort of liberation of culture that Derrida undertakes. Under the notion of "play-form," Simmel discussed a number of cultural forms which are detached from the practical aims of life. His brief text on the notion of play in its relation to life allows a Simmelian interpretation of Derrida which permits an understanding of the current cultural situation from within Simmel's text of "The Conflict of Modern Culture."

In his sociological writings Simmel specified and restricted his master-binary "life/form" as a cultural-binary "natural-form"/"play-form." "Life" here is defined as the dynamic of human experience as a whole, which is impelled by passion, interest, and desire. Out of the dynamic life-experience forms are created which regulate through an intelligible pattern how desires and interests are to be pursued, and passions are to be expressed. The initial forms created in/by life are means to aims that are ulterior to themselves, at first sensuous and practical, later more idealized or ideal. Cognition, for example, begins as a servomechanism

for practical tasks and may later become science, that is autonomous from any practical-sensuous end, but which has the ulterior objective of true cognitions according to a standard of truth or episteme. Science "autonomizes" the contents of practical cognition, making true cognition an end-in-itself. For Simmel, practical cognition is clearly a "natural-form" developed by/in life to satisfy vital impulse. Science, however, transcends practicality by elaborating autonomous standards for ordering cognitive contents. It is, adding a term to the lexicon of Simmel's text, a "spiritual form," which does not escape nature but reorganizes what the natural-forms have given.[27] Both natural- and spiritual-forms have their aims exterior to themselves. Adding another term, they can be ranged under a category called "transitive-form." But, according to Simmel, the destiny of form is not exhausted in transitivity. Form can order contents so that they are made fully immanent to itself, creating a play-form with no object but its own perpetuation and the pleasure which that perpetuation gives. In the play-form life submits to form for its own delight, a sweet triumph of form, the polar opposite of the tragic effort of life to absorb form into itself.

Simmel defines the play-form along the axis transitivity-immanence. All the play-forms are "lifted out of the flux of life and freed of their material with its inherent gravity": "On their own decision, they choose or create the objects in which they prove or embody themselves in their purity."[28] In play-forms the flux of life (transitivity) persists, but it is gathered into the display of the form for its own sake, giving "play both its gaiety and the symbolic significance by which it is distinguished from mere joke."[29] The immanence of life to play-form is illustrated by one of Simmel's examples, the hunt. The natural-form of the hunt is a means to procuring food, whereas the play-form of hunting, the sport of hunting, is undertaken for the pleasures and attending to the enactment of that form for its own sake. Life submits gladly to one of its own creations without endowing that creation with any transcendence to itself. Indeed, life is pleased to acknowledge its authorship of the play-form. It would ruin the play if life referred the play-form to something transcendent, as it does when it refers the "central ideas" of metaphysical discourse to the presence of Being. In terms of Simmel's discussion of play, Derridian deconstruction may be interpreted as the play-form of metaphysics. For a Derridian Simmel, metaphysics is a spiritual-form which seeks to articulate a "central idea" which joins the orders of "is" and "ought." Although Simmel does not identify a natural-form that metaphysics spiritualizes, Derrida provides, through his critique of metaphysics, the hypothesis that the natural-form of metaphysics is the practice of controlling discourse with master-names. In the natural-form of discursive control any word that succeeds in achieving the closure of discourse from the outside will do. Metaphysics takes up the contents of discursive control, for example, religious conceptions, and submits them to rational analysis and synthesis, guided by the objective of

enunciating presence with its proper word, the master-name. Through its denial of presence, Derridian deconstruction deprives metaphysics of its transitivity, of its ulterior object, transforming its discourse into a play of philosophemes and epistemes within written texts, the Simmelian play-form of metaphysics, which Simmel himself never glimpsed. For Simmel metaphysics remained tragic—the rebellion of creative life against its creations. For Derrida, there is metaphysical play and/or play with metaphysics. For Simmel life seeks to make form immanent to itself, and the tragic structure of its effort is "Life." For a Simmelianized Derrida, life makes itself immanent to form and the emblem of that playful procedure is "*différance*."

Derridian deconstruction provides the paradigm for describing the postmodern moment of cultural history in terms of Simmelian cultural history. The philosophical phase of postmodern spiritual culture is deconstructionist play in which the texts of metaphysics are liberated from the burden of enunciating presence so that their philosophemes and epistemes can play in a strategic and adventurous game ruled by "a strategy without finality." The effort to make life immanent to form is the *motive* for deconstruction. One does not transcend the metaphysical texts, but plays within them, writing, as Derrida[30] notes, in their margins and between their lines: life is expressed by playing within a given form. And the result is not a new exemplar of the old form: deconstruction does not produce metaphysics, but appropriates it as culture using "blind tactics." The next moment of the metaphysical tradition is not in this sense, but in a liberation of it from its serious aim, from its pretension to control discourse from the outside; similar to the sport of hunting which frees the tactics of the hunt from the control of a desire to procure food. By displacing the master-names with "*différance*" Derrida articulates a far-reaching cultural program. If the spiritual-form of metaphysics is stalemated by its play-form of deconstruction, and if the play-form is taken up to the exclusion of the spiritual-form, then the natural-forms of making discourses submit to closure are deprived of any logocentric authority. That is why deconstruction is not a move back to classicism, but a non-classical privileging of culture, a romantic privileging of culture in Simmel's sense of romantic; a privileging of flux over fixity, of the unbounded over the restricted, and of the Dionysian over the Apollonian. Life plays in its creations and all natural-forms of closing discourse now become simple bids to install hegemonic discourses: Derridian play de-authorizes metaphysics and, along with it, all discourses and, even more widely, as he acknowledges, the spiritual culture of "the West."

When life plays in de-authorized forms it surrenders its high-modernist pretensions to express itself, but it gains, in turn, relief and release from any obligations to make form serve an external controlling objective. "Deauthorize in order to play" is the formula of the postmodern moment of cultural history. Postmodernism raises the question of whether life can reject authority in favor of play. From one viewpoint, that is not a genuine

question. As long as life must struggle to survive it must deploy forms to reach ulterior objectives. But perhaps there is a more genuine question about the possibility for spiritual-forms to be made play-forms, creating a culture in which play with culture is ground and goal, and in which natural-forms are but practices on the way to or thwarting play. This is, perhaps, what the postmodern moment of cultural history seeks to achieve. If so, then another question follows about the fate of a culture which pits natural-form against play-form without the mediation of spiritual-forms. Is what George Santayana called "the authority of things" strong enough to bind life to practicality without what he called the "sensitive cuticle" of belief? Can life tolerate cultural freedom, that is the freedom of spiritual culture from the constraints of life's practicalities?

Freedom of spiritual culture is the watchword for the postmodern moment of Simmelian cultural history. The root of that freedom is in the exteriorization and concretization of spiritual-form into a sensuous-form which is thereby made available for play within it. Derrida's transformation of the originary and irreducibly simple presence of metaphysical discourse into the synthesis of marks of the texts of metaphysics, in which he playfully writes, is just such an exteriorization and concretization. For the metaphysical tradition the text is an expression of the words of presence, of presence itself; but for the deconstructionist it is the play of *différance*. That is, the metaphysician creates new texts, trying to chain writing to an ulterior Being; but the deconstructionist frees writing by operating on given texts or merely by reading them without attempting to force any unity on them. The text that the deconstructionist reads is a sensuous object, pervaded with form. And the deconstructionist participates in that form by making it a play-form, by simulating its moves in "calculations without end." Play presupposes the externalization and concretization of spiritual-form so that there will be something to play *with*. Otherwise spiritual culture demands preoccupation - the object is not all there; one must strain beyond it to grasp its import or significance.

Throughout contemporary spiritual culture there is a movement towards the exteriorization and concretization of spirit into sensuous play-forms. In the domain of appreciative culture, including the misleading binary art-entertainment, this movement is most obvious and well known. Perhaps the most significant change in spiritual culture since Simmel wrote "The Conflict" has been the emergence of television as the dominant site of aesthetic experience. Considered as a phenomenon, as comprehensively as possible, television is the play-form of living. It is not a question here of the contents of particular programs or of the specific effects of the medium on the sensibility, but of television as a world of sensuous-forms which is perpetually ready to come into being at the turn of a switch. As a whole, television takes all of the materials of vital activity and re-presents them to the viewer in a context or situation that has been voided of any necessity of reference to an ulterior object, opening up a field for a play of images in which nothing

is essential. Just as Derrida erases or strikes over, the viewer can change channels or turn off the set. Just as Derrida writes in the margins and between the lines, the viewer can praise, comment, criticize, and emote at whim.[31] The viewer, indeed, participates with different degrees of emotional intensity in the play of images and meanings, which are always displacing and cancelling each other. Even seriousness is but a serious tone, taken up into the governing context of the "blind tactics" of a heterogeneous series of games bumping up against each other.

Culture here is free in the sense that even if programs, ads, and announcements take themselves seriously as specific meanings, they lose their seriousness when they are juxtaposed to each other. That is, life is deconstructed by television when television is taken as a total text, as the text, and when its "imagemes" are considered not in isolation but as bits of the incoherent totality. Life is all there, with some editing to be sure, but deprived of any seriousness, of any need to act on it. Television asks only to be watched or, even less, just to be on, or even only to be there, ready to give the play of images. It is available for the life of the viewer to become immanent to its play-form in any manner; for example, as hypnotic subject, compensating neurotic, critic, or couch potato.

From the modern and modernist viewpoints, which privilege activity, television appears to encourage passivity; but for a postmodern sensibility it is playful rather than expressive. The expressionist art that Simmel analyzed was an effort by the creator to subdue form, to make form immanent to life, which meant that in some way the object of expressionist art had to defy interpretation by its appreciators. Postmodern art, exemplified by the total text of television, and epitomized by MTV, works in the opposite direction, making life immanent to form, by presenting pre-interpreted sensuous-forms in which the viewer participates vicariously. Vicarious participation is the characteristic disposition of the postmodern spirit, present in Derridian distance from metaphysics and pervasive in the distance of the viewer from all of the details of imagined and actual life given by television. The images play across the screen, just as the philosophemes and epistemes play through the text; and the viewer plays with them, just as Derrida deconstructs the text. Television is present as a perpetual context, but what runs across it is "the spacing of differences." To "read" the text of television is to surrender to its juxtapositions and displacements, never allowing any image to be a master-image, providing a meaning for that text from the outside. "Watching television," rather than "seeing a program," is a paradigmatic example of postmodern play. Regardless of what is on, spirit wants to play in "calculations without end," an adventure, however, without risk, and without any demand to make or possibility of a practical effect. One need not even feel in a particular way or even feel at all. Derrida, one might say, is the philosopher of television. Deconstructed texts are simulacra of television.

The play-form, through which spirit participates in a form without ulterior result, is epitomized by television. The same movement towards play in and with sensuous-forms is present throughout contemporary leisure and consumer culture . More than any other site of contemporary culture the shopping mall exemplifies play-in-public/public play. Similar to television, the mall is a context in which the contents of practical life appear as sensuous objects in a manner which makes them available for play: they are on sale as what Heidegger called a "standing reserve." Here again, although life is more edited in the mall than it is on television, a wide array of contents are juxtaposed to one another without any coherence except the abstract one of having been selected to attract buyers. In an environment relieved of adversity the shopper, who is a potential buyer from management's and the retailer's viewpoint, is free to reject that definition and become a *flaneur*, an empirical wanderer through a theme park displaying the commercial version of the totality of life. Shopping *for* something is like seeing a program, but "going shopping,""going to the mall," is like watching television–a form of play within a field of signifiers, in this case signifiers of utility and enjoyment. One can drift from shop to shop, examining products, imagining what one might do with them, and, all the while, even if one refrained from making a purchase, allowing free play in and with the standing reserve. Simply drifting through the standing reserve is sufficient, with no ulterior reference or purpose. Life becomes immanent to the sensuous forms in which it participates, but playfully, at a distance, deconstructing the sale situation in calculations without end, but also without risk.

On the side of art the movement towards play-form has already been well documented in postmodernist criticism. Current literary movements and genres such as magic realism, meta-fiction, and the narrative essay are open for(u)ms in which the categories of standardized-modern judgment are fused with one another, juxtaposed, and transgressed. Any genres and themes can be brought together within works of the new literature, which are pre-deconstructed so as to appear already as fields for the free play of signifiers. Such pre-deconstruction is exemplified by the magic realist's insertion of fantasia within the standard version of the perceptual world, the meta-fictionist's intrusion of the activity on the construction, and the narrative essayist's shuttling between the discourses of fact and fiction. In each of these cases both the writing and the reading are playful, creating a complete immanence of life to play-form. Whereas the providers of the leisure culture's play-forms (television and the mall) are not playful themselves, the creators of the new literature are at play when they create, deconstructing literature as they supplement it. Both writer and reader wander; there is much more adventure and risk here, though, of course, the new literature is subject to the constraints of the publishing industry.

Derridian play and play-forms are present at many of the sites of contemporary culture. They operate to deprive spiritual and now ma-

terial culture of any ulterior objectives, disclosing culture as mere culture, as simply sensuous-form which can be removed from practical or expressive import and reappropriated as the spacing of differences among those sensuous forms (the discourses of metaphysics, the programs on TV, the groups of products in the mall, and the transgressed genres in literature). At the current moment of contemporary culture it is especially difficult to elude recognition that culture is sensuous-form and not the expression of spiritual entities or forces such as "values," "norms," "intentions," "the spirit," or "the subject." Even if those terms are not meaningless, postmodernism shows that they need not control, that it is possible to play within sensuous-forms as well as to use, exploit, or control them, that the freedom of culture is available for life as one of its possibilities, at which point "life" becomes a player in discourses and an operator in texts such as this one, losing some of its foundational confidence. Postmodernism stalemates modernism by affirming play as the destiny of form.

But surely life must do other than play. The background of postmodernist spiritual culture is a technological culture which is at the opposite pole from play. A nuclear power plant or an operating room are not venues for a *flaneur*. They are specialized and serious, hallmarks of the adversity which life seems necessarily to encounter. By making spiritual culture a form of play, postmodernism renounces the sublimation of technological culture into systems of ulterior meaning such as religion, metaphysics, and humanized art.[32] The practical seriousness of technology now confronts a playful spiritual culture without the mediation of unplayful (serious? practical?) spiritual-forms. A new conflict emerges within culture-as-culture between technology and play. Can life tolerate cultural freedom and dispense with religious, metaphysical, and aesthetic controls and mediations? Can technology be disciplined without spiritual mediations or can a spirit of play dis-tense technology?

Envoi: De-Deconstruction[33]

Simmel concluded "The Conflict" wondering whether cultural history, the empirical wandering engendered by the interplay of life and form, had not drawn to a close with the hegemony of the central-idea/master-name "Life." But uncapitalized or decapitalized life proved in the following decades to lack the tenacity to hold on to itself, to assimilate the forms it had created into itself. Rather than fitfully trying to possess culture, life let it go and fell into the habit of being possessed by the artifacts of sensuous form. Simmel saw life in its youthful, upward swing of self-assurance, but now, at the fin-du-siecle, we observe its senescence. There is a new "central idea," Culture, which is implied in Simmel's deconstructed cultural history and displaces the "master name" "Life" with itself. Deconstructed cultural history is the historization that dwells

within postmodernity, not imposed on it from the outside, but generated inside it. It is not the deconstruction of deconstruction, but de-deconstruction, the seepage of history into postmodernity, of the history in/of/by/for the *Kulturwelt*, not the *Lebenswelt*.

Lebenswelt history is a drama, such as Simmel portrayed as the tragedy of Life struggling through its inward tension between life and form to achieve an ever-elusive peace. Deconstructing Simmel's drama yields a cultural history lacking any extra-textual unities, but maintaining extra-textual references, the references of uncapitalized "life." Life (life) goes on as different from and penetrated by form, but it has no story to tell: it is de-dramatized. Nor does form have a story to tell. *Kulturwelt* history is simply the interplay of life, full of dispersed references, and form, which takes the open form or nonform, of Derridian wandering, Deleuzian rhizomatic thinking, and Lyotardian drifting. When culture itself becomes its own self-assertion or, alternatively, the self-assertion/denial of a life without self-confidence, there can be no drama of culture, nothing controlling/inspiring culture from the outside to be anything other than it simply is. That is how it becomes free for(e)play. There is no longer any motive that it serves. Rather, it absorbs all motives and makes them serve its essence of fragmentary signification. Of course, the only way that it can do this is through the mediation of a weakened life which allows culture to mean nothing but its own dispersed meanings. Culture is liberated for play because life is too weak to do anything but play. Decapitalized life does not have the strength to assert itself as "Life" and is not sufficiently integral to make any other master-name stick. The frenzied search after fundamentalisms counterpoints postmodern spiritual culture, but is finally merged into it because no fundamentalism can displace or repress the myriad others. Life (life) is too solipsistic to pay allegiance to anything but a narcistic fundamentalism. It (it) mainly exists without allegiance to anything, not even to its own gratification. Postmodern play is not selfish, but at most therapeutic.

Can technology be disciplined without spiritual mediations or can a spirit of play dis-tense technology? There is no discipline in postmodernity, only disciplines, which are ever vulnerable to deconstruction. Play does dis-tense technology. If life is too weak to do anything but play, if it exists merely to submit to being endlessly formed and reformed, then Culture will be liberated for play. Let life be liberated foreplay. Of course "Humanity" (life) may die in the process. But the neutered master-name of motiveless control (play)—Culture—is King in the postmodern moment of "Cultural" history.

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Notes

1. See Georg Simmel, "The Transcendent of Life," *On Individuality and Social Forms,* ed. and trans. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971 (1918)), 353-74.
2. Georg Simmel, "The Conflict in Modern Culture," *On Individuality and Social Forms*, ed. Donald N. Levine, trans. K. Peter Etzkorn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971 (1918)), 375-93.
3. Ibid., 375.
4. Ibid., 375-6.
5. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970).
6. Simmel, "The Conflict," 376.
7. Ibid., 378.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 388.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 382.
16. Ibid., 393.
17. Jacques Derrida, "Différance," *Speech and Phenomena And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans., David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973 (1968)), 129-161.
18. Ibid., 143.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 135
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 159.
24. Ibid.
25. Jacques Derrida, "Implications: Interview with Henri Ronse," *Positions,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981 (1967)), 14.

26. Derrida, "Differance," p. 135.

27. The term "spiritual-form" is coined here to make a place in Simmel's theory of forms for what he calls "spiritual culture" in "The Conflict." "Spiritual culture," for Simmel, embraces all of those activities and artifacts that are not bound directly to practical-sensuous ends, but which are regulated by ideal ends such as truth (science), perceptual significance (art), and right conduct (ethics). He uses spirit not to refer to the religious life but to the autonomous operations and standards of mind, in accordance with the discourse of philosophical idealism.

28. Georg Simmel, "Sociability," *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans., Kurt H. Wolff (New York: The Free Press, 1950 (1908)), 42.

29. Ibid.

30. Derrida, "Implications," 4.

31. For indications of the use of television as a form of play, see James Lull, "The Social Uses of Television," *Human Communication Research* 6 (1980), 198-209.

32. For the notions of "humanized" and "dehumanized" art see Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art* (New York: Anchor Books, 1956).

33. We are indebted to Arthur Kroker for the word "de-deconstruction" to characterize the textual strategy of this writing.

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HABERMAS CONFRONTS THE DECONSTRUCTIONIST CHALLENGE: ON *THE PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE OF MODERNITY*

Ian Angus

Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Translated by Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987, pp. 430.

Among critical circles in North American universities during the 1970's, the work of the Frankfurt School was an essential point of reference. But in the last decade, this centrality has been displaced by the texts that are lumped together under the term "postmodernism." The shift from the "immanent critique" of the Frankfurt School to the "discourses" of postmodernism is a fundamental change in the content and style of "critical theory." A genuinely radical critical theory must continually renew the questions "What is critical?" and "Of what are we critical?"

In this context, it is both a rare and an important event when Jurgen Habermas, the most prominent contemporary representative of the Frankfurt School, publishes a book critical of the main postmodernist thinkers. As Habermas clearly documents, the work of Nietzsche is the entry into postmodernity. Consequently, he must reject the formulations of the earlier generation of Frankfurt critics, especially Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, where the influence of Nietzsche is decisive. Whereas they moved from immanent critique of the contradictions of capitalism to a totalizing critique of Western civilization,

Habermas is concerned to recover the lost possibility of modernity—a philosophy of communicative praxis that incorporates specific scientific (i.e. validity-oriented) critiques into discursive (i.e. intersubjectively-oriented) reflexion and thereby extends the possibilities of reducing domination in practical contexts.

In a key passage in the introduction to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno expressed the transition that their work had undergone. "Even though we had known for many years that the great discoveries of applied science are paid for with an increasing diminution of theoretical awareness, we still thought that in regard to scientific activity our contribution could be restricted to the criticism or extension of specialist axioms."[1] Previously, in being limited to criticizing or extending specialized knowledges with regard to their impact on the whole socio-historical lifeworld, Critical Theory assumed the framework of this lifeworld as given. While specialized knowledges might function either to mystify or to enlighten, the integrity of the wider categories within which the alternative of "ideology or enlightenment" could be formulated was not in question. Thus, in the fashion of Marx, one could speak of the internal "contradictions of capitalism" (or "modernity") and of "progress," however delayed or muted, in anticipating their overcoming.

This turning in Critical Theory was motivated by the "insight" that, not only was the expected progress not forthcoming, but that new forms of domination were issuing from exactly those productive forces that were expected to provide its motor. In particular, they had in mind automation and other advances in industrial production, the psychology of management and public relations, and the mass deception practiced by the new media of communication. One might reply, of course, that it is no surprise that these progressive forces are "distorted" under capitalist relations of production. But the point is that to speak of distortion is to assume that the forces of production are themselves progressive, or perhaps "neutral," and that their use for destructive ends is an extrinsic factor. However, in the death camps, for example, traditional anti-Semitism takes on a new genocidal potential precisely because of improvements in means of transportation and organization. Thus, the object of critical thought was broadened from contemporary contradictions to the process of Western civilization as a whole, with a special interest in the contemporary conditions that exacerbate generic forms of domination. Subjective reason, which enables the domination of nature, asserts itself through subjugating an alien "Other." Internal nature is subdued through psychic repression and external nature through science and technology. The present epoch is characterized by "revolts of nature"[2] which intensify the tensions inherent in the civilizing process and force critical thought to turn from contradictions within the given lifeworld to the critique of civilization, from Marx to Nietzsche.

In his early work, Habermas was concerned to criticize and extend the concept of the public sphere from early bourgeois society by distinguishing instrumental action from communicative interaction. Thus, there emerged a layered intellectual project involving epistemological self-reflection on the interests incorporated into the research programs of the human sciences, a theory of discursive practice, and incorporation of specific scientific researches into public reflection aimed at enlightenment. In order to pursue this project Habermas must defend a limited concept of critique that remains tied to modernity even while developing its unrealized possibility—a philosophy of intersubjective reason.

Habermas discerns a "performative contradiction" in totalizing critique in which critique "loses its orientation" (p. 127). Subjective reason advances through the critique of myth, and ends by asserting a pure instrumentality which itself becomes mythical by repressing any concept of a meaningful relation to an Other aside from domination. Thus, the critique of civilization indicts reason as the perpetrator of domination, but does so with the tools of reason. The rational critique of myth, because of its consequences, is turned against reason itself. But this totalizing critique, at least in Horkheimer and Adorno, is still meant to contribute to enlightenment. This it cannot do, Habermas claims, because it "tears down the barrier between validity and power" (p. 119). By criticizing reason as culpable in social domination the critique of civilization removes the Archimedean point outside domination from which a denunciation can proceed. While ideology critique relies on immanent critique of the unrealized potential of bourgeois culture, totalizing critique would have to generate its own normative justification—which, according to Habermas, it cannot do.

This performative contradiction leads to two consequences which are central for Habermas's evaluation of postmodern writers: Totalizing critique undervalues the central aspect of demythologization as "differentiation of basic concepts" (p. 114). As against the totalizing power of myth to integrate all phenomena into a pattern of consistent concepts, modernity involves an internal differentiation of the spheres of science, art, religion, politics, and so forth. Also, in a correlative manner, totalizing critique elevates one of these spheres to exemplary status—the aesthetic avant-garde with its focus on the world-disclosing aspect of language—to the neglect of learning processes in the lifeworld, even though the notion of a "purely aesthetic experience" is formed through the process of differentiation (p. 307, 339).

Hegel attempted to "sublate" [aufheben] the differentiation of modern society in a concrete totality by fusing the actuality of contemporary history with the essential relations of concepts. The subsequent division between right and left Hegelians centred on the failure of this synthesis such that "the Young Hegelians deliver themselves over to historical thinking in an unphilosophical way" (p. 54), whereas the right Hegelians

(beginning with the old Hegel) progressively retreat from history into purely conceptual relations. Thus, Habermas judges that we are still contemporaries of the Young Hegelians because our task is still to integrate real history with conceptual totalization. He attempts to solve the problems of the philosophy of the subject by recuperating and developing systematically an intersubjective conception of reason.

> But the growth in reflexivity, in universalism, and in individuation undergone by the structural core of the lifeworld in the course of its differentiation now no longer fits the description of an intensification within the dimensions of the subject's relation-to-self. And only under this description—that is, from the perspective of the philosophy of the subject—could societal rationalization, the unfolding of the rational potential of social practice, be represented as the self-reflection of a societal macrosubject. The theory of communication can do without this figure of thought (p. 345).

It is from this perspective, developed in more detail in other works, that Habermas unloads his polemic against the postmodernists. He documents their performative contradictions, de-differentiation of social spheres and experiences, and elevation of world-disclosing language in order to argue that critical thought goes astray when it is totalized. Since critique cannot generate normative and rational criteria from itself alone, it must proceed immanently, against the background of a lifeworld that it must conceptualize but cannot master critically.

Stemming from Nietzsche, Habermas discerns two branches of postmodern philosophy. One, based on the Nietschean critique of metaphysics, comes through Heidegger to Derrida. The second, beginning from Nietzsche's genealogy of power and desire, comes through Bataille to Foucault. It is clear that Habermas has a lot more sympathy with the latter. While he considers its critique of modernity one-sided—failing to consider the real gains in enlightenment alongside its disciplinary aspects—it has nevertheless produced important empirical analyses of modern power. The problem is solely with its self-understanding. In a penetrating account of the development of Foucault's work, he argues that the later theory of power enfolds a duality concealed by its genesis: on the one hand, it is an empirical analysis of power formations, on the other, it is a concealed theory of constitution, a trancendental analysis of the conditions under which empirical power formations originate, develop, and decay. Only because of this concealed duality do Foucault's historical analyses take on their emblematic character as critiques of modernity—because these conditions are not specific to psychiatry, criminology or sexuality but constitutive of the epoch of modernity itself.

Later, Habermas returns to the "doubles" that Foucault diagnosed in *The Archeology of Knowledge* as produced by the human sciences in the contradictory attempt at self-knowledge characteristic of modernity:

transcendental/empirical, conscious/unconscious, and creative actor/alienated from origin. He argues that these unresolvable doubles between which theory oscillates are produced by the exhaustion of the philosophy of the subject and disappear when communicative praxis is taken as the starting point.[3] Whereas empirical and transcendental cannot be cannot be "mediated," a participant can subsequently reflect on his action from the perspective of the other. Similarly, the conscious/unconscious opposition (which leads to the concept of the heroic modern subject rendering the opacity of the in-itself into a fully conscious for-itself) can be reformulated as the relationship between the horizon of an intuitively given, unproblematic background of the lifeworld and the reproduction of the lifeworld through communicative interaction. Critical reflection on objectivistic illusions, or reifications, is directed toward the reproduction of the lifeworld through communicative practice. Thus, in a certain sense the intersubjective community is *responsible* for these illusions, even though they have not (necessarily) been deliberately engendered. Such reflection is directed toward single illusions; it "cannot make transparent the *totality* of a course of life in the process of individuation or of a collective way of life" (p. 300). Thus, it can neither recapture a pure origin nor be absolutely alienated from it.

The other branch of postmodernism fares less well. Nothing positive is said about either Heidegger or Derrida. In discussing the "turning" in Heidegger's work after *Being and Time*, Habermas argues that he recreates the problems of the philosophy of the subject rather than overcoming them. While in a first step Heidegger overturns the priority of propositional truth, nevertheless, in a second, he views world-disclosure as an *event* prior to the intersubjective understanding of meaning. Habermas asserts the contrary: "[T]he horizon of the understanding of meaning is not prior to, but subordinate to, the question of truth" (p. 154). Thus, Heidegger returns to a "temporalized philosophy of origins" in which the disclosive event reigns over all subsequent occurrences, and is thereby raised above any critical investigation.[4] Derrida accepts Heidegger's critique of metaphysics but rejects the mythology of origins and turns to writing as the world-disclosing event without either subject or origin. He "renews the mystical concept of tradition as an ever delayed event of revelation" (p. 183). While Habermas acknowledges the affinity of this thought, which "returns to the historical locale where mysticism turns into enlightenment" (p. 184), to that of Scholem, Adorno and Benjamin, he denies it any enlightening role. Adorno acknowledged the paradoxes of totalizing critique and devised a strategy of indirect communication from the performative contradiction it entailed. His negative dialectics drew from the aesthetic avant-garde for an access to the object that was undistorted by subjective reason. In this respect, Derrida and Adorno are on the same ground—they are concerned to decipher the normal case from the point of view of the extremes. However, whereas Adorno utilized the performative contradiction in order to liberate the utopian

thematic within philosophy, Derrida wants to clear away the metaphysical differentiation into genres.

Habermas identifies three propositions on which Derrida's rhetorical criticism is built. 1) Literary criticism is not "scientific," but as rhetorical as "literature." 2) Philosophical texts are accessible in their fundamental content by literary criticism. 3) Rhetorical criticism applies to the whole context of texts, in which genre distinctions are dissolved. It also follows, from the concept of "general literature" implied here, that literary texts are accessible to the critique of metaphysics. In short, Derrida's deconstructionist standpoint is based upon a reversal of the subordination of rhetoric to philosophy that elaborates a new rhetoric in which both the critique of metaphysics (that defines "philosophy") and world-disclosing language (that defines "literature") merge into a concept of writing that implies delay of meaning, absence of closure, and proliferation of discursive interventions.

There are two main points in Habermas's rejoinder to Derrida. Taken together, they attempt to sustain the subordination of the world-horizon to the problem of truth. First, he argues that "normal" and "limit" uses of language (we could also say "literal" and "metaphorical" language, or "serious" and "playful" use) cannot be levelled and treated in the same manner as the deconstructionists suggest. They argue, or often simply assume, that because any statement can be quoted (recontextualized), and since meaning changes with context (and there is an inexhaustible plurality of contexts), that any text is open to an uncontrollable multiplicity of interpretations. Thus, it seems that any normal usage depends simply upon a temporary stabilization of limit usages and that one can not begin from an "in principle" separation between normality and abnormality. Habermas responds that normal usage occurs relative to the "shared background knowledge that is constitutive of the lifeworld of a linguistic community" (p. 197). Thus, when background knowledge does become problematic, the social actors engage in discussion which appeals to "idealizing suppositions" oriented to repairing intersubjective agreement. Consequently, the plurality of interpretations of a text is not simply open; it is constrained by this orientation toward ideal consensus. From this ideal consensus, a distinction between normal and limit cases can be sustained and the proliferation of meaning is held within determinable bounds. Habermas states it this way,

> It is not habitual linguistic practice that determines just what meaning is attributed to a text or an utterance. Rather, language games only work because they presuppose idealizations that transcend any particular language game; as a necessary condition of possibly reaching understanding, these idealizations give rise to the perspective of an agreement that is open to criticism on the basis of validity claims (p. 199).

Thus, communicative action contains a universal moment thoughout a plurality of contexts.

Communicative action draws upon the resources of the lifeworld to reproduce the components of culture, society and person. Insofar as these processes of reproduction are less and less guaranteed by tradition, they tend toward legitimation through consensus between those involved in the communicative processes themselves. Habermas admits that this is an idealized projection, but argues that it is well-founded. Rationalization of the lifeworld implies both differentiation of spheres and a "thickening" of the relations between differentiated spheres and the lifeworld as a whole. The continuity of meaning is re-established throughout differentiation by critique. Abstract procedures of discursive will formation operate, not in the isolated spheres, but in their relation to the whole lifeworld. Thus, "abstract, universalistic procedures for discursive will formation even strengthen solidarity in life contexts that are no longer legitimated by tradition" (p. 347). In short, formal and abstract discursive procedures function in concrete contexts to extend uncoerced consensus among participants.[5] According to Habermas, fundamental social conflicts occur neither within specific differentiated systems nor in an undifferentiated lifeworld, but in the boundaries between the two. While differentiation, and the consequent self-referential closure of systems, rules out direct intervention in functional systems (such as economics and politics), there is an increased capacity for restricted critique of systems in their relation to the lifeworld.

Habermas's attempted renewal of modern philosophy through intersubjectively-oriented critique confers a central significance on the concept of the "lifeworld" that he adopts from phenomenology. However, this concept is used in two different ways: On one hand it is understood, consistent with its use in the phenomenological tradition, as "the implicit, the prepredicative, the not focally present background" (p. 300). On the other, in continuity with the Weberian concerns of Critical Theory, he speaks of the "differentiated" (p. 345) and "rationalized lifeworld" (p. 346).[6] But the lifeworld in the first sense, as implicit, cannot be rationalized. Indeed, the lifeworld can be "populated," to an increasing extent, by rationalized systems, but they exist "within" the unthematic background of the lifeworld. This is not a mere terminological slip.

Habermas substituted a phenomenological concept of totality for a Hegelian one because the latter is implicated in the illusory thematization of the totality of all conditioned spheres characteristic of the philosophy of the subject. But totality, when understood as the horizon of everyday involvements, can never be thematized as such and, therefore, can never itself be rationalized. It is the horizon of the plurality (not "totality") of rationalized systems. But, in this case, it is misleading to speak of restricted critique as mediating differentiated systems and lifeworld since only two thematized elements can be "mediated." Either critique simply dissolves a systemic blindspot into its background or it is directed toward the totality as horizon. In the first case, it is a particular intervention that

illustrates the failure of a given attempt at systemic closure but cannot thematize the significance of this for the form of life as a whole. In the second case, critique is directed toward the horizonal totality but needs precisely the tools of totalizing critique that Habermas has ruled out of order. By slipping back into a Hegelian conception of totality as the aggregate of relations of thematized systems in this way Habermas obscures the fundamental redirection of Critical Theory that a phenomenological conception of totality requires.

This confusion of two senses of the lifeworld undermines the notion of universality in Habermas's first point in response to Derrida. He argued that a distinction between normal and limit cases can be sustained because language games "presuppose idealizations that transcend any particular language game" (quoted above). But what is the character of this transcendence? Either it is within a meta-language game, of which the paramount case is Hegel's unification of differentiated spheres, or it is related to the plurality of systems belonging together within a common horizon. In the latter case, the horizon itself cannot provide a universality that would function as regulative within a specific language game. Indeed, we must understand the thematizations that give rise to rationalized systems as implicating the lifeworld as a whole, but must determine the manner of this implication more precisely. The plurality of systems exist "within" an unthematized totality. This horizon defines the plurality of systems as belonging together "in principle," that is to say, as not external to one another. But the actual relations between systems—and it is these relations that characterize the lifeworld as a whole—are a product of social practice. That is to say, the "in principle" relations of systems are indefinitely plural; their actual relations are established by social practices specific to the given state of a socio-historical lifeworld. However, the relation between the plurality of systems—which is established by the social practices of "translation" between systems—is not well characterized as a "transcendence," but is rather an *emergent universality* produced by the interaction between particular language games. Thus, Habermas's restricted criticism cannot appeal to criteria of truth that transcend a discourse; the concept of truth emerges from translation and, contrary to Habermas, occurs within the world-horizon.

The second point in Habermas's rejoinder to Derrida pertains to the specific characteristics of literary discourse. While narratives in everyday life and in literary works have a similar structure, the literary work confers an "exemplary elaboration that takes the case out of its context and makes it the occasion for an innovative, world-disclosive, and eye-opening representation in which the rhetorical means of representation depart from communicative routines and take on a life of their own" (p. 203). More generally, in specialized languages the rhetorical elements of language are enlisted for the purposes of problem-solving (p. 209). Thus, Derrida obscures the characteristics of everyday, intramundane linguistic practice and confuses it with artistic world-disclosive language by ig-

noring the process of the differentiation of art from everyday practice that has allowed the autonomization of the world-disclosing function. Habermas concludes that, correlative to the increasing autonomy of art, literary criticism has taken on the task of mediating between art and the everyday world. Similarly, philosophy directs itself to the foundation of the various autonomous spheres—such as science, morality and law—and connects them to the totality of the lifeworld. Both literary criticism and philosophy utilize rhetorical language, but they begin from differentiated spheres and therefore subordinate rhetoric to "a distinct form of argumentation" (p. 210).

As has been pointed out above, the lifeworld consists of a plurality of language games, or "discourses" (some of which are sufficiently differentiated to be called "systems"), belonging together within a common horizon and in a continuous process of translation such that the universal moment does not hover above them but emerges from their interaction. Consequently, the disctinction between normal and limit usage can be made, but it is relative to a given discourse, not to the totality of the lifeworld as Habermas suggests. Differentiation of rationalized systems implies that intervention in these systems must struggle with normal usage and rules established within the system. In this sense, Habermas is correct to say that such intervention cannot be "direct" (p. 365). But the situation is different with respect to genres of criticism which attempt to "mediate" systems and lifeworld. Since the lifeworld is only accessible through the plurality of discourses, this so-called mediation is actually a process of translation that constitutes the specific character of a given lifeworld. As such, these "genres," especially rhetoric and philosophy, are not really genres at all, but strategies occurring at the point of translation that aim to rescue world-disclosure from its forgetting within the sedimented practices of established discourses—though there are important differences between strategies.

At this point we can differentiate Adorno's style from Derrida's. Adorno utilizes genre distinctions in order to operate within philosophy (and also within literary criticism, music criticism and sociology) even though the motive for negative dialectics seems to come from avant-garde art alone. The motive is comparable in Derrida but is utilized to undercut genre distinctions and reveal them as rhetorical ploys. To begin from distinctions in order to lead out of them toward the lifeworld is different from intervention in the plurality of discourses constituting the lifeworld designed to undercut the validity-claims of a given discourse. Habermas does not formulate this difference precisely and his lecture format allows him to avoid a systematic comparison of Adorno and Derrida. Adorno's procedure resembles ideology critique even though it can no longer rely on the lifeworld context that would tie specific critiques to general enlightenment. Derrida's interventions, however, tie the conditions for a specific discourse to the world-horizon within which they emerge. While Adorno can only destroy totalizing claims while re-

jecting any theorization of the whole as a Hegelian totalitarianism, Derrida's deconstruction of specific totalizations points toward the world-horizon by engaging in all the translations (especially the "impossible" ones) that disclose the formation of the historical epoch.

In his last lecture, Habermas summarizes his three main objections to the postmodernist writers. One, they cannot account for their own position, and are "discourses without a place" (p. 337). Two, they are guided by normative intuitions which reject subjectivity undialectically. Three, there is no systematic place envisaged for everyday practice. As we have suggested above, Habermas is right to maintain a universal component—and thus a normal/limit distinction—in the face of the plurality of contexts championed by postmodernists, but he locates it wrongly, in classical fashion, as a meta-discourse rather than in the activity of translation between contexts. He oscillates between a Hegelian and a Husserlian concept of totality and thereby attempts to maintain a differentiation of genres that rejects the continuous translation between discourses constitutive of the new rhetoric of the postmodern condition. Normal discourse occurs within differentiated genres, but these are constituted in reference to their limits in the world-horizon.

Orientation to the horizon of the lifeworld does not entail a rejection of the importance of the everyday as Habermas claims, but rather a recognition that the "everydayness" of the everyday is constituted with reference to its limits. Thus, the theory and practice of totalized critique is necessary to uncover the horizon that circumscribes the socio-historical lifeworld. While the procedure of totalizing critique cannot be legitimated with reference to criteria solely within the given lifeworld itself, this does not imply, as Habermas insists, that it thereby becomes simply arbitrary. In the phenomenological tradition such reflection is legitimated by the transcendental reduction, which allows the systematic explication of the horizons within which experiential contents are given. Habermas rejects the transcendentalism of phenomenology out of hand (p. 297, 358), and here he is at one with the dominant trend of postmodernism. Nietzsche, as is clear from the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, was well aware of his own reflexive paradox—that he must utilize the concept of truth in order to criticize it, that he is still pious. Following this, and against Habermas's estimation (p. 121), Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, were committed to a reason that is still not yet rational enough. Their text "is intended to prepare the way for a positive notion of enlightenment which will release it from entanglement in blind domination."[7] Beyond the tradition, yet aware that it is the tradition that has opened this beyond, postmodern criticism operates in a paradoxical moment, but this is not necessarily a performative contradiction. (Which is perhaps why the popularized versions of postmodernism attempt to simply abandon the problematic of self-justification and grounds.) Nevertheless, Habermas gives both the

transcendental and the paradoxical reflective self-justifications short shrift and, at this point, fails to encounter his object of criticism.

Habermas discovers in both branches of postmodern totalizing critique a performative contradiction such that they cannot account for their own standpoint due to a false equation of truth and power. From this follows a one-sided characterization of modernity as only a closed metaphysics and/or disciplinary apparatus. He reminds us that modernity has also made significant inroads in recognizing individual rights, reducing scarcity, limiting arbitrary power, and so forth. Out of this more nuanced evaluation, Habermas argues that the project of modernity—which means differentiation of autonomous spheres and the translation of specialized knowledges into the lifeworld—can be rescued and extended. To put it more concretely, socialism is a radicalization of liberalism, and forgets this fact only at the price of a dangerous flirtation with unjustifiable power.[8] Thus, our task is the connection of empirical history with conceptual critique, and we are the contemporaries of the Young Hegelians.

There are indeed two forms of critique, but Habermas's argument does not justify an abandonment of totalizing critique. However, it does stand as a thorough defence of the still relevant resources of restricted critique within the normality settled by the historical epoch. We are left with the task of thinking the relation between what we may call social and epochal criticism. The orientation to communicative interaction suffices to reveal forms of domination embedded in practices within industrial society. It is based on the distinction between labour (nature-directed) and intersubjectivity (consensus-oriented) fundamental to Habermas's revision of Critical Theory, which is a reworking of the Kantian distinction between nature and history that is characteristic of modern thought. In this form, critical theory regains its capacity of determinate negation of specific social injustices by retreating from the universalization of critique toward the horizons of historical epochs. It can once again speak of "contradictions," but at the price of ceasing to speak of a "whole form of life." But, to the extent that new social movements call into question the viability of industrial society, this distinction must itself be criticized.[9] Epochal criticism seeks in embodied praxis both the origin of the separation of interactive capacities from "nature" and glimpses of other possibilities. In this sense, previously silent "nature" is brought into discourse and discourse recognizes its own materiality. This new rhetoric is characteristic of the postmodern condition, which is a turning point not only with respect to modern capitalism but also Western civilization itself. At such a turning, we cannot simply eliminate the doubles produced by the human sciences, as both Foucault and Habermas attempt. Rather, we must think through the intensification of the doubling that the two forms of critique bring forward. We are in a moment in which the turning between epochs allows the institution of epochs to become visible. For better or worse, we are contemporaries of Nietzsche, not of the Young

Hegelians: Our task is not to connect reason and history, but to comprehend the horizon within which reason and history are always already connected. This task must necessarily be a "discourse without a place." The mixing of modes can only be justified by the light it sheds on the fixing of places by the epochal horizon.

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Notes

1. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno,*Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Trans. John Cumming. New York: Herder and Herder, 1972, p. xi.

2. The differences among those of the first generation of the Frankfurt School in evaluating the progressive and regressive aspects of these revolts of nature have been documented in Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, *Woman, Nature and Psyche*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, pp. 147-77.

3. Since Habermas only discusses Husserl directly in the context of the development of Derrida's work, he does not seem aware that, in returning to Foucault's *The Archeology of Knowledge* for the elaboration of his own theory, he return to the point reached by Husserl in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Foucault's early work does not philosophically advance Husserl's problematic, but simply extends it into the domain of the human sciences.

4. Habermas argues that the turning in Heidegger's thought to the "event of appropriation" is inexplicable as an internal development from *Being and Time* and derives from the experience of adherence to, and then disappointment with, National Socialism. Without minimizing this historical experience as an influence in Heidegger's thought, the priority of "event" is already present in the earlier work and the experience of fascism as world-historical is shared also by the first generation of the Frankfurt School. The priority of the event in the experience of truth (in these general terms) is characteristic of phenomenology as such. Habermas seems, at this point, to be caught at the level of anti-Heidegger polemic of the first generation of Critical Theory.

5. Thus, Habermas sets aside the critique of formalism that characterizes both the first generation of Critical Theorists and phenomenology. This convergence on "instrumental reason" is key for the integration of these two traditions. See Ian H. Angus, *Technique and Enlightenment: Limits of Instrumental Reason*. Washington: Centre for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1984.

6. In addition, he suggests that critique of tradition, in orienting toward social reproduction through consensus, yields "the abstraction of *universal* lifeworld structures from the particular configurations of totalities of forms of life that arise only as plural" (p. 344). This may be construed as a contribution to phenomenology insofar as the dual aspect of the lifeworld as universal and as socio-historically particular was recognized by Husserl, but there was not a correlative account of the historical conditions under which the distinction between the two could be made.

7. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, op. cit., p. xvi. Horkheimer and Adorno quote Nietzsche's reflexive account of his own piety on p. 115.

8. In this connection the different trajectories of C. B. Macpherson and George Grant in recovering the humanist basis of politics are pertinent to the argument here. While Macpherson was concerned to retrieve and extend the liberal tradition, Grant broke

with socialism because of its incorporation of liberal assumptions. I have addressed this comparison in *George Grant's Platonic Rejoinder to Heidegger*. Lewiston/Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987, chapter IV. In this case, as in many others, the dual sides of sublation as "preservation" and "transcendence" have been impossible to hold in harmony.

9. It has been suggested that, due to this distinction, Habermas cannot properly address what is at issue in the environmental, feminist, and anti-nuclear movements. See, for example, Joel Whitebook, "The Problem of Nature in Habermas" in *Telos*, No. 40, Summer 1979; Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical About Critical Theory: The Case of Habermas and Gender" in *New German Critique*, Number 35, Spring/Summer 1985; Ian H. Angus and Peter G. Cook, "Nuclear Technology as Ideology" in *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. XI, No. 1-2, 1987.

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THE COMING OF THE SUBMASS AND THE DIS-INTEGRATION OF PERSONALITY

James P. Cadello

Jose Ortega y Gasset, in his most famous work *The Revolt of the Masses*, gives the classic definition of the *masses*. However, despite the profundity of Ortega's work and its usefulness for an analysis of the past and the present, an analysis of contemporary public life reveals phenomena that either escaped Ortega's view or were not present to him in Europe during the thirties. This essay argues for the latter of these alternatives, and in doing so presents a case for a new class of public phenomena particular to (at least North America during) the latter part of the twentieth century. These new developments are in some cases extreme amplifications of phenomena described by Ortega, but which in other instances clearly differ in kind from the characteristics exhibited by Ortega's modern mass. In this essay the individuals embodying this new set of what Ortega calls "collective habits"[1] shall be referred to by a new term: the *submass*.[2] The term *submass* has been chosen because this new class of social phenomena represents a decline from the modern mass, at least if the development of an *integrated personality*—touched on below—is the standard by which this judgment is made.

The modern mass described by Ortega will serve as a qualitative standard against which the submass can be compared, and as an indicator and advisor of which attributes to look for in attempting social criticism of mass phenomena.[3]

Ortega on the Modern Mass

Ortega's analysis of the modern mass stems from his aristocratic conception of social structure that extends to all historical periods: "Society is always a dynamic unity of two component factors: minorities and masses. The minorities are individuals or groups of individuals which are specially qualified. The mass is the assemblage of persons not specially qualified."[4] The select minorities feel themselves limited by, and take into account, their radically insecure circumstances, choosing to devote their efforts to upholding and to enhancing civilization. The select minorities live noble lives, make great demands of themselves, appeal to standards beyond themselves in the service of something greater. Only through the determined, dedicated, and dutiful effort of this cultural elite are the social institutions and the cultural creations that vitalize civilization maintained.

Until modern times the masses, too, felt the limits and the burdens of life; however, they made no demands on themselves, appealed to no standards beyond themselves: "[T]he mass, as a psychological fact ... is all that which sets no value on itself–good or ill–based on specific grounds, but which feels itself 'just like everybody,' and nevertheless is not concerned about it; is, in fact, quite happy to feel itself as one with everybody else."[5] The mass remained content in its self-sameness, and exerted no effort to attain perfection.

For Ortega, therefore, masses and minorities are not determined on the basis of social standing or family history, or even because the individual that exhibits certain characteristics appears in a multitude,[6] but because of psychological traits, namely, a set of attitudes or dispositions, a posture toward the world.

Nevertheless, in the twentieth century Ortega saw the mass advancing to the forefront of social life, taking over the functions, using the instruments, enjoying the pleasures previously reserved for the few: "the mass, without ceasing to be mass, is supplanting the minorities."[7] Bloated by a false sense of confidence that stemmed from a command of specialized techniques that were practiced in professional life, the *modern mass* gained a fallacious feeling of power and of mastery over circumstances. Yet the modern mass lacked both the special qualities required to grasp the significant relations existing in civilization and the control to perform the duties necessary to sustain it. Nonetheless, the self-assured modern mass demanded all that modern civilization had to offer, asserted its right to have its say on every matter of the day, and insisted that its voice be heard.

The modern mass individual was a curious creature, combining aspects of the traditional mass and minority. Possessing a feeling of mastery and demanding a right to all of the best civilization had to offer, the modern mass had available "the same 'vital repertory' which before

characterized only the superior minorities."[8] But at the same time the modern mass experienced a security, a material ease, and an eradication of social and moral barriers heretofore unknown in history.[9] Thus, the "world which surrounds the new man from his birth does not compel him to limit himself in any fashion, it sets up no veto in opposition to him; on the contrary, it incites his appetite, which in principle can increase indefinitely."[10] Therefore, members of the modern mass had the *feeling* of mastery and of power exhibited by the minorities, but lacked the minorities' *understanding* of the proper relation to their circumstances to complement this feeling. Modern mass individuals were like the traditional mass in that they lacked the *special abilities* to qualify them for disciplined service, but differed in not feeling *limitation, obligation, and dependence on something greater.*[11]

The resulting personality type was what Ortega called the "spoilt child,"[12] which was comprised of "two fundamental traits: the free expansion of vital desires, and therefore, of personality; and ... radical ingratitude towards all that has made possible the ease of ... existence."[13] Such a person was satisfied as he or she was, felt complete, acknowledged nothing superior, desired no external influence or support: in short, had become "hermetically closed."[14] The modern mass renounced the principles upon which culture rested, and without being upheld these principles vanish. Barbarism, the absence of standards to which appeals can be made, was the final result of the complete revolt of the masses.[15] Proficient in the techniques of modern life, but lacking a respect for and an understanding of the principles that sustained the world in which they lived, the modern mass individual was a self-contradictory figure, a *civilized barbarian.*

The Psychology of the Submass

Because his social theory was aristocratic, Ortega's analyses of social phenomena were aristocratic also, derived from his conception of noble or select minorities. To borrow a phrase from Emily S. Hamblen, these minorities were characterized by "reflex control,"[16] the ability to instinctively "[concentrate] the entire force of the individual at one point,"[17] combining and integrating the diverse aspects of the turbulent individual and circumstances into a coherent personality to attain the highest values. To coin a phrase, members of the modern mass were characterized by "reflex demand," automatically seeking the conditions wherein their wants could be satisfied, without consideration for the coordination of self and circumstances that were required to bring about these conditions. Thus, the modern mass refused to *defer* to the moral standards grounding culture, choosing instead to make *demands* for the satisfaction of wants present in its enhanced vital repertory.

But with the coming of the submass, a new phenomenon approaches that escapes the framework of Ortega's analysis. Ortega viewed the problem in terms of whether an individual would defer to the standards supporting civilized conditions, or demand the institution of those conditions in which wants could be satisfied, without upholding the standards that allowed for the creation of those conditions. In both cases the individual was marked by a felt *distance*: for the minorities, it was felt between themselves and the standards they served to support culture; for the modern mass, it was felt between themselves and the objects of their desires that could be realized by demanding and by attaining social equality and the rights to the goods of civilization. Members of modern mass, despite being satisfied with themselves and their opinions, and therefore "hermeticized" internally, nonetheless externally evidenced a striving for something more than themselves, as manifested in their demands.

The *submass* experiences no such distance, at least not in those instances most definitive of this type. Whereas the select minorities were characterized by reflex control, and the modern mass by reflex demand, the submass is denoted by *reflex expectation*. The conditions demanded by the modern mass are felt by the submass to have been realized; that is, the submass feels that it has secured those conditions required to realize the satisfaction of its enhanced vital repertory. Whereas the modern mass demanded specific conditions without considering the coordination of self and circumstances required to attain these conditions, the submass does not even consider the conditions, for these conditions no longer appear to them as problematic. In a context perceived as safe and plentiful, the submass no longer demands satisfactions, but expects them. Except in instances of frustration—which are almost always perceived by the submass to be temporary and readily correctable deviations from the normal state of affairs—no distance is felt by members of the submass between themselves and the objects that provide gratification.[18]

Dissolving the distinction between the external and the internal causes this dissolution of distance, a process that Michael A. Weinstein calls the "externalization of the mind."[19] With the ever-increasing domination of large-scale bureaucratic organizations and the profusion of images manufactured to modify and concentrate undifferentiated and unfocused desire, individuals of the submass are increasingly reduced to and exhausted by the functions and fictions comprising late-modern society. *Personality*—the coherent expression of a stable, unique and individual life, what Nietzsche called "a living multiplicity whose individual parts are dependent on one another, cleave to one another, are nourished by the same food, and as a whole possesses its own atmosphere and its own odour"[20]—was present in the disciplined service of the select minorities and in the somewhat fixed character of the hermeticized, self-satisfied modern mass. But members of the submass lack personality, the con-

sistency that connects a life with its circumstances and congeals to produce a sturdy integration of body, mind, and world. The submass, pulverized beneath the over-flow of images and submersed in operations, exists whimsically, expecting and immediately attaining–that is, constituted by–the readily available sensory stimuli and pleasures of a fabricated world marked by *overchoice*–the situation occurring when seemingly secure individuals are overwhelmed by and dissolved into a myriad of trivial possibilities. Despite numerous differences–some of which are briefly articulated below–between this characterization of the submass and the ideas of Jean Baudrillard, his words for the "silent majorities" describe well this aspect of the submass:

> The whole chaotic constellation of the social revolves around that spongy referent, that opaque but equally translucent reality, that nothingness.... [T]he social envelops them, like static electricity; but most of the time ... they absorb all the electricity of the social and political and neutralize it forever. They are neither good conductors of the political, nor good conductors of the social, nor good conductors of meaning in general. Everything flows through them, everything magnetises them, but diffuses throughout them without leaving a trace.... They do not radiate; on the contrary, they absorb radiation from the outlying constellations of State, History, Culture, Meaning.[21]

In the terms of this essay: *the hypertrophy of the social brings about the atrophy of the personality producing the submass.*

Ortega's aristocratic bent allowed him to see only the alternatives of being a responsible or an irresponsible social actor: one could *choose to defer* and be among the select; or one could *choose not to defer*, and instead demand, thereby being counted among the modern mass. But *for the submass deference is not an issue*: its members expect fancifully, directed only by what fascinates them in the expanses of the social sensorium, which includes sports, Reeboks, entertainment, pop music, telephone sex, gourmet ice cream, and the most fascinating sensory extension, television. Like body surfers in amusement park wave machines, members of the submass are carried along by artificial forces that at once support them and provide sensory satisfaction. As the wave pool cancels physical effort by overriding any attempt to counteract its forces, fabricated culture molds undifferentiated want by the use of technological enticements and advertising. This neutralizes the critical apparatus as reflection is no longer required to mediate relations between the individual and the world. The result is the elimination of centricity, the dissolution of the embodied self as a locus of decision making. Ortega's modern mass was characterized by an *undisciplined egoism*. It disregarded, and therefore became disconnected from, its proper relation to its circumstances. The submass reveals a *dissolved egoism*. It is fully immersed in the programs and products of its circumstances that are created specifically to divert attention and focus desire, thereby inhibit-

ing reflection and the cultivation of distance. Unable to act as responsible agents, a "revolt of the submass" is impossible.

For Ortega's modern mass the body was the seat of already-existing demands, an active consumer of socially attainable, though not immediately available, social goods. The mind, though intellectually fixed with a rigid set of opinions, used cunning to mediate between the body that desired and the world that held the possibility for the satisfaction of those desires. For the submass, the body becomes a receiver of readily accessible stimuli, a passive participant in social immediacy (or immediate sociality—the two cannot be differentiated: for the submass, the social is the immediate, and the immediate is the social). The mind, lacking the standards of the select minorities or the fixed opinions of the modern mass, is incapable even of cunning, which requires the use of intellect. For the submass, any and all connections with the world are made through feeling; the faculty of judgment is cancelled, mediation is eliminated and distance dissolved. The use of reason (minorities) and cunning (modern masses) has been replaced in the submass by rationalizations—unthinking, automatic, and reactive justifications that serve as the first and only lines of defense when the fragility and superficiality of submass consciousness threatens to be exposed.

The modern mass merely lacked a *disposition* to respect, but the submass lacks the *ability* to respect standards. Lacking respect entails that nothing is "held above," that nothing greater demands service. But not having the ability to respect means that for the submass "holding above" itself is beyond its capabilities. Thus, the members of the submass do not live superficially because standards and ideals are not present, but because, as spongy referents, who are attracted to everything but to whom nothing sticks, they can have access only to sensations and to immediate identifications that are ever in need of reinforcement. Available standards are beyond their powers of comprehension and assimilation.

The characteristics of the submass are continually revealed in each of us: whenever one immediately expects the instant replay at a live sporting event; when frustration is caused by a two-minute wait at a fast food outlet or clothing store, and when this frustration is quelled by tasteless and overcooked processed beef or a drastically over-priced garment with the "right" label; when those receiving mailings from department and food stores excitedly scurry to redeem triple coupons on advertised items they do not need and which five minutes before they did not want; when depression, anxiety, or boredom is eradicated by going to the mall where one can be diverted and reconstituted; when the writer using an almost-full floppy disk has a moment of yelling at and resenting a computer for not being able to save an evening's work; when television viewers involuntarily "talk back" to images projected on a cathode ray tube, or when they chastise "stupid" executives for showing "stupid" commercials and "stupid" shows rather than "good" ones, although they

can give no coherent reasoning to support these feelings that constitute their judgments.[22] These examples can be multiplied many times and extended to include at least some of the mental, emotional, and behavioral processes of every member of late-modern society. Anyone actively participating in social and cultural matters cannot completely escape the influence of technologies that provide for the instantaneous generation and satisfaction of expectations while dissolving the self by eliminating the need to cultivate reflective distance.

The next generation, however, will embody the characteristics of the submass to an even greater degree, and may signal its full arrival. A new generation of toys allow children to "interact" with talking and moving bears, to sing-along with pop heroes on record players and radios with built-in microphones, to engage their television sets with electronic devices that respond to their prompts, and to sit in their living rooms and participate in game shows with Gus Glitz–their "personal" well-groomed and obnoxious host. For these children, raised in well-protected environments structured to cultivate the characteristics of the submass, the creative imagination is cancelled. The distinction between the real world and the falsified world is all but completely obscured.

The Pseudo-Culture of the Submass

Members of the submass sometimes overflow with confidence, but are easily made despondent and self-doubting. This points to an essential instability in the submass, indicating the lack of a durable and a concrete self. This solid self can only result from a sustained effort to reflect on one's inwardness and to demarcate one's boundaries. But this process, necessary to develop a self, is beyond the reach of those unable to attain distance from the world of functions and fictions. Effects of this radical uncertainty–or lack of personality–of the submass are the creation of spurious stability, bogus individuation, and the increase in safe, comfortable, fully-controlled and completely self-contained environments that eliminate the need to deal with the outside world. Genuine culture–whether the healthy culture guided by the select minorities or the degenerate culture associated with the rise of the modern mass, both described by Ortega–coalesces into a coherent totality expressing vitality and world-involvement. Contemporary phenomena, however, exemplify what is best called pseudo-culture, which is marked by dispersion and world-avoidance, and which fails "to exhibit a stylistic unity within which the manifold of phenomena which characterize it are harmonized."[23]

Artificially produced stability–the creation by a pseudo-elite of meanings and contexts intended to be felt immediately by the submass as providing substance and structure, although providing these only par-

tially, and even then only fleetingly—is the means by which the submass flees the world, relieves pent-up hostilities and gains satisfactions. One form that this artificial stability takes is the construction of shared meanings that simulate the world and come to the person through the processed media. Television news, soaps, series, and movies, as well as popular papers, magazines, novels, and films, allow members of the submass to identify with the characters and worlds portrayed, and thus give a sense of continuity and structure to that individual. But in each instance verisimilitude is produced: the appearance of truth is substituted for the real thing. For example, television news and *U.S.A. Today* condense complex events to bite-sized morsels that can be consumed and digested as easily and in as much time as it takes to gulp down a bowl of a currently fashionable cereal. These leave the viewer—most popular news sources, including many of those that have traditionally been read, now use visual images to call forth identifications and arouse sensations without demanding from the viewer the minimal effort required for reading—a passive receptacle of feelings and attitudes who lacks an intellectual grasp of the issues at hand. Television shows depicting flamboyant lives and exotic places, soap operas, scandal sheets, Hollywood films, and game shows are those products of pseudo-culture that are meant to dissolve distance and criticism, and which call forth immediate identifications that vicariously satisfy fantasies or purge resentment. *Wheel of Fortune*, state-sanctioned lotteries, Steven Speilberg movies, Christmas bears, *The Cosby Show*, romance novels, pornography, and *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* each allow the submass—a group of passive participants—to escape immediately to fantasy worlds filled with beautiful bodies, big bucks, adventure, devoted lovers, famous friends, or the "nice and cute," depending on preference. *Sable*, *The Equalizer*, *60 Minutes*, *Rambo*, *True Detective*, and professional wrestling allow watchers to displace resentful hostility, suppressed in the sterile environments of professional life, by identifying with the fictional characters who perpetrate violence on those who deserve it. The success of Rocky Balboa, *Dynasty*, Sally, Oprah, and Phil, *Murder, She Wrote*, big-time sports, and *The Enquirer* is a consequence of their ability to simultaneously satisfy both these functions. Artificial stability is also attained through identification with seemingly stable bureaucratic functions created to promote and to distribute pseudo-cultural material. In each case these pseudo-cultural products and programs relieve psychological discomfort—stemming from either frustration or *ressentiment*—safely and efficiently across society.

The assimilation of popular fictions and functions nullifies the often problematic engagement with the real world, which may bring to light original insights that disrupt everyday life and result in serious reflection. Those popular cultural oddities, instances of serious, creative, and easily accessed public expression containing existential motifs demanding effort and reflection by the viewer—the films of Woody Allen or the

infamous *Howard the Duck*–are almost always commercial failures or at best marginally profitable. Instead, popular fictions and functions substitute standardized schemes that call forth passive identifications and lead to familiar sensations, greatly decreasing the chances of attaining critical distance.

Bogus individuation–the identification with and consumption of pseudo-cultural products by members of the submass to constitute and evanescent self and gain fragile self-assurance–is how pseudo-personality is attained and sham confidence built. Only by incorporating fashions of dress, amusement, manner, and taste can members of the submass gain an identity. But, as opposed to members of the modern mass, who despite their neglect of standards still had a somewhat fixed identity in their self-sameness, the submass has no fixity, durability, coherence, or predictability. The submass lacks self-relation, and therefore is incapable of self-direction and susceptible to manipulation and to accidents of circumstance. Compared to Ortega's civilized barbarians, members of the submass are *civilized chameleons*, changing colors almost naturally, without effort or consciousness of doing so. Sustained exposure to similar settings may leave a nest of preferences that can remain over time, but these can hardly serve as the basis for a stable, integral personality, and may be dissolved quickly by immersion in new surroundings. If the individuals constituted through identifications with the fictions and functions of modern life were not continually reaffirmed by advertising, institutions, predominate ways of thinking, and other individuals, the proliferation of images would likely lead to relativization and the subsequent questioning of the validity of these images–though in the submass the separation of the images and the individual is only theoretical: in pure cases the two cannot be distinguished. With each identification and subsequent avouchment, members of the submass receive a hit of confidence, an ego-builder, and can say "I am." But these fictions and confidences require continual reaffirmation because they do not create an integrated and lasting center of consciousness, but an artificial and rapidly decaying unstable isotope that radiates nothing. This unstable, decaying isotope, the pseudo-self of the submass, is sustained only as long as the ever-dissolving conditions allowing for the creation and the continuance of these fictions and functions can be maintained.

The most radical development that shows the coming of the submass and that combines the tendencies toward stability and individuation is the increase of safe, controlled, self-contained, and completely artificial environments. Prepackaged holidays organized by Club Med and Disney World provide the vacationer with total environments, including predetermined "new" experiences and preplanned "adventures." The family room, replete with television, stereo, and v.c.r., all on remotes, cordless phone and other electronic amenities, allows members of the submass to "experience" the completely simulated world, entirely mediated in and through a technological sensorium. The mall, the paradigm of self-

contained artificial environments, is the incredibly safe, climate-controlled, human-made arena in which one can comfortably work, play, walk about, shop, eat, drink, bank, have health needs tended to, and even be married.[24] Television videos are replacing muzak in department, clothing, music, book, and food stores at the mall, reinforcing receptivity to pseudo-cultural products by comforting shoppers with their homes' technological centerpiece and primary sensory extender. The mall is the modern utopia: filled with lights, colors, sounds, smells, images, and products to fill the senses, focus desire, and excite reflex expectation, the mall allows for each of these expectations of the submass to be met immediately, without effort, reflection, or frustration. As comfortable as children in their mothers' arms, mall-goers display relaxed confidence in their timeless sanctuary. Unlike Ortega's modern mass, who demanded palaces because they were not content with indoor plumbing, in the mall members of the submass are fully satisfied, given substance, form, and identity by the panorama of paraphernalia that encloses and constitutes them.

The family room and mall exemplify what trend analyst Faith Popcorn has called *cocooning*: erecting environments "that provide control, comfort and security against what they perceive as a harsh outside world."[25] This perception of a hostile external—real—world, although avoided through the means described above, indicates a radical insecurity and underlying world-hatred on the part of the submass. Whereas the neglect of the modern mass manifested itself as radical ingratitude, the civilized chameleons of the submass reveal selflessness and repressed hatred for the foundations of civilization through the falsifications of personality and environment. Psychologically, the submass shows not a neglect of culture and its foundations, but repressed feelings of inadequacy, as evidenced in the defense mechanisms of withdrawal and denial. Technological advances have made pathological retreat from the real world common among the submass, thereby hindering and, in extreme cases, eliminating the development of a substantial ego. External reality is systematically denied. As a result, internal and external realities are replaced by the falsifications described above. Sociologically, the information, manufacture, amusement, and fashion technologies create hostels apart from the external world. Everything "outside" appears to the submass as already falsified and in digestible hunks, which are received through the information-generating and the information-distributing systems. Society does not demand or encourage the organization, mobilization, or integration of the individual as either a self-centered or socially responsible agent. Society, as dissolved into meta-circumstances, accentuates the failure of culture to attain rational and responsible organization through adequate leadership, as well as the *ressentiment* of the submass resulting from its inability to act effectively in the real world of strangers, toxic waste, and violent crime.

The Possibility of Personality?

Humans are, at least, embodied consciousnesses, condemned to suffer and die, who can demarcate their boundaries, differentiate themselves from what they are not, and construct personalities. The possibility of grasping an individuated life from within, from a critical, self-conscious center of fleshy awareness, remains a live option. This is expressed by Ortega's well-known phrase: "My life is the radical reality."[26] Ortega did not mean to say that my life is the only reality, but that only through my life do I have access to all other realities. My life contains and refers to that which is other; but my life, personal and concrete, is also marked off from everything other, which is most clearly evidenced in what Max Stirner called a declaration of ownness.[27] Re-centering of this type, which requires the establishment of an ego strong enough to acknowledge its physical and psychological limitations and still engage in free and joyous judgment and action, can give the self to itself.

Thus, Baudrillard's claim that reality has been abolished, leaving only simulation in which everything vanishes in a play of signs, must be denied. Although his analysis is oftentimes cogent, he overlooks what Unamuno called "the man of flesh and bone,"[28] the real living person, thinking and acting in space and in time. The metaphors of text, sign, and simulation break apart on the individuated embodied consciousness, on fleshy awareness, which, through inadequate cultivation and self-forgetting, serves as the substratum that makes the submass possible. Contrary to what is implied by Baudrillard, individuals can have greater or lesser degrees of contact with and clearheadedness about the *real circumstances* in which they live. Meta-circumstances, created to provide a false sense of security, to hide unpleasant occurrences, or to hinder critical assessment, are falsifications. The world in which we live is insecure, unpleasant, and troublesome. Murder, rape, and starvation, as well as lifestyles of the rich and famous, are decidedly different from the fictionalized accounts of these intentionally misrepresented in the mass media. Even members of the submass are forced to make this distinction when their family rooms are broken into or when they are assaulted in mall parking lots.

Unlike Ortega, however, I offer no schedule of reforms to rectify the conditions that have brought about the submass. Programs of social reform cannot be differentiated from the other fantasies that fascinate the submass. Social and political reformist fictions are predicated on the possibility of widespread reflection and responsible action, and as such are as outdated as they are ignored by the bulk of the submass. The few still constituted by these fictions have failed to recognize the ever-changing insubstantiality of the submass.[29] A "reformation of submass society" is as impossible as a "revolt of the submass."

As I see it, the history of philosophy has been a series of serious attempts, by individuals having disciplined minds and well-established personalities, to demarcate the boundaries and to identify the most significant aspects of radically flawed and finite human life, and to present and to embody well-considered strategies for living. In late modernity, the coming of the submass has retarded this undertaking by destroying critical distance. The construction of an organized personality needed for philosophical activity can only be secured by combatting the influences that have resulted in constituting the submass, influences which almost certainly infuse each one of us to some degree. Nevertheless, I share Ortega's view that civilization did not sustain itself, but that it required the support of those interested in its continuation and its enhanced vitality. Borrowing the words of a wise friend, I offer that "personality is not something to be taken for granted, that merely grows, but is something that can be lost and that, therefore, must be protected and cultivated."[30] Such a project is, by definition, personal, and therefore cannot serve as the basis of a widespread public movement, even if large numbers could be mobilized as self-conscious agents. Nonetheless, the cultivation of personality, although an individual affair, gains its warrant as the basis of all genuine creative production, and the seat of philosophy.

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Notes

1. Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1932), 11.
2. Special thanks to Mr. Donald Hanover for suggesting this term and some of its implications.
3. "Mass phenomena" do not refer to the conglomeration of multitudes in socio-cultural space and time—though these, too, are mass phenomena—but to a widespread set of mental, emotional, and behavioral processes common to members of modern society. The basic characteristics of the mass are the lack of reflection and control. For a classic and in-depth description of mass phenomena see: Gustav LeBon, *The Crowd* (Marietta, GA: Larlin, 1984).
4. Ortega, *The Revolt of the Masses*, 13.
5. Ibid., 14-15.
6. Ibid., 65.
7. Ibid., 17.
8. Ibid., 24.
9. Ibid., 55-56.

10. Ibid., 57-58.
11. Ibid., 57.
12. Ibid., 58.
13. Ibid., 58.
14. Ibid., 68.
15. Ibid., 72.
16. Emily S. Hamblen, *Friedrich Nietzsche and His New Gospel* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1911), 73.
17. Ibid., 87.
18. This point about the collapse of reflective distance of the self from circumstances was first articulated by Karl Mannheim in "The Democratization of Culture," in *From Karl Mannheim*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).
19. Michael A. Weinstein, *Finite Perfection* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 6-7.
20. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 351.
21. Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 1-2.
22. These examples come from my experiences of the past few days. Despite this, I do not believe I embody submass characteristics to a greater degree than most people around me, but only that I am more aware of these characteristics in my life that most others are aware of them in their lives.
23. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 8.
24. "People in the News," *Hartford Courant*, 1 August 1987, 2.
25. Annetta Miller, "Putting Faith in Trends," *Newsweek*, 15 June 1987, 46-47.
26. Jose Ortega y Gasset, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960).
27. Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own* (New York: Boni and Liveright, n.d.).
28. Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life* (New York: Dover, 1954).
29. Compare to Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 37.
30. Weinstein, *Finite Perfection*, 164.

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YOU'RE IN SUSPICION: PUNK AND THE SECRET PASSION PLAY OF WHITE NOISE

Andrew Herman

Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989. 496 pages, illustrated.

Remembrance of Noise Past

In the fall of 1977 I took up residence in the U.K. as a university exchange student just at the time when the hype and hysteria concerning punk was approaching its zenith. Simply by being in the right place at the right time I found myself with the opportunity to witness either a revolution in popular music and culture, or the morbid symptoms of a welfare state in moral and aesthetic decay (it was only later that I realized that the two were not mutually exclusive). As a budding sociologist for whom rock music was the most energizing passion of everyday life, such an opportunity was not to be missed. So, in the spirit of cultural adventure and curiosity, in November of 1977 several friends of mine and I trepidatiously sauntered into the The 100 Club in London, one of the epicenters of the British Punk Explosion of 1976-1978, in order to experience the rituals and sonic milieu of punk first hand.

Nothing in my experience as a fan of rock nor my contact with mediated representations of punk prepared me for the scene into which I inserted myself that evening. Some ten years later, after punk as a musical

genre has been exhausted and after almost all the signs of its stylistic subversion have been recuperated by the dominant culture to take their place within the cornucopia of sartorial commodities, it is hard to convey just how disruptive and compelling the experience was. Upon entering the club I had a palpable feeling that I had crossed an unseen liminal boundary into a region of chaos where all the codes of musical experience, of performance, and of audience decorum were joyously and quite consciously being subverted. Almost immediately my companions and I were identified and marked, largely because we clearly did not fit into the sartorial regime of punk with our blue jeans and long hair, both as foreigners to the scene and as consumers looking for a new thrill on the cultural marketplace, which is exactly what we were. Various kinds of threatening words, epithets, and gestures were thrown our way, the most memorable of which was a snarled "Fucking tourist" accompanied by a well-aimed gob of spit at my Frye boots. But as there was safety in numbers, we pressed through the bodies that pogo-ed into the air, and into each other, to the front of the stage, the only possible place where amidst all that kinetic motion and aggressive posturing one could get a clear view of the performance.

This desire to see the performers unobstructed by the audience was an artifact of a regime of musical experience very different from punk. Within that regime, whether it operated in a multi-purpose indoor sports arena with 15,000 fans holding their lighters aloft or in a small club where the audience "intimately" sat around the stage, only the musicians were endowed with the capacity to act and speak. And whether you were one of those 15,000 giving thanks for the spectacle with your tiny flame or sat at a table in club silently letting the waves of artistic creativity lap around your ears, the subject position offered by the regime was one of passive spectatorship with the division between performer and audience firmly drawn. With the pleasure of fetishistic looking and listening being about the only one available within that regime, it is little wonder that the desire for an unobstructed view was overwhelming. I soon came to realize that such a desire was almost irrelevant in the punk milieu, for it was the scene in its entirety that was the performance and not simply the musicians on stage.

The first person to take the stage was a teenager by the name of Patrik Fitzgerald, whom the club D.J. introduced as "The Poet of Punk." This honorific apparently did not sit well with Patrik as he turned away from the mike, hurled his beer at the D.J. booth and screamed "I ain't no fucking poet," much to the delight of audience. Then he turned back to the audience, pointed an accusing finger and spat out "and you ain't no fucking punks either." The crowd erupted with shouts of "yes's", "no's", and "who the fuck do you think you are to tell us what we are!" and a hail of spit rained down upon Patrik from all quarters. Letting loose a laugh of transgressive delight, he strapped on a cheap acoustic guitar, with several strings missing, and launched into a song called "Get Your Punk

at Woolies [Woolworth's]." By his own admission Patrik was no poet, but he was clearly a prophet as he railed against the incipient commodification of punk, the selling of its surface appearances as a pale substitute for its spirit and substance. And what was that spirit?

"Nihilistic" was the first word that stuck in my mind as I stood amidst the noise, tumult, and shouting, and watched as a young woman thrust her fist in the air and slashed at her wrist with a razor until she was dragged away by the bouncers laughing and screaming that "it's just a fucking joke, it's all a joke." (*What's* a joke?, I thought—Her action? Her life? Punk? All of these and everything?) For Patrik that spirit entailed the opportunity to publicly speak of the terror and the boredom of his everyday life, which is exactly what he did in his second and final song called "I Hate My Room." As he spat out the words the waves of rejection spread out in concentric circles from his bed to the walls of his room to his parents downstairs to his neighborhood to his teachers at school to the London Transport to the BBC to the Labour Government and the T.U.C. to the Common Market and NATO to the United States, Japan, and South Africa and finally to God, all of which were implicated in the same bloody scheme to keep him in a world of many pre-determined choices with no creative options. Yet all the verbal rejection in the world could not beget a negation of these things soon enough for Patrik, nor seemingly for those who listened and shouted with or against him. So after his screed he tossed his guitar into the audience and said with a sneer, "Alright, then, *you* be fucking poets." After a tussle among a small knot of people near the stage, the guitar was thrown back towards the stage where it knocked over part of the drum kit for the next band. A cheer went up from the crowd and someone shouted "We already are poets," in response to which some guy leapt up on stage and shouted back, "For God's sake, let us hope so."

As it turned out, that prayer was offered up by the lead singer and guitarist for the next band which called themselves Alternative T.V. The man's name was Mark Perry a/k/a Mark P. (which was his *nom de plume*). In addition to his musical duties, he was also creator and editor of *Sniff'n Glue*, one of the most influential fanzines of the early punk era. Before punk hit the British music scene in 1975, Mark Perry found his pleasure as a rabid rock fan, and his alienation as an office clerk. In punk, he saw the opportunity to make the magic leap from fan to performer and in his magazine he vigorously formulated and promulgated one of the central tenets of punk ideology: that everybody was, in fact, a poet and should strap on a guitar, become speaking (or screaming) subjects, and proclaim their experience to world. To this end, the back page of every issue of *Sniff'n Glue* was devoted to a diagram of three basic musical chords, beneath which was a caption which read "Here's one chord. . . Here's a second . . ..Here's a third . . Now form your own band!" But at the time I first saw him and his band, I knew none of these things. All I saw was a person who was brazen enough to stand before what I thought

to be an unruly mob and challenge them to become what they said they were.

As Alternative T.V. walked on stage and plugged themselves in they too were greeted by a hail of spit, which prompted me to ask someone standing by me why people were doing it. She looked at me somewhat incredulously and said, "We're gobbing, that's all." And as if that answer made all the sense in the world, I took a swig from my beer and added my saliva to the spray. "That's the spirit," my neighbor said, adding a new twist to the story. This group expectoration was not a gesture of hostility, but one of blessing and benediction that enveloped the band within the collective effervescence of the crowd. Within the spiritual matrix of punk, it was a gift that could not be refused without destroying the ethos of participation and solidarity that bound performer and audience together in opposition to the world outside. Having accepted the gift, the band returned it in spades, launching an arrow of noise that was aimed straight at the craven heart of a rock and roll that had become bloated, corrupt, and vacuous. The band kicked off their set by crashing into a barely recognizable cover of Frank Zappa and the Mother's of Invention's "Good Times," a classic send-up of let's boogie, get drunk, get fucked rock and roll. By the way that Mark Perry hurled the words at the audience it was clear that he did not think that these were the Good Times, and, to the extent that rock and roll operated as a good time soporific for hard times, then rock and roll needed to be destroyed.

So too did the myth of the rock musician as poet or artist who was singularly authorized to speak the dreams, desires, and experiences of an audience that had its tongue cut out by the spectacle that rock had become. For Alternative TV this meant smashing the idols by shattering the hagiography that constructed the rock star as artist-poet (and any poet as star). As the band cranked up the noise to ear-splitting levels, Mark Perry went off stage and brought out a bust of the self-proclaimed Dionysian poet of rock himself, Jim Morrison, and set it at the front of the stage. "Viva la Rock and Roll," Mark screamed:

> Paris is the City of the Dead Hero
> Jim Morrison died in a bath, July 3, 1971
> After that, poor Jim wasn't good for a laugh
> In 1970 he was a lot of fun
> Viva la Rock and Roll
> Paris is the City of Influence
> Uncle Rimbaud spoke to me
> Through New York's New Wave
> Q'est-ce que c'est?
> What people say
> Paris is a wonderful city on forty francs a day[1]

Behind the satirization of rock icons both old (Jim Morrison) and new (Patti Smith, Talking Heads) was a pointed critique of the valorization of dead heroes that Marx would have recognized (if he could only stand the

noise). As the famous passage in the "18th Brumaire" goes, "The tradition of dead generations weighs like a nightmare upon the minds of living."[2] By borrowing the language and images of past struggles to shape and validate those of the present, by engaging in a "world-historical necromancy" by which the past is conjured up in order to pass judgement on the present and the future, the living could not find their own voice or vision. "Leave the dead to the dead," said Marx.[3] In different words and with an entirely different tonality, Mark Perry was saying the same thing: Let's not waste our time touring around a city of dead heroes on a pilgrimage to Morrison's grave at Père La Chaise or to the cafés where Rimbaud held court. Our fascination with dead poets only diminishes our ability to make poetry in and out of our everyday lives. The present of the everyday: "Hic Rhodus! Hic Salta!; Here is the Rose! Dance Here!" (Marx).[4] And we danced, sweeping the visage of Morrison off the stage and smashing it to pieces to the hyper-pulse of the band's anthem, "Action Time Vision": "Chords and notes don't mean a thing/Listen to the rhythm/Listen to us sing/We're in action and the four walls crack/On A.T.V.V.V.V.V.V."

Still, all this was simply satire, a play upon pre-existing codes and icons of rock music. While it was intended to be a subversion of rock and roll, that subversion was premised solely upon having an audience that could read the signs that were being circulated. Who's in action? Who's singing? Who's listening? We were listening to a different story, a different song, but that was all we were doing. The noise pushed at the boundaries of rock as a discursive formation and as a performance ritual, but it had yet to really break through them. The idols had been smashed but what about the temple? Would the four walls really crack? After all, A.T.V. was still a T.V.

As various members of the audience pogo-stomped the remaining pieces of Jim into a dusty soon-to-be-forgotten memory, the band settled back into a jagged punk dub while, from seemingly out of nowhere, a taped voice that was clipped from a trailer of an underground cinema club began to play: "In this space films have been seen by over 80,000 people. Films, that before this cinema, would have remained in their cans. Here also battles are fought, imaginations expressed, differences confronted. And it is also a space in which all kinds of movements can develop . . ." The voice was cut off and the statement was amended by Mark P. who stepped up to the mike and said "even rock and roll." Here was yet another element of the punk spirit: the creation of an aural space of difference within which there were differences that made a difference; a space where clashes of sonic texture, grains of voice, ideas, sentiments and desires not only drew a boundary between punk and the rest of the culture, but also gave succor and sustenance to those inside the boundary precisely because it was heterogeneous. This was quite a promise, but one that could not possibly be realized as long as those on stage remained indifferent to the differences that bubbled under the

surface of an audience that could hear but could not speak. And so, as the crowd churned and roiled in front of the stage, Mark Perry declared that the time had come for anyone who wanted to speak their mind to mount the stage, grab the microphone, and lead the performance to its next destination.

By this time I was swept up in the anarchy of the crowd, pushing and shoving, jumping and dancing, spitting and shouting. It was a feeling that was both exhilarating and frightening. Here was a place where few of the codes of accepted behavior held sway—seemingly everything was permitted. But where everything was permitted, things could get out of control. And when things get of control, nobody knows what possibly might happen. I felt an inchoate fear of possibilities that were unpredictable, of actions whose consequences were terribly uncertain. Someone might get hurt, maybe killed. Perhaps the dance of chaos where we gleefully smashed rock and roll icons would not be enough to satisfy desires for transgression that had been let loose. Perhaps we would destroy the club and then sweep up the stairs and onto the streets to destroy whatever we might find.

In retrospect, the simulacrum of violence inside the club was nothing compared to the real violence that was enacted daily outside. Early in the year, the number of unemployed passed the one million mark, a number that just a year before British politicians and pundits had declared to be "inconceivable." Older urban centers such as Liverpool, Birmingham, Glasgow, Newcastle, Cardiff, and large sections of London reeled under the impact of deindustrialization and capital flight, as communities and their inhabitants were left to fester and decay. There was also the growing popularity of the neo-fascist National Front's racist appeals to "Britishness," and in August 1977 there had been street battles between supporters of the NF and anti-fascist demonstrators in the Lewisham section of London. As a result of this event and others, such as the anti-police riot by militant young blacks at the Notting Hill Festival a year earlier, the state increased its surveillance and harassment of groups marginal to an increasingly paranoid white, middle-class Britain. People were being violated in more ways than one and to some of the people inside the club, who had to contend with such violence in their own lives, perhaps the idea of perpetrating some violence of their own was not so frightening or foreign. Of course, the possibility that that might actually happen was remote. But to my white, middle class, American sensibility, the thought that such things might happen was enough to encourage me to psychically, and physically, circle the wagons. And so I drifted off to a corner of the club to watch from a safe distance.

Others, who had no need or desire for the safety of any kind of distance, charged the stage to accept Mark Perry's invitation. The noise, mainly emanating from the crowd, was deafening and even with the aid of the microphone it was hard to hear what the people standing on stage were saying. A woman seemingly catapulted out of the crowd, grabbed the

microphone, screamed "Defiance!" and leapt back into the maelstrom. She was followed by someone who blurted out that the crowd was boring and staid, a characterization to which the crowd vigorously protested by pouring forth a tidal wave of catcalls, whistles, and profanity that prohibited the man from pursuing whatever point he was trying to make. Another man pushed him aside and shouted above the roar that he was from "The Dead." Pale, pock-marked, incredibly thin, and with eyes laden with black mascara, he looked as though he was telling the truth. And indeed he was, as "The Dead" happened to be the punk band he was in. By some strange twist of fate that seemed to strengthen the band's claim upon their name, their lead singer had been killed (of all places) in France. But the man was not all interested in lionizing his dead compatriot; he couldn't even remember when the man was killed ("Our singer was killed three days . . .one month. . . .no, two weeks ago. . . ") He asked the audience if anyone was interested in taking the dead man's place in The Dead and hands shot up, indicating an intense eagerness among the listeners for a chance to stop listening and to start making some noise of their own. I had no doubt that one of them would get that chance, and perhaps appear on the stage of the 100 Club the very next week, resurrecting the dead with a vengeance.

The next person who gained possession of the microphone tried to turn the discussion, if one can call it that, in a political direction by asking the audience to think about what they would say if they had the chance to "talk to the people who are running this country." It was clear from the response that there was no interest in talking to such people since everyone understood that it would be a useless enterprise. "Fuck the Prime Minister!", "Go join the Labor Party", "Why bother? They're as thick as you are," were some of the retorts, but most people simply ignored the question because the whole idea was boring and stupid. If punk was political, it was not political on any terms that made sense within the spectacular discourse of liberal capitalist democracy. Frustrated, the would-be agitator threw up his hands and said, "Alright, what's your favorite fucking T.V. program, then?" This question provoked the most lively reaction yet as almost the entire audience erupted with about half the people shouting names of T.V. shows and the other half vociferously berating the other half for watching T.V. in the first place. Mark Perry took the opportunity to deliver a small speech on the perils of having punk bands appear on television. For some, he said, having the Sex Pistols on the BBC's *Top of the Pops* was a victory for punk in the battle for social acceptance. But this was no victory since the battle was not for social acceptance but for something else which Mark P. couldn't quite articulate. A woman shouted "We know the problems, what's the answer?!" to which he replied after a long pause, "You know this is really depressing because I don't know the fucking answer."

In a way, the answer was right in front of all of us: it was in the effervescence of the crowd, in the possibility that such a public discussion

could happen, not only in the midst of such incredible noise but inextricably linked to and sustained by it; it was in the woman who once again bounded up on stage, screamed "Defiance!" into the microphone and disappeared into the crowd. But, then again, maybe that wasn't the answer either. So a man took advantage of Mark Perry's lack of an answer to provide his own: "If you want to change the world you don't sing songs and you don't make your point on stage. You do like the blacks in South Africa and go out and start a war. Words are a bunch of bullocks. They don't do anything. You're just a bunch of little boys and girls who don't know what they're doing." Before the crowd could respond to this clear challenge Mark Perry moved to close the debate by saying, "Alright. He wants chaos... well, chaos is finished" and signaled to the band to wrap up its dub in a crescendo of noise.

But chaos was not finished. For as Perry turned around to talk to the drummer a man grabbed the microphone and yelled "If there was a load of skinheads down here you'd all shit yourselves and you know it!!!" The violence that had hung in the air now became palpably real as the club exploded into bedlam. A score of punks rushed the stage to attack the offender, accompanied by a veritable mortar barrage of beer bottles and glasses. The skinhead provocateur was dragged off to an uncertain fate, while the bouncers sallied forth into the crowd to restore order. People scattered in all directions as the melee spread on to the stage and across the floor. Visibly shaken and infuriated by this willful self-destruction of the fragile space of difference, Mark Perry shouted above the *sturm und drang* "One of you people gets a chance to say something and there's a fight. Is that all you can do, struggle with one another? I love all you people, but I hate you when you act like stupid idiots CAUSE THAT'S HOW THEY GRIND YOU DOWN!!!" The show was over.

It is now 1990, nearly thirteen years after that fateful night. The obituary of punk was written long ago (by some as early as 1978[5]) even though it is not uncommon to see teenagers congregating in Harvard Square, listening to hardcore, with "Punks Not Dead" painted on the back of their leather jackets. Within the walls of the 100 Club, if it still exists, I imagine that punk perdures only as a nostalgic echo, a vague memory of a desire for transgression that is stirred by bands who still do not care whether they can play chords at all. Mark Perry and Alternative TV still exist. Last summer they released their first album in seven years. But they no longer prowl the same musical terrain, having eschewed their assault on the premises and dead history of rock and roll for a nostalgic immersion in 60s psychedelia. As for the other members of the audience, I have no idea whether they exist or not. We all dispersed after the event, destined never to share the same space again. Outside of the boundaries of the collective performance space, we were left to our own devices, bereft of the evanescent power of the moment when the four walls appeared to fracture, even if only a little. Perhaps the best that we could hope for was that the fragmented memories of the rhythm-driven

cacophony of difference would somehow make the facts of everyday life seem less natural and stolid, more political and fluid, than they did before. As for me, I like to think that I definitely do exist, though my grasp on my place in the present keeps slipping as I listen to a recording of ATV's performance that evening, re-membering, re-configuring, re-writing that experience, and trying to make sense of it all in relation to Greil Marcus' *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*.

White Punks on Theory

The principal reason why I have engaged in such a self-indulgent preface to this review is that I wanted to situate myself with regards to my subject matter in the same way that Marcus situates himself towards his. Although *Lipstick Traces* is by no means simply a book about punk, it is most assuredly a book that not only finds its animating spirit in punk, but also its motivating inspiration in the carnivalesque maelstrom of a punk performance. At this performance, which Marcus claims was "as close to the Judgement Day as a staged performance can be", he was fascinated by a screeching, abrasive voice that "denied all social facts, and in that denial affirmed that everything was possible"[6]. The voice of the Avenging Angel was that of Johnny Rotten at the last Sex Pistols concert at the Wonderland Ballroom in San Francisco in January 1978. It was a voice that was so powerful and compelling from Marcus's perspective that it blew a hole through the fabric of everyday life and its ubiquitous tyranny:

> [Rotten's] aim was to take all the rage, intelligence, and strength in his being and then fling them at the world: to make the world notice; to make the world doubt its most cherished and unexamined beliefs; to make the world pay for its crimes in the coin of nightmare, and then to end the world–symbolically, if no other way was open. At that, for a moment, he did.[7]

Much in the same way that I stumbled into the suddenly unreal world outside of the 100 Club, Marcus left the Wonderland Ballroom with the firm belief that nothing would ever quite look or feel the same again. And so Marcus leapt through the gaping hole that Johnny Rotten's voice opened up for him, spending the next ten years trying to make sense of that voice, its moment of refusal, and from whence it came.

Marcus is certainly not the first to be so moved by what might be called the "passion play" of punk. Simon Frith has argued that punk has been the most theoretically scrutinized and analyzed musical genre and stylistic movement in the history of post-war popular culture. For many (myself included) punk not only changed the way one listened to popular music but also provided the occasion for thinking about it in a different way. Indeed, more than a few rock critics and academics made their careers and reputations, Frith included, on the basis of interpreting the aural and

visual disruption that punk represented in the popular culture through an array of Marxist and post-structuralist theories of cultural practice that emerged (at least in the English-speaking world) in the 1970s. Prime examples include Dick Hebdige's early work on punk as a subculture engaged in cultural resistance through semiotic guerilla warfare; Dave Laing's analysis of punk as a contradictory matrix of economic, aesthetic, and ideological discourses drawn from mainstream rock, different youth sub-cultures, and the artistic avant-garde; Larry Grossberg's dense theorization of punk as an implosive "rock and roll apparatus" that implicitly undermined the conditions under which rock music operated as a site of pleasure and empowerment through its explicit celebration of its own artifice; and, most recently, Simon Frith's and Arthur Horne's interpretation of punk as the most compelling evidence to date of the collapse of "post-modern" popular culture where the commodification of aesthetics and the aestheticization of commodities go hand in hand.[8]

Although these and other analyses of punk in particular and rock music in general have pushed forward the frontiers of cultural analysis, I have often felt that their authors are more compelled by the music to theorize about it than to theorize *with* it or *through* it. When confronted with the often inchoate pleasures (and terrors) of music and noise, the "new wave" of pop music analysts tend to flee into a realm of elegant cultural theory whose cool analytic language often obscures the fluidity and multi-dimensionality of music as a distinctive medium, experience, and cultural practice. Standing at a critical distance from their subject matter they take careful aim with a sophisticated conceptual apparatus and frequently miss the mark. This, I believe, is largely because they attempt to impose an alien language upon the music rather than try to develop a language that is homologous to the tonality of the music itself. White punks on theory can surely philosophize, but rarely does their analysis vibrate and dance like the aspects of culture they endeavor to explain.

In this regard *Lipstick Traces* is a rare pleasure in that it is a book whose language and mode of analysis resonate with the spirit of its subject matter. Perhaps this is because, as a rock critic for publications as diverse as *Rolling Stone* and *Art Forum* rather than as an academic struggling for legitimacy and tenure, Marcus has fewer theoretical crosses to bear. Nonetheless, he is no stranger to cultural theory and for the past decade and a half he has been one of the more theoretically inclined and politically concerned rock critics in America. In fact, *Lipstick Traces* is anything but atheoretical, as Marcus brings to bear on his subject matter many theoretical heavy hitters such as Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Henri Lefebvre, Georges Bataille, and, most centrally, Guy Debord and the Situationists. But one of the key virtues of the book is that Marcus deftly avoids the trap that so many of the aforementioned people fall into, which is letting the theory all but silence the sound they are trying to understand. In the context of Marcus's impassioned lyrical prose, Lefebvre's theory of everyday life and Debord's theory of the

spectacle focus and amplify the sounds and events that Marcus is concerned with rather than crushing them underneath their density. (Marcus's impassioned prose, the truth be told, sometimes results in ridiculous flights of hyperbolic fancy: e.g., the claim that events like Elvis being called a "nigger" by his guitarist after sensually crooning "Blue Moon in Kentucky" explain most of American Culture."[9]) Cultural practice and theory are used to evoke and invoke each other, and in the process our appreciation and understanding of both is enriched. Although there is nary a page in the book where this does not happen, one of the most compelling and interesting example of such moments comes when Marcus argues that Adorno, of all people, can be interpreted as the theoretical godfather of punk. It is worth quoting at length as an example of Marcus's unique style and mode of analysis:

> [I]n a way, punk was most easily recognizable as a new version of the old Frankfurt School critique of mass culture... But now the premises of the old critique were exploding out of a spot that [Adorno] had never recognized: mass culture's pop culture heart. Stranger still: the old critique of mass culture paraded as mass culture, at least as protean would-be mass culture. . . .
>
> Probably no definition of punk can be stretched far enough to enclose Theodor Adorno. As a music lover he hated jazz, likely retched when he first heard of Elvis Presley, and no doubt would have understood the Sex Pistols as a return to Kristallnacht if he hadn't been lucky enough to die in 1969. But you can find punk between every other line of *Minima Moralia*: its miasmic loathing for what Western civilization had made of itself by the end of the Second World War, was, by 1977 the stuff of a hundred songs and slogans. . . . *Minima Moralia* was written as a series of epigraphs, of ephemeralities, each severed block of type marching relentlessly toward the destruction of whatever intimations of hope might appear within its boundaries, each paragraph headed by an impotent oath, a flat irony, each (chosen at random) a good title for a punk 45: "Unfair intimidation," "Blackmail," "Sacrificial Lamb," "They the People." After 1977 a spoken rant LP could have been made into into an album called *Big Ted Says No* and it would have made perfect punk sense. . .
>
> What Adorno's negation lacked was glee–a spirit the punk version of his world never failed to deliver. Walking the streets as pose and fashion, Adorno's prophecies were suffused with happiness, a thrill that made them simple and clear. More than trashbags or torn clothes, punks wore Adorno's morbid rash; they inked or stenciled it over themselves in regular patterns. As Adorno's prepared corpses, more consciously prepared then he could have imagined, they exploded with proofs of vitality–that is, they said what they meant.
>
> In so doing they turned Adorno's vision of modern life back upon itself. Adorno had not imagined that his corpses knew what they meant to say. Punks were those who now understood themselves as people from whom the news of their not quite success-

> ful decease had been withheld for reasons of population policy—as punk defined the no-future, society was going to need a lot of zombie counterpersons, shoppers, bureaucrats, welfare petitioners, a lot of people to stand in line and man them. The difference was that these people had heard the news.[10]

The question that obsessed Marcus in this book is how the Sex Pistols, who were just as surely a commodity as any other pop culture product, somehow became part of a different structure of opportunity within the land of the spectacle; a structure of opportunity that enabled people, albeit temporarily, to choose to get off the spectacle's "Mobius strip of pure capitalism" and to see that for all the time spent traveling its recursive serpentine architecture, one wasn't really going anywhere at all. The answer is relatively simple: if most of mass culture emanated the harmonious sound of the engine of spectacular capitalism smoothly clicking on all cylinders, the Sex Pistols were a source of cultural dissonance that interrupted what was, according to Debord, the spectacle's never-ending discourse about itself. Like all simple answers concerning the complex and contradictory field of cultural politics, this answer begs many questions, some of which, as we shall see, diminish the power of Marcus's story. But the importance and the pleasure of *Lipstick Traces* reside in first, the process by which Marcus constructs this simple answer and, second, how much it is, in fact, able to illuminate.

Noises, Traces, Versions

Above all else, *Lipstick Traces* is a book about noise. Although Marcus does not explicitly refer to Jacques Attali's path-breaking work on the subject, both writers share a common ground with respect to the politics of sound.[11] Attali's project was to explore the intimate relation of sound to power, or aurality to the structuring of differences in society. For Attali, "music" is tamed noise. It is a code that sonically defines the hegemonic ordering of positions of power and difference. Noise, sound that falls outside of the musical code, also falls outside of that ordering of difference. If the sound of music is, broadly speaking, harmonious, the sound of noise is cacophonous as it throws into question differences that are assumed to be natural. For this reason, if a dominant sonic framing of power and difference is threatened by noise, that noise must be silenced, marginalized or incorporated. For this reason also, Attali's work is suggestive of a radical cultural politics that locates a seam of disruptive and fracturing possibilities within the spectacle sounded large at the interstices of music and noise, language and babble, coherence and utterance.

Marcus has placed his ear at precisely these interstices. The sound that he hears is the coalescing of different currents of disruptive cultural static and interference into a shout of refusal and negation, a shout that voices

a "'no' so strong that it would create the will never to take it back."[12] It was "a voice of teeth ground down into points... a near absolute loathing of one's time and place, the note held into disgust turns into glee."[13] And what was being refused and negated? Basically everything that made a prison out of everyday life: alienating work, colonized leisure, the hierarchically organized dispensation of a God that denied sanctity to free individuals who sought their own deification in pursuit of the pleasures of the material world, the regimented architectronics of space and time that divided lived experience into fragments that had no relation to one another, and so on. As Marcus is fond of reiterating time and again, this noisy shout of "no" implied an even noisier "yes", a yes that was "a demand to live not at as an object but as a subject of history—to live as if something actually depended upon one's actions—and that demand opens up unto a free street."[14] It is this dialectic of no and yes, according to Marcus, that distinguishes the noise of nihilism from the noise of the negation. The former is solipsistic, seeking only to end the world for the one who screams in rage and refusal. What happens to others is inconsequential. The latter is political, seeking to end the world as it is so that it can be re-created as it is desired to be in conversation with others. What happens to others is a question that cannot be avoided without peril to one's own freedom.

This noise is the anarchist grail that Marcus pursues throughout all 450 pages of his book. Although he first heard it in punk, with his ear to the ground, he can hear distant echoes of it in the Dada of Zurich and Berlin, in medieval Gnostic heretics, such as the Cathars of Montaillou and the German Brethren of the Free Spirit, in the modern Gnostic heretic Michael Mourré who commandeered the altar at the Nôtre Dame Cathedral during an Easter High Mass to proclaim that God is dead, in Saint-Just, the Paris Commune, May 1968, in the Situationists and their precursors in the obscure group of Left-Bank Parisian avant-grade intellectuals, the Lettrists. For Marcus, each of these events, groups, or individuals signified a revolutionary desire to turn everyday life into a Festival, a dance of ecstatic liberation. But what attracts Marcus to these moments or people is essentially their failure, their ephemerality as revolutionary impulses (a point that we will return to shortly). They were movements that "led to no official revolutions" and "raised no monuments."[15] All they left were traces with no hint of their origins, like lipstick traces on a cigarette (and hence the title, taken from a song by Benny Spellman), nor of their impossible demands that the world be changed by the sound of their rebellion. Yet time and again, these demands resurface to be articulated in a new way by people who are motivated by the same rage and will to freedom, but who have no idea of either their ancestry or progeny. As Marcus reasons (probably correctly), "Johnny Rotten hadn't said the word 'dada' since he was two."[16] Nonetheless, there he was in the Wonderland Ballroom, recalling nothing so much to Marcus as the dada sorcery of Hugo Ball or Richard Hulsenbeck, attempting to destroy first

art (or rock) and then the world of seemingly obdurate social facts through the language of noise.

This then is Marcus's grand project, to tell the story of the secret history of anarchist noise; secret because it is history adrift, a history without consciousness of lineage or precedent, particularly when it comes to the chapter contributed by punk. It is a history "secret to those who make it, especially those who make it. In the Sex Pistol's hands, and in the hands of those who turn up in their wake . . . .[there is] a blind groping towards a new story" as if it is being told for the very first time.[17] But Marcus is not at all interested in simply diachronically mapping all the connections and linkages between punk, situationism, dada and all the rest, which to Marcus is simply adding up the "arithmetic" of history. Rather, he has something more provocative in mind, which is to illuminate how the desire for freedom encoded in the noise of negation resurfaces at different moments in time by allowing the participants in its history to have a synchronous conversation with one another. As Marcus eloquently argues his prologue:

> If one can stop looking at the past and start listening to it, one might hear echoes of a new conversation; then the task of the critic would be to lead speakers and listeners unaware of each other's existence to talk to one another. The job of the critic would be to maintain the ability to be surprised at how the conversation goes, and to communicate that sense of surprise to other people, because a life suffused with surprise is better than a life that is not.[18]

Although the declension to this statement is indicative of Marcus's often overblown rhetoric (surprises are nice, but only if they do not include a knock on the door at 4 A.M., and for a Berkeley intellectual like Marcus, such surprises are not within the realm of probability, at least not yet), as a whole, it is suggestive of a methodology of cultural analysis and writing style that is far more suited to evoking the sensibility of anarchist noise than the linear narrative of traditional historical discourse. In a manner and tonality that is similar to, though not nearly as erudite or politically astute as, the recent writing of Dick Hebdige, Marcus employs what may be called the methodology of the 'version'.[19] Versioning has long been one of the key characteristics of reggae and other Afro-American and Caribbean musics and occurs when a particular piece of music is re-mixed and modified by different musicians or producers who give the original soundscape a slightly different architecture. Versioning is not so much an act of musical plagiarism as a gesture of respect and inspiration, where one uses the original source as a springboard for telling one's own story. The basic principle of this methodology is, as Marcus himself states, "that there are no truths only versions."[20] (205). Thus, in bringing his particular secret history to light, Marcus operates more as a record producer who delights in conjuring and mixing different versions of the same basic story than a writer who carefully

builds an argument point by point. In fact, I do not think that it is a misrepresentation to say that Marcus really does think of the main elements of his story less as persons, ideas, and events and more as different instruments and sounds that make up the history of anarchist noise: there is the Dada of Zurich and Berlin, led by the self-proclaimed "Dada Drummer" Richard Hulsenbeck, pounding out a rhythm that would crush art and language; there are the Lettrists on synthesizers, armed with Isidore Isou's particle physics of poetry, twisting and torturing electronic wave forms on a hell-bent mission to smash the wall of linguistic sound; there is the Situationist's anarcho-Marxist critique of spectacular capitalism and their will to radical subjectivity through which everyday life is turned into art, providing a searing lead on guitar; there is punk snarling away on lead vocals, declaring that it was consumer society's own worst nightmare come to life; and there are a host of ghostly samples thrown into the mix ranging from obscure early doowop singles (The Oriole's "Too Soon to Know") to even more obscure science fiction movies (*Quartermass and the Pit*) to murderer/folk heroes (Charley Starkweather) to a garden's variety of religious heretics (the Ranters, the Lollards, John of Leyden and the Brethren of the Free Spirit), all of which evoke the delirium of sliding down the razor's edge between nihilism and negation. In each chapter (or version), Marcus fashions a different sounding mix out of the confluence of all these elements, according to one of them a dominant place in the mix so as turn the story in a slightly different direction.

Much of the value and originality of *Lipstick Traces* lies in this application of the principles of versioning to cultural analysis. Many of the connections that Marcus makes, as he himself acknowledges, had been made before. It is a widely known part of punk lore that the Sex Pistols's manager, Malcolm McClaren, and his partner Jamie Reid, had been involved in the British branch of the Situationist International and, largely through them, many sitiuationist slogans from May 1968 found their way into punk discourse.[21] Moreover, most of the trails that Marcus follows on the road of his secret history, such as those to Dada, the Cathars, or to the Paris Commune, were already clearly marked out in the writings of the Situationists. But in the true spirit of versioning Marcus is not really plagiarising his sources. Rather, both respectful of and inspired by these ready-made connections, he tries to make events, ideas, and sounds talk to one another across great gaps of time. What makes his analysis all the more interesting is that the desire for such a conversation was not really a central part of the tradition by which he is fascinated. Tristan Tzara declared that he was not at all interested in whether or not anyone came before him. The Situationists, although more mindful of their lineage, took great pains to articulate just how avant-garde they were, ruthlessly criticizing both their predecessors (dada, surrealism, the non-Communist marxism of Lefebvre and Castoriadis) and those who would emulate them (whom they denigrated as infantile "pro-situs"). And punk, insist-

ing that is was the embodiment of "no future," denied that it had a past as well. In this subterranean tradition of negation *sui generis*, it seems that no one was interested in talking to anyone else. This, I suppose, is yet another sad manifestation of the hubris of white western culture, both center and margins, where the author's voice is the only one that ever really matters. It is thus ironic that Marcus must appropriate from a different "marginal" culture whose history has been denied and erased by white "civilization," the methodology to make the conversation happen. What is good about *Lipstick Traces* is that Marcus does indeed create a conversation where before there was none. What is sad about the book is that it revels in the spirit that prevented one from happening in the first place.

Dancing on the Offbeat of the World or the Problematic Politics of White Noise

There is an image in *Lipstick Traces* that opens and closes the book. It is a cartoon of two women regarding a vagrant stumbling down the street outside a soda fountain shop window. The vagrant is mumbling "I yam an anti-christ!" whilst the woman says with opprobrium and disgust "It's that shabby old man with the tin whistle!" The caption to the cartoon reads "It is seventeen long years since Monty was spotted outside Malcolm MacGregor's Sex 'N' Drugs shop. . . ."[22] The denotation of the image is obvious: the shabby old man is Johnny Rotten, who was indeed marked as the perfect medium for a frontal assault by Malcolm McLaren on the rock and roll apparatus as Rotten prowled King's Road in London in front of McLaren's underground clothing and accessories shop named "Sex" in 1975. For Marcus, the connotation of image encompasses a number of different figures who appear in his story: Johnny Rotten, Richard Hulsenbeck, Guy Debord; all of whom, for a brief, shining moment, rendered transparent all of the nefarious constructions of power and who, because of their glimpse of this anarchistic void, were sentenced to spend the rest of their lives in futility trying to recapture the halcyon moment where everything seemed possible. According to Marcus they were "condemned to roll their greatest hit up the hill of the crowd for all eternity, carrying the curse of having been in the right place at the right time, a blessing that comes to no one more than once."[23] In the penultimate paragraph of the book he suggests that because of the absolute demands of their desires "there is a certainty of failure: all those who glimpse possibility in a spectral moment become rich, and though they remain so , they are ever after more impoverished."[24] They become shabby old men of Sisyphusian proportions, bleating out tunes of negation on tin whistles for an audience that no longer cares to listen.

These bookends of imagery are indicative of the problematic cultural

politics of *Lipstick Traces* and the white noise with which it is so fascinated. In essence, Marcus is seduced by the 'tragic' stories of white men who attempt to transcend the oppressive structures and relations of power in the 20th century simply on the strength of an aesthetic scream of refusal. In describing these shabby old men, Marcus waxes wistfully about their damaged character and doomed cultural insurgency. He writes:

> There is a figure who appears in this book again and again. His instincts are basically cruel: his manner is intransigent. He trades in hysteria but is immune to it. He is beyond temptation, because despite his utopian rhetoric satisfaction is the last thing on his mind. He is unutterably seductive, yet he trails bitter comrades behind him like Hansel his bread crumbs, his only way home through a thicket of apologies he will never make. He is a moralist and a rationalist, but he presents himself as a sociopath; he leaves behind not documents of edification but of paradox. No matter how violent his mark on history, he is doomed to obscurity, which he cultivates as a sign of profundity (218).[25]

Despite the power of Marcus' prose, there are several things that are extremely disturbing about this kind of romantic sentimentality, a sentimentality that pervades Marcus' assessment of his anti-heroes. The most immediate and infuriating is the telling fact that the passage has more male-gendered pronouns than a passage from the Old Testament. While perhaps not intentional, it is all the more insidious for being so unacknowledged in a text concerned with tracing a history of cultural subversion. Aside from providing the seductive nostalgic markings to which the title of the book refers, women largely remain a secret in Marcus' secret history. Marcus would no doubt protest at such a characterization as women such as the Dadaist Emmy Hennings, Situationist Michelle Bernstein, and punk musicians Poly Styrene and Lora Logic do indeed make appearances *in* the story. But that is all they do, make appearances, while Rotten, Hulsenbeck, and Debord are placed at the center of Marcus' narrative. The problem here is not simply one of equal opportunity history but of the politics of noise as it is sounded out by Marcus. It is rather inexplicable that women are so marginal to Marcus's story since it is precisely the women who are in the story who, quite literally, produce the most radical noise. It was the Second Empire cabaret singer Thérésa who, by subverting the formal conventions of concert singing, provided a soundscape of aural resistance that helped fuel the explosion of the Paris Commune. It was Emmy Hemmings whose shrieking voice was so disturbing and powerful that frightened reviewers likened it to an avalanche loud enough to wake the dead. It was a noise that was far more transgressive than the implosive sound poetry of Ball, Hulsenbeck, or Tzara. It was the Slits who took the punk ethos to the limit, not only mocking prevailing expectations of what women in rock sound like, but also breaking every rule concerning what rock itself should sound like.

Compared to the sonic anarchy produced whenever the Slits picked up their instruments, the Sex Pistols were just another rock and roll band. I am not really saying anything that Marcus doesn't know; all of these examples can be found in his book. But Marcus is not motivated to ask where the power of these female voices comes from, how and why it is different from the voices of their male compatriots, and most importantly how would the history look different from their stories. Theirs is a noise that is absent from Marcus's versioning, and it is an absence that makes the conversation that takes place somewhat suspect.

But questionable gender politics is not the only flaw in Marcus' analysis. As I mentioned before, his romantic sentimentality valorizes the failure of these moments of anarchist irruption to affect social change. For Marcus, this failure is endemic to projects of transcendence themselves: those who seek to turn everyday life into a festival of revolutionary poesis are making impossible demands upon the world and they know it. In order to support this hypothesis Marcus often invokes Debord's statement in the founding document of the Situationist International that, "This is our entire program, which is essentially transitory. Our situations will be emphemeral, without a future; passageways."[26] For Marcus this statement is powerful because it represents a tragic will to freedom that could begat nothing but failure. As Marcus says near the end of the book, "I was drawn to . . . [Debord's] frank and determined embrace of moments in which the world seems to change, moments that leave nothing behind but dissatisfaction, disappointment, rage, sorrow, isolation and vanity".[27]

This romanticization of failure is the only position that Marcus can take with respect to his subject because he fails to understand the difference between transcendence and transformation, and between the politics of performance and the politics of social change. I wonder if Marcus read and understood Debord's conclusion to the above statement in which he says "Eternity is the grossest idea a person can conceive of in connection with his acts."[28] The desire for eternity, the desire to escape from the concrete materiality of space and time in a social formation in a search of self-realization, is a desire for transcendence and not a desire for transformation. The Situationists, who provide the theoretical basis for Marcus' interpretation of the cultural politics of anarchist noise, were most decidedly not interested in transcendence. Cognizant of the changes in the materiality of advanced capitalism that consumerism and the mass-mediated representation of "reality" had wrought, they sought a politics of transformation that was appropriate to this new spatial and temporal organization of everyday life. They were Marxists, not Romantics; and between the two is a yawning gap of difference.

This failure to understand the difference between transcendence and transformation is all the more perplexing as Marcus draws heavily upon the Situationist text where that difference is most explicitly drawn out: Raoul Vaneigem's *The Revolution in Everyday Life*. One starts down the

path to radical social transformation by learning to "dance on the off-beat of the official world" argued Vaneigem, and this meant sabotaging power by turning upside down the language and images by which it circulates. Such a dance was the hallmark of "active nihilists," of which Dada was the archetype.[29] But as Vaneigem clearly points out, in their nihilism the Dadaists sought transcendence by diving into the chaotic decay they saw all around them and, as such, their assault on art was only pre-revolutionary. Unless one moves from transcendence to transformation, from art to everyday life, from the performance space to the streets, all active nihilism can produce, as Vaneigem says, is "spurious opposition".

But the question of how one moves from spurious opposition to revolutionary transformation is one that escapes Marcus because he frequently elides the difference between the politics of performance and the politics of social change. For Marcus, the politics of anarchist performance revolves around the idea that "in the constructed setting of a temporally enclosed space—in this case a nightclub—anything could be negated. It was the notion that, there, anything might happen, which meant finally in the world at large, transposed artistically, anything might happen there, too"[30]. This, I think, is a profound and insightful statement, equally applicable to both Dada and punk. The problem is that Marcus never really considers how and under what conditions such transposition can or cannot occur. His thinking about this key issue is rather schizophrenic. At one moment he inexcusably equates the symbolic violence of performance with physical violence of social revolution (comparing the last Sex Pistols concert with the Sparticist Uprising in Berlin, 1919) and at another he implies the gap between the two is unbridgeable (e.g. punk was "a nightclub act that asked for the world, for a moment got it, and then got another nightclub"[31]). In the end, Marcus can't decide whether the performance space is the "place where the spirit of negation is born or where it goes to die"[32].

And thus we return to the 100 Club, where in one evening I saw and participated in a more dislocating and dramatic enactment of transgressive poesis than I have in a decade of countless rock shows and performance art events. Like Marcus and the last Sex Pistols concert, I was profoundly affected by the experience: the world never looked or sounded the same again. It was an exquisitely precious moment. But unlike Marcus, I think it is a political error to romanticize it and not to ask questions of its limitations as a site of subversion. Although I have continually returned to similar performance sites, similar sounds, hungry for the noise that would make a difference, I have realized that noise by itself cannot make the difference necessary for social transformation. In order to move beyond spurious opposition, beyond the boundaries of the performance space, there must be affective alliances between the noise of subversion and other sites and practices of resistance in work, family life, sexual relations, the community, in short, in everyday life. Punk, as Marcus quite correctly points out, opened up a breach in the discursive

economy of rock music so that the politics of everyday life became an explicit concern. But making or listening to a sonic discourse of subversion can only be a beginning.

Unfortunately, this beginning point of when and where noise is produced and circulated is also the end for Marcus. His ultimate stance in regards to the cultural politics of negation is basically that of a passive consumer rather than as engaged social critic or organic intellectual. He regards the events and personages of his secret history like he does the hundreds of recordings he probably receives each week for review: objects to be consumed, listened to, written about, and then filed away. How else can one make sense of the closing statement of the book as he looks back upon the tragic failures he has chronicled and says, "If all this seems like a lot for a pop song to contain, that is why this story is a story, if it is. And it is why any good punk song can sound like the greatest thing you ever heard, which it does. When it doesn't, that will mean the story has taken its next turn".[33] In the end, the same judgement may be applied to *Lipstick Traces* that Vaneigem applied to Dada and juvenile delinquency: "The same contempt for art and bourgeois values. The same refusal of ideology. The same will to live. The same ignorance of history. The same barbaric revolt. The same lack of tactics."[34] I don't know about Marcus, but I would rather not wait for the story to turn. I'd rather work, in and through noise, to help shape the turns the story will take. The past may indeed be tragic, but the future can be very bright, but only if we actively make it so.

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Notes

1. All song lyrics in this section are from Alternative TV, *The Image Has Cracked: The First Alternative TV Album*. Deptford Fun City Records (UK), 1978.

2. Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in David Fernbach, ed. *Karl Marx: Surveys From Exile, Political Writings* Vol. 2. New York: Vintage, 1973, p. 146.

3. Ibid., p. 149.

4. Ibid., p. 150.

5. The prime example here is the scathing and scabrous indictment of punk's inevitable cooptation by the music industry by Julie Burchill and Tony Parsons, two music journalists who loudly trumpeted the cause of punk as an assault on the conventions and complacency of rock music in the pages of *New Musical Express* in the late 1970's, in *The Boy Looked at Johnny: The Obituary of Rock and Roll*. London: Pluto Press, 1978.

6. Griel Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 38, 2.

7. Ibid., 17.

8. Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Methuen, 1979; Dave Laing, *One Chord Wonders: Power and Meaning in Punk Rock*. Philadelphia; Open University Press, 1985; Larry Grossberg, "Is There Rock After Punk?" *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*. Vol. 3 No. 1: 50-74; Simon Frith and Arthur Horne, *Art into Pop*. London: Methuen, 1988.

9. Ibid., 58.

10. Ibid., 70, 72-74.

11. Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

12. Ibid., 306-7.

13. Ibid., 195.

14. Ibid., 6.

15. Ibid., 148.

16. Ibid., 200.

17. Ibid., 181.

18. Ibid., 23.

19. See. in particular, Dick Hebdige, "Digging for Britain: An Excavation in Seven Parts" in David Joselit and Elizabeth Sussman, Eds. *The British Edge*. Boston, MA: Institute for Contemporary Art, 1987; *Hiding in the Light*, New York: Routledge, 1988; and *Cut 'N' Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music*. London: Comedia, 1987. The first chapter of the last book is devoted to an intriguing discussion of Hebdige's appropriation of the spirit of versioning for writing.

20. Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, 205.

21. One band, Royal Family and the Poor, who recorded for the explicitly situationist inspired Factory Records, took to reading excerpts from key sitiuationist texts against a wall of noise. See (or, rather, listen to)Royal Family and the Poor, "The Vaneigem Mix" on *A Factory Quartet* , Factory Records, U.K., 1981. For an analysis of the direct influence of situationism upon punk and post-punk see Simon Frith and Arthur Horne, op.cit.

22. Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, 1,447.

23. Ibid., 202..

24. Ibid., 447.

25. Ibid., 218.

26. Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions and Organization of Action" in Ken Knabb, ed., *Situationist International Anthology*. Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981, p. 25.

27. Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, 446.

28. Debord, "Report. . . ." 25.

29. Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution in Everyday Life*. London: Left Bank Books and Rebel Press, (1967) 1983. p. 136.

30. Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, 241.

31. Ibid. p. 442

32. Ibid., 125.

33. Ibid., 447.

34. Vaneigem, *Revolution in Everyday Life*, 138.

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INTIMACY AND CULTURAL CRISIS*

Steven Pinter
Greg Nielsen

> Public rumour has it that culture is in crisis. Literature, cinema, and theatre are groping for a way out while architecture is agonizing under an unknown quantity of cement. It would seem that the other culture, the day-to-day, social totalities that interest anthropologists and sociologists are also in trouble. The family, religion, and the nation are threatened with possible extinction. Our relations with nature, the environment itself, is headed for an imminent apocalypse. We will no longer be able to create, to love, to inhabit. We will no longer grow old, nor make children. ... But after all, if we do dream, think, and create, it is because we are not in agreement with the world. *Without crisis, there is no culture.*
>
> Fernand Dumont, *Le Sort de la culture*

We enjoy thinking of ourselves as fully capable of intimacy, but it is no longer certain what we understand by claiming this capability for ourselves. Intimacy is not necessarily guaranteed in any of our most fundamental relationships: those to each other, to our own communities, to our families, and to our own gods. The absence of a durable guarantee may actually be a prerequisite to a new set of practices yet unthought of. But, before we, as a society, can come close to describing these new practices, we must ask what we mean by "intimacy" now. What has become of this term and how can we now use it?

In view of the many plausible definitions, it is perhaps best to define intimacy simply as a primary internal coherence among groups of actors, that which sets one group apart from others and from the mainstream. Yet, even this tentative definition threatens to break down. If Dumont is correct and culture is always in trouble, then the crisis of our epoch is not

entirely unique, and our definition would remain intact. But everywhere there are signs pointing to the uniqueness of our own time, which is evident in our society's inability to maintain intimacy amongst its members as a whole.

Intimacy today is a principal element in the uncertain relationships among individuals, society, and culture; its meaning is vague and subject to ceaseless variation. It is, in other words, implicated in the general crisis of disciplines that claim to reflect the life of the everyday world. What is intimacy and can it be rescued from the crisis of disciplines? At its most minimal, it is the purest form of Georg Simmel's definition of sociability: "While all human associations are entered into because of some ulterior interest, there is in all of them a residue of pure sociability or association for its own sake."[1] This residue, which we call intimacy, is both a process and an aesthetic state. In this duality, the "becoming" that intimacy may residually denote, the value that it still possesses, from the erotic to the economic, has the potential to shape a critical and informed disagreement with the world around us.

What has intimacy become? Even in the postmodern crisis of signs and disciplines, we still dream, think, and [pro]create. What do we mean when we say that we do these things "intimately"? We still regard these as integral and humanizing activities, ways in which values and meanings are transmitted to those with whom we choose to be close. But how can we say that these activities are equivalent to intimacy when intimacy itself is implicated in the collapse of signifying practices? In what follows, we show that a new theorization of intimacy and culture is possible, even necessary in our time, because of a broadly diffused crisis in the signs through which we traditionally understand intimacy. Yet we would be wrong to regard intimacy in crisis as a master code that would explain the fate of culture today: we cannot call for yet another social science that would simply appropriate intimacy. Many explanations, economic, intellectual, political, or familial, regardless of the differences in their contents, contain certain fragments of truth about the state of intimacy. By almost all indications, though, the always looming collapse of the social, the breakdown of institutions through which intimacy was traditionally expressed, and the irony produced by the crisis of signs, combine to produce a subject distanced from the residue of intimacy that sociability, in our reading of Simmel, contains.

Any attempt to expand the horizon of the social and the sociable is impossible in light of the fate of utopia in postmodernity. The postmodern drive to transform as much as possible into the full immediacy of visual stimuli provides one of the organizing metaphors for our existence today. Since McLuhan's *Understanding Media* and *The Medium is the Message*, the instantaneous yet alienated visual image of our intimate selves can be transmitted anywhere, whether at work, in love, or at rest. Under the signs of cosmopolitanism and autonomous personal lifestyles, we find an uneasiness, an anxiety caused by the erasure of

referents, that has been implanted as a genetic thread in the structures of postmodern life. Intimacy today is caught in this fully dynamic act of erasure.

We want to begin exploring this absence, which intimacy now connotes, from a variety of angles and within different discursive or dialogical forms,[2] namely those found within the secondary cultural products of American, Canadian, and Quebecois societies and the primary dialogical forms that articulate the moments of the cultural crisis which we inhabit. Why this limitation? If it is possible to momentarily escape the crisis of signs to touch the residuum of what we still hold as intimacy, then it is necessary to reflect upon the material of mundane daily life as we know it in our particular circumstances, and as it comes to us mediated through irony and multiple meaning. In this paper, we consider intimacy in the following forms: as it appears in Canadian cultural policy; and as it becomes an articulated problem in anthropological narratives that focus on reporting on and explaining the culture of people "over there" and their contact with us "here." We also want to explore the specificity of Quebec society through two popular commercial films of 1986 and 1987: *Le declin de l'empire americain* and *Un zoo la nuit*. These films are appropriate because of their representations of irony and their stark portrayals of urban and rural decadence throw the postmodern erasure of referents into high relief. We privilege an immanent critique that for the moment suspends the very real political and biological explanations that have reshaped intimacy, in the hope that a theoretical "highground" can be adhered to. With this in mind, we have also explored the differences between male and female erotic forms in the *New Dating Game*. This paper is decidedly less of a report of a clearly defined research program than it is an experiment in relating our thesis on intimacy and cultural crisis to the mundane, and at times trivialized, life of everyday North American society. In fact, it is an invitation to speculation and an effort to outline research questions that will offer a fresh look on what we as a society will be able to understand and signify by intimacy.

Sociability and Intimacy

What happens to culture when one society comes into contact with another? When the foundations of a peasant social structure disappear into contemporary formations? When the traditional can no longer hide in the cracks of modernity because of the cynical folklorization of the last trace of its value? Social scientists have been investigating the shifts in sociability, the capacity to maintain intimacy through association and its changes, for several decades. Shifts from *gemeinschaft* to *gesselschaft*, from mechanical to organic solidarity, from rural to urban, from symbolic to sign-based cultures, and from face-to-face contact to serialization, are

only a few of the concepts used to address the questions of culture in crisis.

Explaining postmodern shifts in sociability is problematic, not so much because of the reported death of the social, but because of the speed at which horizons of explanation are shifting. Baudrillard's attempt at a theory of the postmodern is somewhat incomplete in that he seemingly offers little explanation for the appearance of new forms of sociability that emerge as institutions collapse in the face of crisis.[3] Baudrillard's work, however, offers an important point of departure, leading to the suggestion that communication, not alienation, is today's dominant social experience. Another way of understanding Baudrillard's position is to theorize sociability as having become disengaged from the disciplinary tools that traditionally have constructed the social: "all events, all spaces, all memories are abolished in the sole dimension of information." Today our most fragile and intimate moments are mirrored back at us in impersonal survey information and statistical communications. The real becomes instantly more real: it has becomes fully quantified. Social totalities with specific histories become numerical blocs in the hyperreal. "Obscenity begins when there is no more spectacle, no more stage, no more theatre, no more illusion, when everything becomes immediately transparent and visible, exposed in the raw and inexorable light of information and communication."[4] Intimacy itself has moved into the hyperreal, existing as series of statistical features.

Quebec: Or the Intimacy of the Distinct Society

> "Is the frantic drive for personal happiness we see in society linked to the decline of the American Empire as we are now experiencing it?"
>
> Denis Arcand, *Le declin de l'Empire Americain*.

Quebec itself, as a living representation of the transformation of intimacy into its hyperreal state, is truly startling in that the collapse of the political will to emancipation, what was also a promise for a new kind of recognition of intimacy, has penetrated individual will. The nagging question remains though: to what extent does the emancipation of the individual depend on political emancipation of the type contemplated in Quebec? With the latter in decay, what can the former mean?

Forty years ago, Quebec was one of the western world's most traditional societies. Today it is part of the postmodern avant-garde, as is well illustrated by one of Marcel Rioux's most often-quoted statements: "to be Quebecois is to accept to live dangerously".[5] Amongst its youth, it reports the highest suicide rate in the post-industrial world. It has recently surpassed the West German record for the lowest fertility rate.

Today, fifty percent of the Quebec population marries. Of those that do not marry, only a small fraction enter into common law relations. Of the portion that does marry, more than one half are divorced. Quebec demographers say that this society is a place where people increasingly live alone, a status for which there is even a provincial tax exemption. When these statistics are combined with information on wife battering, child abuse, alcoholism, and drug addiction, one cannot help but speculate that these trends point to a specific and negative-tending form of de-industrialization. This form throws new light on the continuing de-industrialization of the Maritime Provinces, and curiously, Quebec may be the clearest and most contemporary example of a process one might call "Maritimization". This process includes the concentration of regional resources around a central city: Montreal, and it also means that the decline of the centre is equivalent to the decline of the entire region. What is nationalism in this context? It is the recurring, perhaps nostalgic, claim to regional identity, a condition that inescapably implicates intimacy. Against Denis Arcand's vision, we argue that Quebec is not witnessing the decline of the American Empire from the sidelines; it is itself on the leading edge, tracing the outlines of a future in which nationalism is an uncertainty.

Cultural products are also reports on the cultural environment. *Un Zoo La Nuit* may be one such decisive object for the "emancipated" generation in Quebec.[6] It is precisely the escape from the effects of the much-promised emancipation of Quebec's political independence that is the subject of this film. Lauzon's work may be called a political metaphor about the reconciliation between isolated generations and cultures. The film seems to say that Quebec's future politics is connected to the difficult reconciliation between generations, as represented by the development of an intimate connection between Albert and Marcel, between father and son. The political problem is an old one: Albert has no heir. The old Quebec, tied to an unproblematic nature and to a Catholicism unwilling to acknowledge alienation and *ressentiment*, its public waiting for a female ideal that has not been seduced by American capitalism, has no hope of seeing itself in the face of its "emancipated" younger version: it cannot project the best of itself forward. This old Quebec has no heir and its life will be without communicable meaning. Slowly Marcel realizes this while extricating himself, and some of his generation, from the wastes of urban life in Quebec in the 1980s. The reconciliation between Marcel and Albert verges on a religious phenomenon.

But the film also contains a horrifying representation of the general degradation of the visual sense brought on by urban scum-culture. A scene in a peep show transmits this perfectly. The terrified girl is about to be mutilated and painfully killed by two sadistic crooked cops in front of Marcel's eyes. He keeps feeding the peep machine tokens so that he can keep seeing the torture. Marcel's past relationship with the girl is just

a cinematic excuse to keep Marcel watching. But as he watches and keeps feeding tokens, it becomes unmistakably clear that we employ vision now only to see the mutilation and degradation that daily pervades the culture and our environment. Even though this portrayal is confined to the criminal underworld, a maliciously ironic cycle is established in which we see in order to witness degradation, and in turn our overly sensitive vision becomes capable of seeing only the prevalence of obscenity. This is of course a profound metaphor on another level as well: the sacrifice of women becomes everyday titillation, a violence that has become "trivial". That the crisis in urban culture appears only now means that elements of this crisis have been accumulating for some time. This crisis is not so much about aesthetics or taste as it is about the contours of Foucault's "therapeutic state." It is about physiology: the visual and the communicative capacities as potential vehicles of intimacy are decaying in a culture that has been radically transformed across generations and through our senses.

Denis Arcand's film, *Le declin* carries a similar message, although it differs in terms of the contact between urban and rural cultures. Mario, lover of one of the members of the decaying intelligentsia portrayed in the film, is the connector between urban and rural culture in the new Quebec. His taste for sadistic sexuality brings him to the comfortable hideaway that Quebec's professorial elite have established, and he is welcomed there as a possibly interesting friend. Arcand's message: bucolic visions of an unspoiled nature and the unspoiled life of the country folk are museum pieces in the new Quebec. If anything, there is no longer any difference between the urban and rural on the register of sexual taste and appetite. Nature, to the extent that it's still preserved, is simply a silent and indifferent witness shrugging its shoulders at the professoriat portrayed in its actual decline.

Mario is Marcel's spiritual relation. Arcand's and Lauzon's visions of a degraded cultural environment feature these two characters as reporters on the current level of crisis and also as indicators of future possibilities. Paradoxically, we know nothing about their specific futures at the conclusion of either film: Mario drives off leaving the professoriat in the disarray of something like a post-nuclear dawn, while Marcel prays in silence beside his dead father. As far as inheriting some future possibility for a cultural rehabilitation outside of institutions, Marcel and Mario are portrayed as the only choices. Ironically though, both these films still work within the deeply Catholic framework of Quebec heroism: the male is shown as the only one strong enough to walk out into the dangerous territory on his own type of mission. But we must keep in mind that the portrayal of these figures provides a metaphor for the distance and alienation that have been institutionalized within ourselves as an ironic component in our day-to-day existence.

Culture and Irony: Why This Canada?

It is traditional in national studies to compare the meanings assigned to discourses across the social formations of both Quebec and Canada. Since the previous discussion outlined certain key problematics that are located within Quebec, it is necessary for us, especially in view of our opening remarks, to remember that we are examining the value assigned to intimacy as a social good that undergoes significant changes when it is extracted from the specificity of Quebec. We can outline this shift through a suspension of disciplinary conventions and through as direct an analysis as possible of mainstream cultural products as representations of ironic forms of intimacy. We must, therefore, assess the extent to which the administrative state in both Canada and Quebec has inserted itself into our daily lives. The state today can be seen as a producer of an accessible intimate "surface", whether through policies in pornography or AIDS education, through which intervention in social processes on both individual and collective levels is made possible. Conceptions of intimacy are in part shaped by the state and by institutions generally. Paradoxically, the socially corrosive effects of institutional legitimation functions tend to the elimination of specific characteristics of the cultural domains that they were designed to represent. The Canadian type of political solution that tries to reinvigorate cultural life through administrative practices creates instead an apparent absence on both collective and individual levels which is generally filled by surrogates or caricatured representations of culture and of intimacy.

An illustration of this intimacy and communication might well be represented by the 1986 *Canadian Task Force Report on Broadcasting*. The *Caplan-Sauvageau Report*, as well as the Quebec films we have mentioned, are artifacts that do not conceive of the range of problems that are associated with communications and reporting in postmodern conditions. For these instruments, culture, as an authentic tissue of public discourse, is not problematic whatsoever; they go about the business of producing reports on Canadian culture and associated cultural industries in a supremely literal style whose medium of expression and whose focus diminish the specificity of the objects reported on. But this public style has certain features for analysts: there are no annoying problems about meaning and language or power or colonialism. Everything can be taken at face value in this hyperliteral horizon. We are encouraged by institutions of the state to remain indifferent towards the alienation of our autochthonous intimacy through the production of surfaces through which intervention is made not only possible, but legitimate and indeed wanted.

Culture as Incommunicability

The opposite of the preceding analysis might be called the futility of communicating meaning. This suggests that language has nothing but itself to refer to: its presence on the page is simply testimony to the surrounding absence, it is the visual representation of the always collapsing ironic horizon. Style becomes the essential parody of presence as it reifies the page, converting it into a slippery slope deflecting all climbers. There is no difference here. Clifford Geertz looks at this disturbing political extreme in the context of anthropological writing.[7] Geertz says:

> However far from the groves of academe anthropologists seek out their subjects—a shelved beach in Polynesia, a charred plateau in Amazonia—they write their accounts in the world of lecterns, libraries, blackboards and seminars. In itself, Being There is a postcard experience ["I've been to Katmandu—have you?"] It is being here, as a scholar among scholars, that gets your anthropology read, published, reviewed, cited and taught.

This anthropological problem is close to everyday Canadian experience. All reporting, and perhaps all discourse on culture, fictional or anthropological, is an activity of writing what is seen somewhere else. It is taking from there and bringing here. It is a reshuffling of blank cards, especially in the institutional representations produced by Canadian cultural industries. There is no "there" to write about. The sense of "there" as being a place that is qualitatively different, that is "other," is a by-product of institutional culture. It is a reified geography, a cartographic excess symptomatic of the visual overload produced by cultural industries.

Geertz continues:

> What is at hand is a pervasive nervousness about the whole business of claiming to explain enigmatical others on the grounds that you've gone about with them in their native habitat. ... Both the world that anthropologists ... study ... and the one that for the most part study it from—academia—have vastly changed.

For Geertz, this is a two-headed crisis. It is not only that one culture cannot enter into another to explain that other. It is not that the act of writing carries no meaning except that of the language itself, which might be only self-referentially ironic. It also means the erasure of the power relationship that allowed one writer to stand apart from an other and try to describe that other based on an informed individual observation. There is not only a reversal of positions between observer and observed, but what was valid about the observed in the past can no longer be made valid: the observed now simply reflects the dreams of the observer in a ressentiment which mocks distance and difference. Ethnog-

raphy, or cultural reporting, can no longer convince anyone of anything. As Geertz says:

> The capacity to persuade readers (most of them academic) that what they are reading is an authentic account by someone personally acquainted with how life proceeds in some place, at some time, among some group, is the basis upon which anything ... ethnography seeks to do ... finally rests. The moral asymmetries across which ethnography works and the discursive complexity within which it works make any attempt to portray it as anything more than the representation of one type of life in the categories of another impossible to defend.

Three points are made here: 1) Readers have to be convinced, by writing or by some other representation, that things somewhere else are the way they are said to be; 2) that reporting on culture, one's own or anyone else's is ultimately a construction of the other in one's own terms and thereby an erasure of difference; and 3) that the fantasies of the observed are the only things visible now. The telescope has become a mirror.[8] Not only is the act of writing, as an activity representative of something radically other, called into question, (writing becomes solely autobiographical) but the capacity to convince anyone that things are the way I say they are is no longer there. The power relation that enabled this is no longer there. Nothing I say can convince anyone of anything. The public consensus has dissolved, as has the auditory capacity necessary for this kind of dialogue. At this extreme of dissolution, there is no authentic public discourse about anything except the nostalgia of what power was like. It is apparent that Geertz has provided an excellent allegory for one aspect of intimacy and the nostalgia for power and for authoritative discourse of any kind whatsoever that intimacy is concretely bound to.

Intimacy is deeply bound to consensus and to those institutions that are engaged in the production of consensus. Dumont's concern about the primary institutions of social life–the family, friendships, community–is also represented, we argue, in the "secondary" institutions of culture: television, the state, the economy. These institutions are no longer capable of generating consensus; and this in itself is a positive result of our time, enabling emergent forces to replace older ones. Nevertheless if there is to be any communicable desire that may energe, it is undoubtedly that we wish to consider ourselves fully capable of intimate thoughts and acts. We claim this for ourselves and for those around us, and importantly, we claim this for future generations. If we accept Dumont's concern, then we must also accept that intimacy is impossible outside of some institutional form allowing the communication of meaning and desire. And to the extent that television is one such form, we must stare back at the image that McLuhan, for example, reflects in *Understanding Media* and ask: when the images disappear from our screens, does intimacy also disappear with them?

The images of Quebec and Canada that we have presented, and the reflections that they provide on intimacy, tend to represent intimacy as disagreement. That is, intimacy was bound to the political drive toward independence in Quebec, as in any other community in which members have shared understandings, as part of its deep disagreement with an external definition of its inmost character. The profound irony of Canadian culture and its institutions is then to claim that specific cultures have a minimal value as articulators of intimacy. "Canada" therefore also represents a particular aesthetic state that has evolved through a network of institutions aimed primarily at diminishing the intimacy of any "distinct society" within "Canada" itself. The final images of both films *Le declin* and *Un Zoo* are testimony to this aesthetic: the processes that have been tied to intimacy collapse, leaving only a dead calm in which there is neither sociability nor intimacy. This offers a startlingly real, and Canadian, representation of what Geertz refers to in his discussion of anthropological reporting.

Lived Intimacy and the Inner Erotic

The institutional representations of intimacy that enter into the questions of cultural policy and reporting suggest a consideration of intimacy as a lived aesthetic form which defines the creative dimensions of the day-to-day. Here, we employ the distinction between primary and secondary culture as an analytic device.[9] Eroticism, as the inner expression of primary lived culture, is separated from the secondary institutional representations that we discussed above. Here, intimacy is the attraction between actors; it is the reduction of a gap, the *rapprochement*, the filling of an absence. Perhaps the purest aesthetic form of intimacy, the primary intimacy that we live, is located in eroticism. It is an aesthetic state that links real and imaginary associations. Bataille points out, for example, that the associative impulse suggested by eroticism is not derived exclusively from sexuality.[10] Indeed, his discussion of the erotic contrasts it with the biology of sex, thereby establishing the peculiar instance of the imaginary as the agency which separates humans from other animals. This imaginary suggests an "inner erotic" which involves the anticipation of a response from the other as well as the construction of the other as object. Eroticism then, as we link it to the inner erotic of the imaginary, is much more the wish for a response to our own intimate self, and less the objectification of the other through power. Television's attempts to appropriate this inner erotic is the subject for this part of our discussion. Before we explore the public representations of this aesthetic state, we must first consider some of the controversy surrounding its existential definition.

Even in the most telling of feminist theories that explore a critique of intimacy, the existential constitution of the erotic as "inner being," is often indirectly addressed. The erotic is usually defined relationally; a political horizon is used in an explanation of eroticism. Mariana Valverde, for example, states: "Where there is strong eroticism, there is power."[11] Defining the erotic as power does not allow an immanent critique, but reduces it to the sexual by fixing the tyranny of the male gaze perpetually in patriarchy. Defining the erotic in relation to the political, and ultimately to the moral and ethical economies of a culture, is certainly preliminary to a newer practice and a newer theorization. But the erotic must first be located in its specific autonomy, in its critical dialogical relation to emancipation and domination, as well as in its immanent ability to construct dynamic practices. This means that the autonomy of erotic forms is open to analysis apart from gender, sexuality, and the political horizon accompanying it. This suggests, in turn, implications for theories of difference.[12] French feminists and their North American homologues argue that sexual difference is the issue of the epoch. Luce Irigaray argues: "La difference sexuelle represente une des questions ou la question qui est a penser a notre epoque."[13] We argue that this formulation tends to establish difference fundamentally within the sexual and gendered, and not within the erotic imaginary.[14] Privileging the erotic means that the Freudian establishment of only one sexuality, one drive, and one desire is secondary to our purpose, as is Baudrillard's claim that sexuality is masculine and seduction feminine. These views become secondary to definitions of difference because this difference cannot exist without the immanence of the erotic imaginary. Just as the erotic is necessary to the libido; sociability, association, or even simulated intimacy are necessary to difference.

Feminist psychoanalysts also address the primacy of the imaginary in their critiques of difference, and dismiss its biochemical origins. Julia Kristeva reports on the recent genetic finding that locates depression in the feminine X chromosome.[15] She also argues that the chemical treatment of the genetic base invariably shows a misunderstanding of the imaginary, and reduces the subject to nothing more than a complex chemical and biological compound. Linking the imaginary to the biological or to the political may be a necessity in instrumental strategies for change, but this link does not always supply an immanent perspective on the imaginary. Below we outline an immanent critique by hypothesizing the "inner erotic" production of differences in a variety of representations across gendered erotic forms of the imaginary. We do not intend to report on a wide spectrum of erotic genres. More to the point, we focus on applying the dialogical form to the function of the erotic as a point of departure, and theorize the immanence of the erotic imaginary. At this stage, our method operates only on what is generally regarded as heterosexual discourse.

The Eroticism of the Day-to-Day

The Italian sociologist Francesco Alberoni defines the differences between the male and female erotic imaginary as a dialectic between the extremes of continuity as dreamed by the woman, and the extremes of discontinuity as dreamed by the man.[16] We argue for the dialogical, not dialectical, construction of these forms. Each extreme is an anticipation of the other, not as it really is, but, as Geertz argues it, as it is imagined by the other. Dialogical form, at its simplest, is one actor's anticipation of a rejoinder from an addressee that is inscribed within the utterance or word itself. A dialogical definition of the relationship between continuity and discontinuity then takes the polyvalent nature of the word and its elusive place in the imaginary as its datum. The idea of the unspoken or of the secret may well be the elusive key to discontinuous eroticism, as Alberoni defines it. From pornography to prostitution, the extreme discontinuous form in which eroticism is contained and expressed allows the perpetuation of the illusion that satisfaction has occurred at some level. And this is valorized in the illusion that the secret and its value have apparently been transferred from seller to buyer, that "satisfaction" is available for a price in the system of exchange. In an intertextual relation, pornography is bound to contemporary advertising forms. The viewer must complete the never completed story line in the purchase of a particular fiction: their participation in the primarily visual system of symbolic exchange is complete upon purchase and satisfaction is guaranteed. The eroticism or sensuousness immanent to the specific object is obviously not the point here; rather, the point is to reproduce the symbolic exchange of visual consumption. This eroticism does not seek a response to itself, it fixes the other as an object for whom response is not a question.

If pornography aimed at men can assure itself that women and men have identical structures of desire, then female eroticism, as conventionally represented, perpetuates a continuous male role-response throughout the entire spectrum of popular media, ranging from magazines and pulp fiction to daytime television.[17] What is seen as "mainstream female eroticism" is an attempt to equate a quasi-genetic anticipation of sensual continuity with the representation of the female. The soap opera's decontextualized sexual encounter, in which male or female adopts the dominant position is rarely the issue. Rather the less-threatening "capacity to be loved" (a passive construction that is generally disputed) is institutionally produced and results in a divided and distorted eroticism. The first aspect of this divided eroticism is the construction of female subjectivity as being passive and non-threatening. This is a function helped by the fashion and cosmetics industries whose products generate a discourse of "feeling good" which colonizes the consumer's life-world. The second erotic aspect is linked to seduction. Attracting the other

becomes thought of as an erotic stimulation which confirms seductiveness and thus converts passivity into a sense of power. This dual construction constitutes the reified and institutionally supported erotic moment. In the extreme, this forces a response from the other confirming continued interest, and enables this type of claim: "A man thinks first of the sexual act when he sets out on a conquest. When a woman looks to a conquest, she thinks first of an emotional eroticism that allows her to make sure his desire remains permanent."[18]

To summarize our preliminary analysis of intimacy as an institutional product, we argue that: in cultural productions aimed at women and produced increasingly by women, the liberating polyvalent character of female eroticism is chained to the desire to be loved continuously. The production of continuity, and the attempts to locate it in the female character, deny the possibility that continuity may just as easily be a type of eroticism wished for by the male character. While the male is shown to have the similar desire, he is also shown to be susceptible to the overwhelmingly visual extreme of discontinuity, a flaw that the intelligent and alert woman, the one in every commercial, is shown as being able to remedy.

Semiotics of the Scene and Obscene: The All New Dating Game

The TV game show is essential for considering the dialogical relation between these extremes of continuity and discontinuity. We will probe Baudrillard's "obscene secret" of the object, the dialogical form of the erotic imaginary, in the context of a game show that takes intimacy as its theme. The political, economic, or cultural features of the program, the glorification of the televised document, and the caricatured sexist and racist banter, are secondary to aiming the critique at television's distorted representations of intimacy.

At the bottom of television's institutional hierarchy of genres, there exists a faked lightness, a false comic sense that counters the prime-time drama and newsspeak on the more serious top end. Grafted onto the narratives of contemporary irony, the television game show feeds on the rapid doubling of utterance, on the reversal of signification, and on the fostering and maintenance of a conservative solidarity with an interiorized audience through the ridiculing or highlighting of a guest contestant. As author of its own text, the institution of television takes more than audience ratings into account in the construction of narratives. When we consider the dialogical form of the game show, it is much more important to highlight the interiorized audience than to track empirical reception of the program. This interior dialogue becomes a privileged location that provides an insight into the power relations of American television as

institution, and into norms regarding the maximum possible public discourse on the erotic and the minimum number of social constraints imposed on its expression.

Of the current games that show intimacy as their theme, (we could have selected from any one of a dozen others for analysis) the *All New Dating Game* is one of the most exemplary. It constantly plays at the edge of the erotic by feigning a conflict between ordinary innocence and the obscene edge of its public disapproval. In crude terms, the interiorized audience physically represents this conflict. Research ascribes a carnivalesque quality[19] to this genre, but it can never be carnivalesque in a Bakhtinian sense because of the reification inherent in the institution. There are words that cannot be uttered, reversals that cannot occur, an entire "semiotic chora" that can never be drawn on.[20] Still, in its simulation of the carnivalesque, the game show advertises itself as playing on the verge of some transgression. In terms of format, a narrator introduces three members of the same sex to the studio audience (generally they are paid female high school students from southern California). Each reveals details of their dating behavior and then the narrator moves on to introduce the "competitor" from the opposite sex who must choose a date based on the responses to questions posed to the three potential "dates" hidden behind a screen. After considering the responses, the competitor is introduced to the person chosen and details of their coming "date" are announced. While the screen that separates the contestants cancels out a visual dimension, all the objects remain perfectly visible through the virtual exuberance of the studio audience, acting on the narrator's encouragement. The story line is never completed, we are left to fill in what remains of the fantasy; and in so doing the privacy in which the "date" occurs becomes an object that obsesses the audience: this becomes the elusive target for the surveillance mechanisms of television. What is most striking about the dialogical form is how the addressee is constructed as object. The female uses resistance as she probes the object, she asks: "what changes about yourself from the first to the second date?" She doesn't really want to know who that man really is; rather, she wants to know if he can be what she wants him to be. He holds back, he feigns what he thinks she wants to hear, he plays on her sympathy. The first tells us that he becomes "more himself somehow" on the second date while another says that he just becomes "more quiet"; the third responds that he "introduces romance" [read:sex]. Suffice it to say that the male who reveals the sign of discontinuity (there is at least one on every exchange) is never picked. When he responds to her question "what is the one thing you would never do on a date" by saying that "I'd never show up at your house naked", he eliminates himself from the game. Here the sign of discontinuity is ironically reversed and also doubled: the audience knows that he has come too close to the transgressive scene, their reflex is to reject him. In choosing the sign of nakedness as an extreme of what he would not do, his utterance is ironically

reversed to the point that the audience is convinced that that is exactly what the contestant would in fact do.

This double-voiced interior dialogism is also the operative mode with male contestants choosing from among females, but here it is couched in the motif of discontinuity. Here, continuity is reversed, doubled, and distanced. When he asks, "what would you never ask a guy to do on a date?" he is not addressing the quality of her "person," as one would expect in the motif of continuity. Rather he is seeking to confirm that which most closely fits his discontinuous aspiration. She also holds back on her response and attempts to simulate what she thinks he wants to hear. The first tells him that she wouldn't want him to "open doors for her" or act in the "old school," while the second informs us that she "would never ask a man to kiss her," and the third claims that she "would never ask a man to dance nude at a table." Each simulates an element of discontinuity. Unlike the continuous motif in which the sign of discontinuous transgression is reversed and thereby eliminated from the game, the "nude dancing" response of the third contestant which plays with discontinuity is also reversed, but it is celebrated rather than negated. Again, in choosing the sign of nakedness as an extreme of what she would not ask, her utterance is reversed to the point where the interiorized audience is convinced that dancing nude is exactly what she might ask of him. In effect, she wins the game by simulating the response expected of her.

While this reading of the scene of intimacy is necessarily cursory, we can draw two preliminary hypotheses from it: first, the extreme motifs of continuity and discontinuity dialogically construct the other as object through the medium of the television set virtually embedded in the audience. In its object form, the referent of an inner eroticism or intimate self is abandoned and only a model or simulacrum remains. This is the irony of the institution. Second, the model constructs a panic theatre by adjusting the parameters of transgression to fluid public norms that construct the shifting horizon of what is permissible and what is obscene. In exaggerating the intimacy of the ordinary erotic, television produces the obscene object whose job it is to always be stripped of its already fake veneer and innocence. The secret is uncovered in a simulational process that generates intimacy as a panic fear of transgression and renders it equivalent to a trusting docility.

Transgression, Irony, and the Will to Symptoms

We have introduced some of the issues that are essential to a preliminary theorization of intimacy and its links with cultural representation and eroticism. Fundamental to this beginning is a consideration of the polyvalent nature of irony and its relationship to the imaginary. In this way, irony is potentially linked to resistance, and to what intimacy may

be like in the inner erotic. The element most crucial to our presentation of intimacy is this: that erotic and intimate capacities are separate from political, biological, or gender-based reductions. These can only be imperfect renderings of the intimate imaginary into a horizon which, in the postmodern crisis of disciplines, is tending toward collapse. As we have shown, simulational models or scenes serve to double and reverse utterance, and so eliminate and trivialize any possible encounters with the specific imaginary of the other. This is a metaphor for the erasures produced by institutional culture and offered to the interiorized audience constructed by each medium. In essence, these hyperreal simulations have become the everyday norm, amplified across the social to become the reality of intimacy and eroticism. As the simulation is concentrated into the virtual image, the fact of the hyperreal itself is erased from the horizon. This absence, resulting from the collapse of difference, then becomes an interiorized "real" which alienates contact with the imaginary, forcing back on the social an entire array of caricatured representations of intimate and other kinds of relationships.

A future extension of our critical model of intimacy in such a way as to articulate the difference between cultural crisis and transgression must be reflected upon. What appears as cultural crisis takes a nihilistic and reversed construction of intimacy for its basis, uncritically and unthinkingly accepting docility as a dominant principle. What is the fundamental irony of intimacy now? Is it the acceptance of passivity and docility as the peak of what intimacy means? Reflecting on transgression, however, is bound to a different sense of irony, a version that affirms the critical potentialities of an intimacy that is bound to the inexorable alternations between crisis and transgression: the desire for an intimate response instead of fixity. For this, and for further work, it is useful to remember Alberoni and Geertz: as much as Alberoni would want to locate continuity in the female and discontinuity in the male, it becomes too easy to suspect that the formulation that he offers reflects the types of fantasy and nostalgia that power, which Geertz reports in anthropological reporting, was once able to confer. Intimacy then, consonant with Simmel's definition with which we began, may be that residuum of signs associated with crisis and transgression, indifferent to power and resisting definition. That this residuum of signs has meaning at all today is ironic, yet promising of something new.

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Notes

1. For a fuller indication of the concept of sociability that we are employing here, see Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Sociability" tr. E.C. Hughes, *American Journal of Sociology*, LV (November 1949); "Female Culture" in *Georg Simmel on Women, Sexuality and Love*. ed. G. Oakes, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

   The reader might also refer to other translations of Simmel's work which contain differences in the concept of sociability. Kurt Wolff's translation, for example, places more emphasis on intimacy as a particular way of distinguishing between insiders and outsiders, or members and non-members. See Wolff, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (Glencoe, Il.: Free Press, 1950). Also in this context, the reader may consult R. K. Merton, "Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge." in *American Journal of Sociology* 78:1 (July, 1972). As we have tried to point out, however, intimacy connotes many plausible definitions, none of which may easily be ruled out.

2. On the subject of dialogical form, see: M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 147. Also see G. M. Neilsen, "Reading the Quebec Imaginary" in *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 12 (1987): 1-2.

   As well, see Brian Singer, "Introduction to Castoriadis" in *The Structural Allegory*: Reconstructive Encounters with the New French Thought, ed. J. Fekete. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.)

3. Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication* (New York: Semiotexte, 1988). Baudrillard's other work is considered helpful here, particularly: *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos, 1971). The reader may also consult Baudrillard's *Simulations* and his *De la seduction*.

4. Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy Of Communication*.

5. Marcel Rioux, *La Question du Quebec* (Montreal: HMH, 1987).

   Regarding the population and demographic issues currently plaguing the province of Quebec, see: G. Caldwell and D. Fournier, "The Quebec Question: a matter of population." *Canadian Journal of Sociology* No. 1-2 (Spring 1987). This article represents a critical and invaluable reference point for the types of relationships and shifts that we discuss here. Also see the *Globe and Mail* editorial for September 18, 1989.

6. See the series of interviews in *Cinema Canada* with Roger Frappier, January 1988; with Jean Claude Lauzon, June 1987; and Micheal Dorland's review of *Un Zoo La Nuit*, September 1987. We disagree with Dorland's remark that "Once his father is dead, there is nothing to keep Marcel 'here' any longer. He is free to leave, and you can bet your US dollars he will." Dorland's concern for Canadian film development agencies ("...Telefilm, the NFB, the SGC, and Radio Canada yet again pick up the tab for the vocational training for the Canadian filmmaker whose vocation these days ... still consists in making preparations for escape") reflects a misunderstanding of the character of Marcel in Un Zoo. Dorland's misunderstanding can perhaps be attributed to a lack of appreciation for a Quebecois cultural project that remains distinct from the temptations of American or other empires.

7. Clifford Geertz, "Being There, Writing Here," *Harper's* (May 1988).

8. See for example Italo Calvino, *Mr. Palomar* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1985).

9. For an expansion of this analytic device see, for example, Marcel Rioux, *Essai de sociologie critique*, (Montreal: HMH, 1978). Also see Fernand Dumont, *Le lieu de l'homme*, (Montreal: HMH, 1968). The reader may also consult Dumont's article "La

raison en quete de l'imaginaire," *Imaginaire sociale et representations collectives* : Melanges offerts a Jean-Charles Falardeau. ed. F. Dumont and Y. Martin (Quebec: Presses Universitaire Laval, 1982). Also see this article in relation to Castoriadis, *Structural Allegory* , fn 14.

10. Georges Bataille, *Oeuvres Completes* vol. 8 *L'erotisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

11. Mariana Valverde, *Sex, Power and Pleasure* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1987).

12. The reader is referred to constructions of difference that are helpful in expanding the conception that we use here: *Screen* 28 (Winter 1987)1 ; *The Future of Difference*, H.Eisenstein and A. Jardine, eds. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987); we also suggest: H. Cixous and C. Clement, *The Newly Born Woman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

13. Luce Irigaray, *L'ethique de la difference sexuelle* (Paris: editions de minuit, 1984).

14. We do not employ the term "imaginary" in a Lacanian sense. Instead, the reader is referred to note 2 above, especially to Brian Singer's translation of the work of Cornelius Castoriadis in *The Structural Allegory* where the relationship drawn between the importance of the symbolic in relation to the imaginary is made quite clear:

> The profound and obscure nature of the relation between the symbolic and the imaginary becomes apparent as soon as one reflects on the following: the imaginary must utilize the symbolic, not only in order to be "expressed"—this is self-evident—but in order to "exist," to move beyond amerely virtual state of existence. The most elaborate delirium, like the vaguest and most secret phantasm, consists of "images," but these "images" are present as representations of something else, and so have a symbolic function. But inversely, symbolism presupposes an imaginary capacity....In the last analysis, we are dealing with the elementary and irreducible capacity for evoking images.

C. Castoriadis, "The Imaginary Institution of Society," trans. B. Singer, in *The Structural Allegory* 9-10.

15. Julia Kristeva, "Entretien avec Julia Kristeva," *Magazine Litteraire* (July 1987) 16-19.

16. Francesco Alberoni, *De L'erotisme*, trans. R Couder (Paris: Ramsay, 1987).

17. For a fine discussion of the role of the male in contemporary mainstream feminine erotic representations, see Angela Miles, "Confessions of a Harlequin Reader" in the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*. 12 (1988) 1-2. This discussion is crucial to the treatment of mainstream representations with which we work. It also underscores the analytical possibilities of reading ordinary texts without reference to, but being aware of the changes that practices and representations at "the margins" might cause in the reception of such things as "ordinary texts," if in fact these demonstrably exist.

18. Alberoni, "De l'erotisme," 44, where he also says: "Men believe that women adore their erections, that they love the God Priapus; in reality, however, women instead desire the continuity of the male interest, gentleness, a freedom from restraint and passion." (our translation).

19. John Fiske, *Television Culture* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

20. Julia Kristeva, Revolution du langage poetique (Paris: Seuil, 1987).

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LE GRIMOIRE POSTMODERNE AU QUÉBEC (FIN DE SIÈCLE)

Caroline Bayard

Grimoire - Forme dialectale de grammaire qui, au Moyen-Age, désigne la grammaire latine que le vulgaire ne pouvait comprendre..

Grimoire - formulaire à l'usage des magiciens et des sorciers *pour évoquer* les morts et les malins esprits.

Grimoire = par extension livre écrit, indéchiffrable, discours inintelligible.

[Larousse du XXe siècle. Paris, Larousse, Tome 3, p. 884.]

Est-il pertinent en cette fin de siècle de suggérer la possibilité d'une littérature nationale et, à l'ère du postmodernisme, la notion même de littérature québécoise est-elle encore viable? Pierre Nepveu[1] a éloquemment—et récemment—témoigné de ces distances à l'égard de tels paramètres et il est difficile de ne pas souscrire à sa réflexion. Simultanément, dans une fin de siècle que Paul Chamberland déclare résolument illetrée, époque dont " le pacte de lecture est rompu,[2] est-il pertinent d'essayer d'établir un état présent du postmodernisme littéraire au Québec?

Ce dernier soulève dans l'Amérique du nord francophone, comme du reste partout ailleurs, de curieuses problématiques. Mais peut être *plus* qu'ailleurs les contradictions qu'il recèle appellent-elles un examen attentif des omissions et des occultations en jeu dans ce proces-

sus, territorial, autant qu'imaginaire.

Personne n'a eu la tentation de commenter le début de la pensée philosophique française sur le postmodernisme. Il serait cependant difficile—à moins de faire preuve d'inattention—de faire l'économie du très laconique remerciement signé par Jean-François Lyotard dans son introduction *La Condition postmoderne*: C'est un Rapport sur le savoir dans les sociétés les plus développées qui a été proposé au Conseil des Universités auprès du gouvernement du Québec, à la demande de son président.[3]

Simultanément il serait illogique de ne pas se demander pourquoi l'instance gouvernementale qui a pris cette *initiative* (après tout l'impulsion n'est pas venue de Paris) se trouve curieusement reléguée au rang de commanditaire, l'heureux récipiendaire de cette recherche en étant ici une très hexagonale instance: tel qu'il est nous le dédions à l'Institut polytechnique de philosophie de l'Université de Paris VIII (Vincennes) au moment très postmoderne où cette université risque de disparaître et cet institut de naître.[4]

Ce grand début théorique surgit donc—du moins au niveau de l'intention théorique du projet—de l'Amérique du Nord francophone sans que cette origine suscite de commentaires précis parmi ses destinataires—le public occidental,—ni de réflexion particulière de la part de son agent principal (Lyotard). Curieux...

Lorsqu'on essaye de contextualiser les années qui précèdent, et suivent ce geste c'est à dire les décennies des années 70 et 80, le silence qui entoure l'*émergence du paradigme postmoderne* dans la culture littérature québécoise paraît particulièrement troublant. Réticences explicites et inconfortables au colloque de Nicole Brossard en 1982 lorsque la question partit de l'assemblée (y aurait-il un dialogue entre la mouvance postmoderne et le travail de Brossard?), un silence prolongé et malaisé pesant sur l'interrogation de nouveaux paradigmes percus lors comme venant d'ailleurs, d'Europe de l'Ouest, de l'Empire au Sud. Silence qui domine le champ presque jusqu'à la mi-décennie, même dans des revues littéraires, critiques, où l'on pourrait s'attendre à voir poser cette problématique, La *Nouvelle Barre du Jour, Les Herbes Rouges, Spirale, Etudes littéraires, Voix et Images, Etudes françaises*.[5] Il faudra attendre l'*Impureté* de Scarpetta (1985) et son impact au Québec pour que les fissures à l'intérieur de la métropole modernité soient énoncées, pour que la modernité québécoise se reconnaisse lasse, évidée, dé-passée—voire passéiste, obsolète—pour qu'un autre parcours s'en détache, des demi-refus et des revirements s'articulent avec hésitation dans la forteresse *nouvelle écriture*.[6] Louise Dupré et l'année 1986 s'avèreraient sans doute être des coincidences intéressantes à ce égard. C'est avec netteté que Dupré amorce un tournant conceptuel dans *Choisir la Poésie* (1986) lorsqu'elle énonce que son attention critique va tout spécialement aux auteurs/res de la modernité *et de la postmodernité*. Puisque ce n'est

pas seulement de la reconnaissance de ce paradigme qu'on lui sera redevable, mais du regard analytique qu'elle pose sur la contamination des genres littéraires au Québec. Il est intéressant de noter qu'elle choisit le terme de *perversion* pour qualifier ces interpénétrations génériques. Clin d'oeil à Guy Scarpetta et à son *Impureté?* (Paris, Grasset, 1985) qui aura eu un fort impact sur *Les Stratégies du vertige* publié quatre au plus tard par Dupré? C'est possible. Mais son discernement est particulièrement gratifiant en ce qui concerne la charnière modernité/postmodernité, le passage de la première à la seconde, la transition entre la lassitude de l'une et les nouvelles énergies de l'autre. La lecture critique que Dupré fera de ces mutations dans la collection d'essais éditée par Shirley Newman et Smaro Kamboureli *A-Mazing Space* mérite d'être notée: "in a diversity *of voices*, each with its own personal inflection, women writers have succeeded in restoring "life blood" to language... the texts become readable in a way which according to female critics belong to postmodernity."[7] Mais Dupré est loin de refléter ici sa génération. En fait un observateur attentif du territoire imaginaire de la culture serait—au début des années 80—en droit cependant de se demander pourquoi une *telle occultation* du paradigme postmodernité ne se retrouve pas dans d'autres aires discursives, celle du discours social des arts graphiques, de la vidéo, de la performance. Or il est évident qu'un parcours transversal des écrits de ces autres territoires imaginaires permet d'inférer exactement le contraire. Dans le champ des sciences sociales et de la pensée politique les écrits de Gordon Lefebvre[8] pour *Conjonctures* ou ses réflexions sur le rôle de l'intellectuel en 1984 suscitent des problématiques éminement pertinentes par rapport au postmodernisme. Citons, entre autres, ses réflexions sur l'intelligentsia québécoise en cette fin de siècle. l'occultation de la question nationale au cours des années 80, l'inavouable du sujet-nation escamoté au profit de la régionalité. Le malaise diagnostiqué ici est aussi la critique sévère d'une génération, d'une époque, de Parti Pris...au marxisme-léninisme, en passant par les échecs du mouvement indépendantiste.

Les méditations de Lefebvre sont doublement pertinentes pour un état présent de la pensée postmoderne au Québec. D'une part parce qu'il prend acte de la mort des avant-garde dans sa culture autant que dans le vaste contexte occidental:

> Maintenant que les avant-garde ont joué la carte de leur punition suicidaire, il faut se mettre en marche, sans tuteurs et sans guides, arpenter un pays de ruines politiques jusqu'à la sorti du tunnel.[9]

D'autre part parce qu'il est l'un des plus lucides analystes de ce besoin d'imaginaire post-référendaire, de ce qu'on pourrait aussi dénommer une soif de pensée post-nationaliste, à inventer, à décou-

vrir, qui pourraît surgir de ce que Lefebvre dénomme des formes *réchappées*, *hybrides,* nées du télécopage de morphologies différentes.

A l'opposé de Dupré, Lefebvre ne parle pas seul dans le désert sur cette problématique. De fait, il semblerait que sociologues et politicologues, au Québec, aient pallié aux carences théoriques de la réflexion littéraire. Pour preuve, il n'est que d'examiner les publications de Michel Freitag, en particulier son article; "Transformation de la société et mutation de la culture",[10] pour prendre acte de l'énergie conceptuelle circulant dans ce milieu. Le rôle de la revue *Conjonctures*[11] devrait être aussi tout particulièrement souligné. Le dynamisme et le ressort de cet index de la pensée sociale et politique dans l'Amérique du Nord francophone fait contraste avec la dangereuse autarcie théorique de revues comme *La Nouvelle Barre du jour* et *Les Herbes Rouges* qui, à partir des années 80, s'épuisent en querelles intestines sur la Modernité. Dans le champs des sciences sociales, on ne pourra non plus passer sous silence la présente revue,[12] ou les travaux d'Arthur Kroker[13] et de Daniel Salée[14] qui ont explicité les développements de la pensée postmoderne, en Amérique du Nord d'abord, au Québec ensuite. Dans les domaines des arts graphiques, de la performance, de la vidéo, certainement un parcours transversal, ne serait-ce que des découpes attentives de Chantal Pontbriand directrice de la revue *Parachute*, des travaux qui ont surgi dans la mouvance de ce périodique, des écrits de René Payant (voir son *Vedute*; *Pièces détachées sur l'Art*, 1976-1987, Laval: Editions Trois; 1988), son *Vidéo* (Montréal : Artextes, 1986) témoigneront de la vitalité de la pensée théorique postmoderne au Québec.[15]

En ce qui concerne la littérature (et théories associées) serait-on en droit de suggérer que la modernité aura finalement été l'ancêtre ridée, figure turbulente dans ses débuts, mais un peu aigre sur ses vieux jours de la postmodernité? Est-il bien nécessaire de revenir sur les lessives accomplies dans la riche endogamie québécoise, par Pierre Milot dans sa *Camera oscura du postmodernisme* (L'Hexagone, 1988) et Jean Larose avec sa *Petite Noirceur* (Boréal, 1986)? Ils ne se seront ni l'un, ni l'autre privés d'aller pratiquer un vigoureux labeur de lavandière sur la place publique ... bien qu'il soit peu probable que leur cible—l'intelligentsia québécoise—ait "entendu", métaphoriquement parlant, leurs critiques. Mais il est indispensable de leur reconnaître leurs mérites. Dans le registre de la polémique fulminante (Larose) et celui de la didactique chagrine (Milot) ils auront accompli un labeur de décapage, de distanciation vis-à-vis des avatars de la modernité,[16] d'illumination de ses chambres noires[17] (la postmodernité) et surtout engagé les participants (a) à une reconsidération du nombrilisme québécois[18] (b) à un examen plus sévère du grand sur moi français.[19]

Indépendamment des questionnements critiques de Larose et Milot

(du reste fort différents l'un de l'autre), plusieurs îlots interrogateurs émergent des pulsions théoriques qui caractérisent la décennie des années 80. Tout d'abord il faudra reconnaître que l'auto-psy[20] de la modernité aura été officiellement convoquée par la *Nouvelle Barre du Jour* en 1984. Découpage d'un cadavre réduit au rigors mortem?[21] ou démontage de ses schémas subconscients?[22] Brossard et les écrivains/nes du colloque lui font leurs adieux. Mais ce seront des adieux terriblement ambigus. Pour preuve, le virage pris par Nicole Brossard qui, au début du colloque mentionnera la "fascination de l'effet/modernité... illusion qui remplace l'effet de réalité" et à la fin de la dite session—qui a durement éreinté la modernité—... reconnaîtra que... "c'est pourquoi il nous faut changer de lexique et de réseau imaginaire".[23] De même, Carole Massé voudrait-elle s'assurer de l'inscription de la modernité québécoise dans celle du discours occidental... mais admet que cette garantie sera peut être aussi "notre épitaphe".[24] André Roy déclarera sa lassitude face à ce "copyright détenteur de la vérité ou cette Modernité élevée au rang de "norme",[25] Louise Cotnoir reconnaît la nécessité pour "les écrivaines [de sortir] la femme de cette langue ossifiée, momifiée".[26] Mais lorsque Michel Gay en appelle au "Modernité/merdonité" de Michel Leiris...[27] au delà de l'évidente insatisfaction collective,le seul consensus réel ce jour-là, il est aisé de percevoir la lassitude d'une communauté d'écrivains qui ne peut, ni ne veut, opérer par rapport à des paradigmes éculés ou plus poliment dira-t-on ce jour-là "fatigués" par référence au texte de l'un des pères[28] de la modernité québécoise, Hubert Aquin.

Il n'y aura ce jour-là que Line McMurray pour saluer sans hésitation dans un texte intitulé "short and sweet" la transmodernité/postmodernité[29]. Mais le "*trans*" est revélateur de la difficulté du passage, des tiraillements à l'oeuvre, de même que le titre de son intervention indique une irritation espiègle par rapport à ces convulsions théoriques.

Que toutes les avant-garde s'usent et que les ismes se transgressent les uns les autres relève du truisme. Mais pour l'observatrice qui n'est pas de ce lieu tout en en étant (par contagion et parasitisme),[30] pour celle qui dans une certaine économie[31] se retrouve donc en une instance gémellaire d'implication/et de non-appartenance (c'est évidemment le lieu de mon énonciation que je n'ai pas le droit d'escamoter) donc, dirais-je, à partir de ce locus là, il apparaît clair que le passage de la modernité au postmodernisme au Québec est malaisé.

Il serait peut-être temps pour l'appareil critico-littéraire québécois, si explicitement lié à l'élaboration de paradigmes théoriques, de se situer plus lucidement sur ce que je dénommerai le marché culturel de l'imaginaire. Il n'est point besoin d'être une lectrice assidue de Theodor Adorno, de Georg Lukàcs, ou, plus récemment de Jacques Dubois et Robert Escarpit pour identifier les rouages de base de tels

échanges. Une re/connaissance de ce parasitisme que pratiquent, en tout cas, les tenants de l'appareil universitaire et une identification minimale (1) des ressorts économiques de cette relation critique—écrivain (2) du capital symbolique dérivé par le premier de sa relation avec le second... ne saurait qu'être féconde. C'est en partie le silence total de Jean Larose et de Pierre Milot que je questionne. Si leurs analyses sont perspicaces et, qui plus est, largement attendues après une décennie d'autarcie critique, une ré-évaluation plus lucide, de leur part, des rôles qui furent les leurs, de leurs position à l'intérieur d'un champ social donné aurait été bénéfique. Finalement, leur silence n'est pas sans rappeller le laconisme de Lyotard par rapport au Québec, son commanditaire et pourvoyeur pour la fameuse *Condition postmoderne* (1979). En ce qui concerne le postmodernisme en Amérique du Nord je ne suis pas sûre qu'on puisse se permettre de faire l'économie d'une analyse de ce parasitisme, de Lyotard, à Larose à Milot, sans omettre ceux/celles d'entre nous qui font profession d'analyser ces problématiques.

Certes, l'émergence de ce paradigme postmoderne est marqué au Québec par des convulsions et hésitations qui diffèrent des éclatantes ruptures paradigmatiques précédentes.[32] De fait il n'y eut pas dans l'Amérique du Nord francophone de fracassantes déclarations sur le postmodernisme, ni même de manifestes équivoques—voires contradictoires—alors qu'il en fut pléthore dans l'Occident des trois dernières décennies.[33] Des constats, des diagnostics sur la phase terminale de la modernité, oui. Mais cela ne revient pas au même. L'imaginaire sait ce dont il ne veut plus,[34] mais il est moins clair qu'il sache ce dont il ne *saurait* se passer. Le Manifeste sur la mort du genre (1985) de Jean Yves Collette et Line McMurray—et à ne pas confondre avec le Colloque du maême nom organisé par ces deux auteurs en 1987—est un éclatant témoignage de cette attente fébrile et insatisfaite sur un seuil théorique. Le passé récent y est lucidement évalué mais l'immédiat théorique y demeure en suspens. Les tenants de la génération de *La Barre du jour* ne peuvent pas aller plus loin.

Beaucoup de lest aura été jeté par dessus bord, par la dite Modernité. Quelles seront les inscriptions qui auront survécu à son urgence, à son exigence de "tabula rasa", et, surtout, quel aura été le jeu de substitutions qui auront modifié la trame de ce grimoire?

La question de la représentation, de la lisibilité, qui aura fait couler beaucoup d'encre, aura été—bon gré mal gré—la charnière sur laquelle ces fracassantes relations se seront finalement articulées. Sans que personne ait sérieusement songé à revenir à la case de départ facétieusement posée par Philippe Sollers, c'est-à-dire à; "La Reine Victoria, en chemin de fer, en train de lire un roman du 19ème siècle... image parfaite du point zéro où peut en arriver la littérature"[35] d'aucuns néanmoins admettent que: "sortir de la représentation, c'est avant tout évacuer la salle de ses spectateurs et la scène de ses figu-

rants".[36] Il devient inéchappable que le couple muthos/mimésis[37] va se négocier un autre partage du champ imaginaire et—de ce fait—opérer à l'intérieur d'un contrat dont les termes vont différer grandement.

S'il est clair que la représentation ait été sérieusement malmenée par les formalismes, avant-garde et modernité incorporées, s'il est vrai que le lisible en a pris pour son compte,[38] collectivement où en est-on en 1990 et quelles sont les grandes lignes de ce nouveau contrat dont il peut-être possible de deviner l'émergence en Amérique du Nord? Sans vouloir s'attarder sur la très complexe problématique de l'écriture féminine et de la modernité on se doit cependant de déceler quelques points de repère. La technique de sabotage sur les mots en tant que signifiants, la déconstruction de la représentation phallocentrique et finalement l'élaboration de la femme/sujet ont constitué un réseau d'énergies considérables à travers les textes de Louky Bersianik, Nicole Brossard et de toute la génération qui gravite autour de la NBJ et des *Herbes Rouges*. Mais, simultanément, un tel réseau d'énergies n'a pu manquer de se déployer au détriment de la mise en intrigue, aux dépends de la narration et d'une représentation qu'il importait de systématiquement démonter (mettre en pièces/mettre à bas/réduire pour en montrer l'oppressive logique). Le coût de telles opérations peut s'avérer infiniment lourd. Pour preuve il faut prêter attention à l'alarme sonnée non seulement du côté de la critique; et ici l'important essai de Louise Milot ne doit pas être escamoté,[39] mais aussi de celui des écrivains, en l'occurence André Beaudet dont *Littérature/L'imposture* (1984), mettra toute une génération en garde contre l'amnésie de la modernité des écrivaines, et, Louise Dupré qui articulera le nécessaire *détour*[40] que l'écriture féminine va prendre autour du locus modernité. Cette alarme prendra rapidement la forme d'un "prendre acte" de l'Histoire comme l'énoncera France Théorêt pour qui le féminisme va finalement, à un certain moment, pointer la béance entre énoncé et énonciation.[41]

Mais les choses ne sont peut-être pas aussi baignées dans la félicité de l'hétérogène que Dupré et Théorêt le laissent entendre; le malaise de la modernité—apparent au milieu des années 80—ne saura peut être *pas* être aussi aisément contourné, voire ré-attelé aux profits et pertes de l'écriture féminine. On s'en rendra irrépréssiblement compte en suivant les colloques de *La Nouvelle Barre du jour* depuis 1980. En deça des conflits larvés *et* ouverts entre individus se profilent le besoin et l'urgence d'une circulation non-dogmatique des discours,[42] la nécessité de tirer les leçons des aventures groupusculaires et surtout la volonté de ne pas s'engouffrer "dans la dernière combine new yorkaise ou parisienne"[43] de se démarquer des grands virages citationnels de la modernité au féminin, contre la saisie/dérive en spirale des paradigmes théoriques des années 70 (Cixous, Irigaray et al).[44] Le besoin de jeter du lest sera lucidement articulé par Louise Dupré elle

même; "encore et toujours nous importons la théorie sans être véritablement capables de l'adapter à notre culture, l'ombre de la pensée européenne planant sur nos têtes."[45]

Qu'est-ce à dire? serait-ce qu'un retour "aux valeurs sûres",[46] au sujet, au biographique, au sacré et à l'Histoire représenterait les enjeux du postmodernisme, un piqué net et droit sur sa "camera obscura"?[47] Sans prétendre délimiter les contours de ces commencements du postmodernisme littéraire au Québec, j'aimerai tenter d'inférer quelques unes de ses directions, à partir de documents, que je ne définirai pas génériquement, mais dont je vois la trame conjoindre le retour de la grande occultée de la décennie précédente, l'Histoire.

A la différence du Canada anglophone, le capital symbolique de l'Histoire aura occupé une position privilégiée au Québec, de François Xavier Garneau, à l'Abbé Groulx, en passant par *Liberté*, la génération de l'Hexagone et *Parti Pris*, le moins qu'on puisse dire c'est que ce capital aura été judicieusement placé dans des lieux tactiquement essentiels à cette culture. Si la modernité (années 60 et 70) lui aura coûté un effacement (réel), cette éclipse ne se soldera pas par un retour en force au premier degré[48], ni même (possiblement) au second, mais, bientôt plutôt par un glissement, émotivement chargé dans le tissu du présent *et* néanmoins tenu à bout de bras, avec l'écart que confèrent l'équivoque, les différends, l'effilé. (histoire locale mais aussi "des autres"). Personnellement je préfèrerai l'expression au troisième degré. Dans une culture où la présence du passé aura finalement constitué une massive "doxa" (sauf pour la modernité des années 60 et 70), son retour ne pourra s'amorcer dans les années 80 que dans des termes de déplacement ou de décentrement. Passage de *je me souviens* à *laissez moi partir vers le mnémonique des autres*. C'est un déplacement qui n'a été que tardivement identifié par la critique mais dont Simon Harel fait une très fine analyse dans son *Voleur de parcours* (1989)[49] dont le sous-titre même; *Identité et cosmopolitisme dans la littérature québécoise contemporaine*, saisit lucidement l'émergence de cette nouvelle problématique. Finies les illusions d'omnipotence du mythe de la Fondation, terminée la passion d'un sens à préserver, dissoutes l'aliénation et la dépossession qui ont résumé la génération de *Parti Pris*[50]. Comme l'énonce Harel;

> Ce qui était perçu comme abject ou menaçant (l'Autre, l'Immigrant, l'Amériendien) est maintenant revendiqué comme part structurante de l'identité avec sa dimension d'aléatoire, de fragmentaire [...] le brouillage des référents culturels accréditant des stratégies discursives devenues hétérogènes.[51]

Pour retracer de manière convaincante les effets de telles hétérogénéités, leurs curieuses *proxémies* pour reprendre le paradigme énoncé par le sociologue Michel Maffesoli par rapport au

postmodernisme[52] il faudrait, de fait, examiner attentivement le champ fictionnel et poétique au Québec durant les quinze années précédentes (1975-1990). Si les développements théoriques y ont été faibles et malaisés par rapport au postmodernisme littéraire, par contre, la mise en jeu de ses attentes au niveau de la création m'apparaît singulièrement prometteuse. Il faudrait, pour ce faire, revenir là certains textes de Jacques Poulain, *Les Grandes Marées*, (1981), *Volkwagen Blues*, (1986), au provocant *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* (1986) de Dany Laferrière, à l'insolite collection de nouvelles *Miami Trip* de Marilú Mallet. De tels textes nous permettent de prendre le pouls d'une très récente préférence hétérologique, transculturelle, impertinente dans sa littérarité autant qu'insolente dans sa vulgarité (cette dernière étant à prendre évidemment au second degré, dans un contexte où des mauvais films de séries B sont simultanément parodiés *et* cajolés, *Comment faire l'amour*....étant ici l'exemple le plus éclatant de cette quétainerie jouissive). Il n'est jusqu'à *Histoire d'Amérique* de Jacques Godbout pour se situer dans ce sillage. Ce qui surprend du reste de la part d'un auteur jusqu'alors plus interpellé par les affres du sujet-Nation que par l'éclatement culturel, le métissage, l'hétérologique. Quelques uns de la génération de *la Nouvelle Barre du jour* se rapprochent de ces attentes. Nicole Brossard avec le *Désert Mauve* (1988) tendrait à se placer en affinité avec ces détournements mais en les effleurant plus qu'en ne les explorant; le désert de l'Arizona, l'américanité, l'ombre de Kérouac féminisée, l'écran télévisé y fonctionnent davantage comme accessoires qu'en tant qu'éléments constitutifs, mais ce livre mériterait une analyse plus détaillée de ces hésitations par rapport au postmodernisme. Yolande Villemaire (*La vie en prose, 1981*) et Claude Beausoleil (*Dans la matière rêvant comme d'une émeute* 1982) ont manifesté de fortes complicités avec l'imaginaire postmoderne. L'ambiguité de ce dernier pas rapport au Syntagme-Histoire, le jeu double de cet élément qui devient simultanément un repoussoir ironique *et* un antidote nostalgique est particulièrement fort dans *Une Certaine fin de siècle* (1983) de Claude Beausoleil sur lequel je reviendrai. Mais disons que les effets mass-média, la culture populaire en général et américaine en particulier, le Las Vegas strip et iconographies associées tournent à plein rendement chez Villemaire et Beausoleil. A plus d'un titre de tels effets sont dans la mouvance de la version hypertrophiée et hystérique de la culture américaine qu'en présentent Jean Baudrillard dans *Amérique* (1987) ou *Cool Memories* (1987) ou Michel Maffesoli avec *Le Temps des tribus* (1988). J'ai parlé ailleurs de l'utilisation de cette même culture chez Poulain et Laferrière et des correctifs importants qu'elle recevait chez eux, par rapport à sa version française.[53]

Aujourd'hui, j'aimerais commenter deux textes, celui de Beausoleil, *Une certaine fin de siècle* et un autre de Louise Dupré, *La peau*

familière (1983) tous deux publiés avant la démarcation théorique de la mi décennie 1984-85 par laquelle, pour reprendre la formule déjà citée de Carole Massé, la Modernité québécoise s'accordait finalement une épitaphe.

La dédicace du premier est intéressante. Elle introduit le concept de mémoire mais en lui conférant un éclatement pluridimensionnel, volontairement hétérogène, obsessivement cosmopolite, ce livre est dédié à "toute les mémoires des autres".[54] Sauf que ce temps des nostalgies s'appuie, paradoxalement, sur la charnière de l'avenir. Lorsque Beausoleil nous assure que "nous reviendrons comme des Nelligan"[55] il situe ce retour dans les fables du *futur*[56]. Et bien sûr ce Nelligan acteur postmoderne qui descend la rue Saint-Denis, erre dans le Carré Saint-Louis, prend acte, ou possession, de la métropolis de notre siècle, de ses Woolworths, de ses surfaces symbolistes autant que New Wave, c'est un acteur qui joue simultanément plusieurs scénarios. Montréal 1898, Madrid 1898, Montréal 1980. Les deux premières fins de siècles s'immiscent dans la troisième. Et cette dernière est espagnole, catastrophiste et finalement aussi millénariste d'instinct que l'Europe de l'ouest l'est aujourd'hui. Elle regarde un Empire qui se défait, *Une Certaine fin de siècle* est curieusement construit autour de calepins éclatés, de notes de voyage, d'entrées de journal intime. C'est un texte qui fuit la définition générique, *et,* simultanément, télescope les chronologies, déconstruit une Histoire qui surgit en registres feuilletés telle la pâte du même nom. L'Ange noir de Madrid y est un ange spéculaire, mnémonique tension en arrière et en avant, prophétie *et* science fiction qui nous ramène le Lorca de *La Casa de Bernarda*, des résidus de l'autrement vu, des exotistes au Canada français,[57] mais aussi La Puerta del Sol, La Puerta Mayor[58] (autres empires, autres fortunes). Beausoleil joue-t-il ici le jeu facile des nostalgies? (coup d'oeil ironique sur sa propre culture, des symbolistes à l'exotisme), pratique-t-il un habile métissage d'histoires toutes plus grimées les unes que les autres?, les jeux d'une chambre d'échos et de ses mises en abîme dans une fin de siècle qui ne possède plus que d'imaginaires musées? oui *et* c'est plus que cela. Un tel texte signale la curiosité de l'histoire des autres, des Mayas à la "Generación del 98"[59] fondue dans l'amusement qu'on peut éprouver à regarder la sienne propre; l'iconographie sportive des années 50, la partie supplémentaire de hockey un vendredi soir, maman qui aimait trop son beau Doug Harvey et le petit garçon qui fait ses devoirs dans un intérieur en blanc et noir.[60]

Cette traversée de l'histoire par un des tenants de la modernité québécoise, joue sur ses lectures de la plus vieille modernité européenne de Charles Baudelaire à Walter Benjamin sans oublier Theodor Adorno, elle joue sur l'ambiguité de la relation high art/low art[61] autant que sur les sources subjectives, intimes de la modernité. Sauf que l'intime y est traduit sur le mode de la facétie; maman est

franchement quétaine et le héros mange des chips en pyjamas dans la cuisine.[62]

Ce retour de l'anamnèse, dans l'altérité, en effilé, sera aussi le choix de Louise Dupré qui dira la rumeur de Sabra et Chatila, accolée à son quotidien, à la table qu'on met, au télé-journal de 18h. De l'Apocalypse de Beyrouth en direct..., conjointe aux menus—et dérisoires gestes—d'une femme qui fait le souper, où sont les simulacres? Pour Louise Dupré qui prend acte du massacre, sans y jouer sa vie, le vit sans en être : "le présent le pays passe est bien passé".[63] La disparition des nationalismes se profile en filigrane de ce qu'elle décrit comme la torture des femmes et l'agonie de l'Occident toute cette chair diaphane pour le sacrifice de ces femmes viscères pêle-mêle,[64] L'OCCIDENT SE MEURT[65] s'effile, de Mère Courage à la ligne de perte, l'Histoire.[66]

Si de tels questionnements des grands récits de l'Occident avaient été largement entamés par la modernité féminine, si Louky Bersianik, en particulier, dans sa subtile distance par rapport à cette modernité, avait déjà dans *L'Euguélionne* et *Le Pique Nique sur l'Acropole* démonté un certain nombre de méta-narrations platoniciennes, judéo-chrétiennes et marxistes, il reviendra à la prochaine décennie d'établir des charnières entre ces chavirements, déconstructions *et* une autre contextualisation de l'histoire, car c'est précisément à des re-jointures, à des re-constructions que nous convie un certain postmodernisme. L'expérience spécifique des artistes afro-américains et le discours critico-théorique qu'ils ont inspiré nous offrent des exemples pertinents à l'expérience québecoise. Kinshasha Conwill dans sa lecture critique de production récente de tels artistes a utilisé le terme *re-membering*[67] à ce propos. Littéralement: rappeler *mnémoniquement* et reconstituer, remembrer, placer les morceaux dans une totalité (comme certains géographes parleraient de remembrement dans un contexte rural). Des sculpteurs comme John Scott par exemple ont utilisé des artifacts spécifiques à la culture d'Afrique de l'Ouest ainsi qu'à la traversée de l'Atlantique imposée de force à ses ancêtres. Son *Akhanaten Rowboat* (1983) projettera la puissance symbolique de ce bateau mythique et de son cargo de fantômes en forcant le spectateur curieux à marcher en dessous de son volume écrasant "which threatens to collapse upon them and then redeems the experience by allowing safe passage".[68] Pour Scott—en tant que noir et descendant d'esclaves—le lien entre l'ancestral et le contemporain est *aussi* un acte de réconciliation, une confrontation de l'expérience collective jouée sous la forme d'une catharsis. Le trauma de ce "Middle Passage" se trouvant ici une expression sculpturale et spatiale. Des re-souvenances/re-membrements différents, mais comparables sont décelables au Québec. Dans le cas précis de Beausoleil et Dupré de telles re-constructions sont une contextualisation des autres, une ouverture à la pluralité dans un geste qui est peut-être aussi... une première au

Québec.

Ce décloisonnement—mnémoniquement parlant—c'est aussi l'ouverture à des altérités qui ne peuvent plus fonctionner à l'intérieur de la vieille dualité Canada/Québec. Le monstre à deux têtes si puissamment, et polémiquement évoquée par Jacques Godbout dans ses *Têtes à Papineau*[69] deviendrait-il un artifact de musée en ce lieu de la génération *d'Acceptation globale*?[70] C'est à "ces autres" que s'adressent Beausoleil et Dupré et aux instances à partir desquelles ces autres parlent. *Conjonctures* dans son numéro spécial "le Québec et l'autre", avait spécifiquement adressé de tels lieux et leur locus d'énonciation dans la trame du discours social postmoderne. Et c'est à propos de telles interrogations—littéraires et théoriques—qu'il serait approprié de revenir vers l'analyse de Chantal Pontbriand lorsqu'elle se réfère au postmodernisme comme "Cohabitation entre la démystification et la fascination".[71]

Il restera ultimement à voir, dans les dernières années de ce siècle-ci, comment au Québec, à partir des chavirements, déconstructions nous ferons la jointure (re-membering littéralement en anglais pour rejoindre des membres diffractés/cassés) avec la contextualisation, le décloisonnement, les mémoires multiples qui ont récemment commencé à surgir sur le grimoire postmoderne. Faudrait-il emprunter les termes de la lucidité de Chantal Pontbriand: lorsqu'elle écrit qu'il nous faudra apprendre à fonctionner à l'intérieur de schèmes culturels en état de reformulation, à explorer *à la fois* la voie du retour aux sources et celles des nouvelles réalités idéologiques, scientifiques et idéologiques"?[72] Un tel choix suggère que le postmodernisme—en tout cas au Québec—serait une question de *cohabitation*. Ce désir de co-existence, de pacte temporaire, énoncé par l'éditrice de *Parachute*, qui est aussi l'un des chefs de file de la théorie postmoderne au Québec mérite d'être relevé. Il est certainement à placer en contraste avec le jugement d'un autre théoricienne Linda Hutcheon, par rapport au postmodernisme du Canada anglais en particulier et de l'univers anglophone en général. Hutcheon, quant à elle, avait, dans la foulée de Charles Jencks conclu au caractère fondamentalement *contradictoire* du postmodernisme[73], à son statut "de nouveau modèle déterminant la frontière entre l'art et le monde tout en leur appartenant *et* en ne leur appartenant pas".[74]

La distance qui sépare les conclusions de Pontbriand et de Hutcheon sont peut être à la mesure de l'intraduisibilité de concepts culturels opérant dans des champs dont les discours historiques et sociaux sont radicalement différents. Clairement *cohabitation* et *contradiction* opèrent en fonction de paramètres dissemblables.

Si, au niveau de la théorie littéraire, la pensée postmoderne au Québec est encore balbutiante et tâtonnante, elle pourrait sans doute correspondre à la dernière définition de grimoire, citée dans l'en tête de cet essai; c'est à dire celle de texte indéchiffrable, discours encore

inintelligible.

Mais si l'on s'écarte de paramètres relevant strictement de la théorie littéraire et si l'on se penche sur les développements de ce discours dans d'autres champs théoriques, il devient évident que l'élaboration de ces paradigmes est à la fois plus poussée et plus affinée. A cet égard l'on serait tenté de suggérer que de René Payant à Chantal Pontbriand, sans omettre Pierre Milot, de tels développements relèvent de la première définition de grimoire citée au début de cet essai. Les méditations de ces théoriciens correspondraient ici à la grammaire latine pas toujours forcément entendue d'un plus large public.

Pour conclure, j'ajouterai que si écrivains/nes, poètes mènent leurs explorations sans trop se soucier ni des incertitudes des premiers (les théoriciens littéraires), ni du savoir des seconds (les érudits de la pensée esthétique et sociale peuvent aussi passer pour l'industrie lourde de l'économie imaginaire), il n'en demeure pas moins qu'ils/elles sont aussi nos magiciens. En faisant revenir les mots—passé proche, passé lointain—ils s'adressent aussi, aux esprits pour conjurer d'énigmatiques sorts. La deuxième et laconique affirmation du Larousse au sujet du grimoire ne me semble s'appliquer qu'à eux. Ce sera leur dextérité à manier nos subtils hétérogènes qui déjouera peut être aussi nos démons millénaires.

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Notes

1. Pierre Nepveu, *L'Ecologie du réel: Mort et naissance de la littérature québécoise*, Montréal, Ed. du Boréal, 1988, pl. 13-16.

2. Paul Chamberland "Après la littérature", *La NBJ*, no. 184, 1986, pp. 63-79. Voir spécifiquement ici p. 66.

3. Jean François Lyotard, *La Condition postmoderne*, Paris, Minuit, 1979, p. 9.

4. Ibid., p. 9.

5. A dire vrai on relève dans cette dernière revue un article très pertinent de Ginette Michaud sur Poulain et le postmodernisme. Mais il faut noter que le flottement definitionnel du sous-titre est révélateur. Voir "Récit postmodernes?", *Etudes françaises*, 21, 3, hiver 1985-86, 67, 88.

6. Pour suivre ce parcours il conviendrait de comparer d'une part les écrits de la NBJ pré-1980, y compris "La nouvelle écriture" *NBJ* no. 90-91, 1980 et "vouloir la fiction", *NBJ* 1984, "Intellectuel/lle en 1984?" *NBJ* no. 130-131, "L'Ecriture: lieu théorique et pratique du changement" qui rapporte les actes du colloque de Charleroi, *NBJ* 1986, *Choisir la poésie*, Trois-Rivières, Ed. des Forges, 1986.

7. Voir "From Experimentation to Experience", in *Amazing Space*, Edmonton,

Longspoon Press, 1986, p. 358. Voir aussi sa thèse défendue en octobre 1987 à l'Université de Montréal sur le postmodernisme dans les textes de Nicole Brossard, Madeleine Gagnon, France Théoret et publiée aux Presses de Remue ménage, *Les stratégies du vertige*.

8. Voir spécifiquement de Gordon Lefebvre "Les arguments de la fatigue" *Conjonctures*, no. 5, Printemps 1984, pp. 155-159 et son attaque en règle contre "Espace régional et nation" de Gérard Boismenu. . . Voir aussi la réponse de Gilles Bourque "La fatigue, et dans tous les camps", ibid, pp. 160-164. De tels questionnements du concept d'idéologie, de celui de nation, la déconstruction et la focalisation subséquente de Bourque sur la question régionale (en tant qu'elle constitue "un mode de résolution des contradictions au sein de l'ensemble sociétal", opus cit 164) révèlent certainement une sensibilité à laquelle les grands récits marxistes et/ou séparatistes des années 60 et 70 ne nous avaient pas prédisposés. Voir aussi, "Sommes nous preneurs d'idées"? *La Nouvelle Barre du jour*, no. special Intellectuel/lle en 1984?, 101-112.

9. "Sommes nous preneurs d'idées?", 107.

10. Michel Freitag, voir "Transformation de la société et mutation de la culture", Partie I, *Conjonctures*, no. 2, automne 1982, pp. 61-85. Voir en particulier ses réflexions sur la "nouvelle culture", p. 84-85.

11. Voir le no. 10-11 de *Conjonctures*, automne 1988, sur le Québec et l'autre. Voir en particulier l'entrevue de Maffesoli, "La transhumance selon Maffesoli", ibid., 147-166. Voir aussi ses remarques sur l'individualisme: "quelque chose qui s'appelait l'individualisme à mon sens, ne fonctionne plus", ibid., p. 156. Les écrits de Michel Maffesoli, surtout son récent *Le Temps des Tribus*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1988 et les concepts de proxémie, de socialité, de tribalisme seraient à placer en réponse à Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, New York: Warner, 1980.

12. Dans *La Revue Canadienne de théorie politique et sociale* voir les intéressants commentaires su les textes de Baudrillard et les problématiques qui s'en démarquent. Voir en particulier d'Arthur Kroker: "The Arc of Dead Power: Magritte/Baudrillard/ Augustine vol. 8, no. 1-2, p. 53-69, "Further Readings on Baudrillard", vol. 8, no. 1-2, p. 69-70, "Synapse lapse", vol. 2, no. 1-2, 1987, pp. 25-37. Sur la question "Postmodernity and the Politics of Style" voir Julia Emberley, "The Fashion Apparatus and the Deconstruction of Postmodern Subjectivity", vol. XI, no. 1-2, 1987, pp. 38-50 et de Gail Faurschau, "Fashion and the Cultural logic of Postmodernity", vol. XI, no. 1-2, 1982, pp. 68-84.

13. Voir *The Postmodern Scene* d'Arthur Kroker et David Cook, Montreal: New World Pespectives, 1986.

14. De Daniel Salée voir le très intuitif; "Pour une autopsie de l'imaginaire québécois: regards sur la morosité postmoderne", *Revue Canadienne de théorie politique et sociale*, vol. X, no. 3, automne 1986, pp. 114-121.

15. A noter en particulier l'une de ses remarques finales (au double sens du mot, hélas); "La théorie de la vidéo sera complexe; un mixte fructueux issu des échanges, dialogues et critiques qui marquent maintenant les sciences humaines et sociales [...]. L'hybridation méthodo-logique—n'en déplaise aux puristes, au *purisme moderniste*—est nécessaire à une juste compréhension de la vidéo" in *Vidéo*, Montréal: Artextes, 1986, p. 11 (c'est moi qui souligne).

16. Sur les avatars de la modernité on pourra consulter "Le féminisme masculin" de Jean Larose, initialement publié dans *Gravida*, no. 1, automne 1980, et ré-imprimé dans *La Petite Noirceur*, pp. 179-190, de Pierre Milot voir le ch. 2 "La légitimité offensée de l'avant-garde littéraire des années 70", pp. 29-39 et "les livres parlent: de l'imposture et des imposteurs" pp. 40-47.

17. Voir *La Camera oscura* de Pierre Milot, Montreal, l'Hexagone, 1988.

18. Voir de Jean Larose "Une modernité bien de chez nous", initialement publié dans *Liberté*, no. 159, juin 1985, ré-imprimé dans *La Petite noirceur*, pp. 141-171.

19. Opus cit, pp. 158-160 et aussi *La Camera oscura*, pp. 81-83, sur les "Fashion victims de la littéro-philosophie".

20. Le terme est de Jean Royer. Voir son "A Montréal; la Modernité" in *Vouloir la Fiction*, no. spécial de la *NBJ*, 2ème Colloque bissextile, 1984, p. 81.

21. Voir Carole Massé, in *Vouloir la Fiction*, "Les Visages de la modernité", p. 69.

22. Ibid., p. 69.

23. *Vouloir la Fiction* opus cit, p. 29 pour les premières remarques, pour ces dernières voir les commentaires de Brossard rapportés par Jean Royer, ibid., p. 89.

24. *Vouloir la Fiction*, "Les visages de la modernité" p. 69.

25. André Roy "Dialogue avec le moderne" in *Vouloir la Fiction*, opus cit, p. 38.

26. Louise Cotnoir, "Peut-être", in *Vouloir la Fiction* p. 69.

27. Michel Gay, "Petit discours d'ouverture", in *Vouloir la Fiction*, p. 11.

28. Voir André Beaudet, "Fatigue de la modernité", in *Vouloir la Fiction*, p. 46, "Si Aquin nous a faussé compagnie c'est peut-être à cause de la fatigue culturelle de la modernité québécoise". Voir évidemment le texte, (ô par trop fondateur!) d'Aquin "La fatigue culturelle du Canada Français", *Liberté*, vol. 4, no. 23, mai 1962, pp. 310-321.

29. "Short and Sweet" in '*Vouloir la fiction*', p. 36.

30. Voir bien sûr la méditation de Michel Serres, *Le Parasite*, Paris, Grasset, 1980, sur une telle instance, spécifiquement. "Interlude: Portrait en pied du parasite", pp. 141-180.

31. Des réseaux d'amitié et de complicité, clairs, je pense dès *Out/Posts/Avant-Postes*, Toronto, Press Porcépic 1977, Caroline Bayard, Jack David, eds. ne devraient pas me faire occulter ma position d'universitaire rétribuée par l' institution. En un sens l'avant-garde des uns est aussi le salaire des autres, les risques des premiers deviennent l'inéluctable confort des deuxièmes.

32. Il serait absurde de nier les contradictions qui divisent toute émergence de mouvements littéraires. Jacques Pelletier (*L'Avant garde culturelle et littéraire des années 70 au Québec*, Montréal, Cahiers de l'UQUAM, 1986), Lise Gauvin, *Parti-Pris littéraire*, Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1975. André Bourassa *Surréalisme et Littérature quebécoise*, Montréal: L'Etincelle, 1977, en témoigneront éloquemment. Mais il serait inapproprié dans ces cas précédents de parler de réticences, de tergiversations, d'indécisions. L'imaginaire québécois a été riche de prises de positions théoriques et d'articulations.

33. John Barth, "Literature of Replenishment: postmodern fiction", *The Atlantic Monthly* (January) 1980, p. 65-71.

Matei Calinescu, "Ways of Looking at Fiction Contemporary/Post-modern", in H. Garvin, 1980, p. 155-170.

Harry Garvin, *Romanticism, Modernism and Postmodernism*, Bucknell Univ. Press, Lewisburg, 1980.

Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity", *New German Critique*, no. 22, Winter 1981, p. 3-14.

Ihab Hassan, (a), "Culture, Indeterminacy and Immanence: Margins of the (Postmodern) Age," Humanities in Society, 1, no. 1, Winter 1978, p. 51-85.

Ihab Hassan, (b), "The Question of Postmodernism", *Humanities in Society*, 1, Winter 1978, 2e éd., en 1980 dans H. Garvin.

Ihab Hassan, "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspectives", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1986, p. 503-520.

Linda Hutcheon, "Beginning to Theorize Postmodernism", *Textual Practice*, 7, 1, 1987, p. 10-30.

Frédéric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" in Hal Foster, 1983, p. 111-125.

Frédéric Jameson, "Postmodernism and the Logic of Late Captialism", *New Left Review*, 146 (July-August) 1984, p. 53-92.

Michael Kohler, "Postmodernismus: Ein Begriff geschichtficher Uberlick", *Amerikastudien* 22 (1977): 8-18. Ce même numéro contient des bibliographies et des discussions sur l'histoire de ce terme. Voir en particulier les articles de Gerhard Hoffmann, Alfred Hormung et Rudiger Kunow: "Modern, Postmodern and Contemporary as Criteria for the Analysis of 20th C. Literature," p. 19-46. Réf. donné par Ihab Hassan in H. Garvin, 1980.

Oliva, Achille Bonito, "La Trans-avaguardia", II Verri, 1-2, 7th series (Marxo Giugno), 1984, p. 56-79.

Craig Owens, (b) "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism", Part II, October, 13 (Summer) 1980, p. 59-80. Craig Owens, "Feminism and Postmodernism," in Hal Foster, 1983, p. 59-72.

Craig Owens (a) "Towards a Theory of Postmodernism, Part I", October 12, 1980, p. 50-75.

Guy Scarpetta, *L'Impureté*, Grasset, Paris, 1985.

Susan Suleiman, "Naming and Difference: Reflections on Modernism versus post-modernism in Literature" in D. Fokkema, 1986, p. 255-270.

Theo Van D'Haen, "Postmodernism in American Fiction and Art" in Fokkema, 1986, p. 211-231.

34. Voir *La Mort du Genre*, Jean-Yves Collettes et Line McMurray, NBJ eds., Montréal, 1985.

35. Philippe Sollers, *Vision à New York: Entretiens avec David Hayman*, Paris, Grasset, 1981, p. 155. Gail Scott l'invoque cependant, voir "Virginia and Collette; on the outside looking in", *Amazing Space*, opus cit, p. 371.

36. André Beaudet, *Fréquences en l'inscription du roman*, Montréal, L'Aurore, 1975, Couverture.

37. Je me refère ici aux termes développés par Ricoeur dans *Temps et récit*, I, Paris: Seuil, 1983, voir spécifiquement "La mise en intrigue", pp. 55-84.

38. Voir Normand de Belefeuille, "Le caca et le lisible", *Les Herbes Rouges*, no. 38, août 1976, pp. 1-27. Du même auteur voir aussi "La Gageure du lisible", *LA NBJ*, no. 90-91, 1980, pp. 147-151. Sur les menaces du lisible et les promesses de son envers voir François Charron, *Qui parle dans la théorie?* Montréal, Les Herbes Rouges, 1979. Voir aussi du même auteur "L'écriture commence par un rêve" in *La NBJ*, no. 90-91, 1980, 12-31, spécifiquement "le signifiant incompréhensible sur lequel vous vous appuyez pour tout comprendre. . .";p. 12.

39. Louise Milot, "Nicole Brossard: une influence coûteuse" in *Modernité/Postmodernité du roman contemporain*, Montréal: Cahiers de l'UQUAM, 1987, pp. 77-86.

40. Voir Louise Dupré "From Experimentation to Experience" in *Amazing Space*; "a re-routing brought about by women's writing", p. 360 "a new readability", p. 360, p. 358. A l'exception près que Dupré situe ce déplacement vers 1970, diagnostic que je trouve inexact.

41. France Théorêt, "Writing in the Feminine", in *Amazing Space*, "Is this perhaps more the task of a literary mole?. . . such writing may seem at times to be exploring the negation of being or what has been called negativity [. . .] to undermine the unary vision of the speaking subject. . ., p. 364.

42. Le numéro entier de "intellectuel/lle en 1984? sera consacré à ces questions.

43. Voir Laurent-Michel Vacher, "Intellectuel l'an prochain" in "*Intellectuel/lle en 1984*"?, opus cit, p. 31.

44. Sur le mimétisme/prise d'identité qui devient prise d'autorité (Cixous, la NBJ) voir Larose "Une modernité bien de chez nous", opus cit, p. 141-171.

45. Voir "*Intellectuel/lle en 1984?*", p 140.

46. Dupré, in "*Intellectuel/lle en 1984?*", p. 140.

47. Pour Pierre Milot, opus cit, "la postmodernité au Québec est la reconversion de l'avant-garde dans l'économie littéraire, 11. Je suggèrerai qu'il devrait aller chercher la postmodernité en d'autres lieux, plus hétérogènes, plus transculturels, plus ouvertement métissés par rapport à un ailleurs, à une altérité fort peu "pure laine". Pierre Nepveu lui en avait déja tracé quelques directions voir *L'Ecologie du réel*, opus cit, 231-234.

48. Pour emprunter l'expression d'Umberto Eco. Voir "A Correspondence with Umberto Eco, Genova–Bologna–Binghamptom–Bloomington: une entrevue d'Umberto Eco avec Stefano Rocco," *Boundary 2*, 1983, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 1-13. Voir particulièrement: "the postmodern response to the modern consists instead of recognizing that the past. . . must be revisited ironically in a way which is not innocent", p. 2-3.

49. *Le voleur de parcours*, Montréal, Editions le Préambule, 1989.

50. Surle rôle joué par cette génération et sa revue (1963-1968) voir *Le voleur de parcours*, 109-157.

51. Ibid., 44.

52. Michel Maffesoli, *Le Temps des tribus*, 151-182.

53. "Le Postmodernisme au Québec: pression franco-américaine? ou ressourcement de l'imaginaire?", C. Bayard, à paraître dans *Towards a History of literary Institution in Canada*, 1991.

54. *Une certaine fin de siècle*, Montréal, Le Noroît, 1983. Voir "le temps des nuits" qui est dédié à Yolande Villemaire et à toutes les mémoires du monde, p. 9.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., p. 52.

57. Sur les exotistes, ou l'école de l'exil (Paul Morin, Marcel Dugas, René Chopin, Guy Delahaye) et leurs distances par rapport à une littérature utilitaire, sociale et nationale voir André Major, "Les Poètes artistes: l'école de l'exil" in *Archives des Lettres canadiennes françaises*, tome V, Montréal: Fidès, 1969, pp. 135-142. Voir aussi Maurice Lemire, "La poésie exotique" in *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires du Québec*, vol. II, 1900-1939, pp. XXXVIII-XLIII.

58. Pour des références historiques sur ces deux portes voir in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 23, p. 375-376.

59. Sur la Génération de 1898 voir Donald Shaw, La *Generación del 98*, Madrid: Ediciones Catedra 1978 et aussi Luis. S. Granjel, *La Generacion literaria del Noventa y ocho*, Salamanca: Ediciones Anaya, 1973. Sur la complexe relation du Modernisme espagnol et de cette génération voir en particulier Guillermo Diaz-Plaja, *Modernismo frente a noventa y ocho*, Madria: Editorial Espasa-Calpe, 1966.

60. *Une certaine fin de siècle*, "La partie supplémentaire", p. 207-213.

61. Sur l'ambiguité de cette relation à l'intérieur du Modernisme européen une lecture d'Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, Indiana University Press, 1986 (surtout le ch. 2 "Adorno in reverse" pp. 16-43), pourra s'avérer utile. Voir également l'essai de Thomas Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts" in *Modernism and Modernity*, S. Guilbaut et D. Solkin, eds., Halifax: Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983. Pour une discussion de l'interaction modernisme-culture populaire en Allemagne, voir aussi Peter Jelavich "Popular Dimensions of Modernist Elite Culture" in *Modern European Intellectual History*, Dominick La Capra et Steven Kaplan, eds., Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982, pp. 220-250.

62. L'interexte des femmes dans la cuisine opère ici comme caisse de raisonnance. De Michel Tremblay au Théâtre des cuisines: *Môman travaille pas, a trop d'ouvrage*, Montréal: ed., Remue ménage, 1976 il opère dans un riche contexte populiste dout la littérature saura se servir. Voir aussi Louise Cotnoir, "Woman/Women on stage" in *Amazing Space*, opus cit., pp. 208-311.

63. Louise Dupré, *La peau familière*, Montréal: Eds., du Remue-Ménage, 1983, p. 12.

64. opus cit., 23.

65. Ibid., 12.

66. Ibid., 14.

67. Sur Kinshasha Conwill, directrice du Studio Museum (Harlem/New York), voir le catalogue d'exposition sur les artistes Afro-américains et le postmodernisme, *The Appropriate object*, ed., Mary Cochrane, Albright Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 1989.

68. Ibid., p. 68, 74.

69. *Les Têtes à Papineau*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1981.

70. François Benoit, Philippe Chauveau, *Acceptation Globale*, Montréal, Boréal, 1986.

71. Chantal Pontbriand, "Editorial: La mode: Démystifications/fascinations", *Parachute*, Sept.-Nov., 1985, p. 1.

72. Ibid., originalement dans l'éditorial du premier no. de *Parachute* (1975), mais réimprimé dans l'éditorial de Sept.-Nov. 1985, p. 1.

73. Linda Hutcheon, *The Poetics of Postmodernism*, New York, Routledge, 1988, 23.

74. Ibid., je traduis.

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THE EVENING'S PORCELAIN

Lucio Angelo Privitello

Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, California: Stanford University Press, 1989, 246 pp. $35.00 cloth; $11.95 paper.

So reibt die Spur
der Fledermaus durchs Porzellan des Abends.
Und wir: Zuschauer, immer, berall,
dem allen zugewandt und nie hinaus!
Uns berfllts. Wir ordnens. Es zerfällt.
Wir ordnens wieder und zerfallen selbst.
The way the track of a bat
goes rending through the evening's porcelain.
And we, spectators always, everywhere,
looking at, never out of, everything!
It fills us. We arrange it. It decays.
We re-arrange it, and decay ourselves.

Rilke, *Duino Elegies* #8

Douglas Kellner's *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond* is an attractive *gestuel* attempt to follow the zigzag thought of Jean Baudrillard. Yet Kellner is not a "bat" in Baudrillard's "evening porcelain." This shortcoming, at first very frustrating, turns out to be the most positive aspect of Kellner's entire study because it allows us to notice the "faults" in this first full-scale critique of the works of Baudrillard.

Kellner's dedication of this work to T. W. Adorno rings truer than his subsequent inscription "in the spirit of T. W. Adorno." With only five

mentions of Adorno throughout the work, of which merely two are of value, there is little Adorno spirit to be found. I would recommend Kellner to give another glance at Adorno's essay on cultural criticism in *Prisms*,[1] and to recall the poignant pre-Baudrillardian gloom of "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric."[2] Yet what strikes the reviewer as most problematic is Kellner's overall "distaste" for Baudrillard's expositions, and its subsequent "scene"—a distaste that I believe is a product of a missed proximity. Overall, Kellner's critique is not balanced in clear alternative positions, and, in the end, what he polemizes against is a product of what he has dedicated this very book to: the backlash of Critical Theory on Adorno,[3] and by this he is "dragged into the abyss by its object."[4]

The table of contents of Kellner's *Baudrillard* is a clear, and at first luring glance at what could have been an extremely provocative study. However, the gloss on the major terms of Baudrillard and their incomplete division begin to develop as one delves into the text. Also, Kellner's overview omits texts such as *The Evil Demon of Images* and *Please Follow Me*, which, especially the former, are crucial to a serious study of Baudrillard's works, and barely receive a footnote within the entire study. These texts would have been instructive because they would allow the reader to see Baudrillardian 'theory' in a more direct and narrow encounter with its 'other.' In the end, one begins to notice that there is little "other" left to Baudrillard's own 'theory': the 'other' that begins its collapse into the ritual, the challenge of the code game of disjunctured signification; and it is this unexorcized point that haunts Kellner's entire study. It is evident that Kellner approached this work with resentment, and this has not allowed the author to insert himself within Baudrillard's positions and polemics. He has merely outlined problems, which are then pasted against and contrasted to other problematic theories. If Kellner believes that "radical philosophy–should contain a 'dreaming forward'"[5] then such a 'dreaming forward' should be used within his critique of the matrix of the Baudrillardian problematic, and not as the Blochian 'Not-yet': of another "reality which lies in the haze." It still remains difficult, and it is doubtful if one may dislodge Baudrillard's 'theory' from its' 'other,' or the 'other' from its 'theory'. Ironically, this is where Kellner's study begins to put us, by default, on the right path. Having encountered a serious attempt at the critique of the works of Baudrillard, we may now begin to debate to what stage this critique belongs: the pre-paraphysial, or the post-pataphysial. It remains crystal clear that those boundaries have not been crossed by Kellner's study. And once again, "Le cristal se venge."

Another sign of the times which Kellner does not notice is that a new wave of French Theory is already disappearing. Kellner instead views this new French Theory as appearing, (and polemicizes and approaches his entire study from that assumption). He misses the mark by the simple twist of a prefix. This missed prefix also haunts and subverts Kellner's

struggles with Baudrillard. Kellner is horrified at Baudrillardian theory, and this horror stems from "the fear of [conceptual] death." Kellner notices this in David Cronenberg's films,[6] but it seems that when translated into a base closer to home, i.e., social theory–history–philosophy, it becomes unbearably real for those still caught within the dark parenthesis of the subject. The "dark writers of the bourgeoisie" (Habermas), with their anxious erasures of the philosophy of the subject, already formed the displacement of the fractal processes of subjectivity. And as metastasis, philosophy and critique attends and accords with the art object. Both critic and artist need to realize that the art object's confession rests in the penetration of its own displacements. Caught up in an animated infringement, the point of view seeks to overtake the object for the recalcitrancy of the knot. Yet this knot is a form of exile theory and critique rarely allow.

In short, another answer to the theoretical tribulations (which Kellner tentatively exposes in some of Baudrillard's works) rests within Baudrillard's notion of death as a form. Yet without the required close reading of *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Kellner's critique remains deceived by mere binary opposition. With the raw materials at hand, as in the two mentions of Baudelaire, Kellner turns away from the more poignant text of Baudelaire's "The Philosophy of Toys," where he could have expanded on the moment of disappointment in the discovery of the "souless" doll. This turning away is a form of melancholy also exposed within Baudrillard's *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, but it is overlooked by Kellner because of his inability to form a crucial notion of the "code." Thus Kellner does nothing more than amplify the fractures of sign and pleasure within the overarching conceptualization of Baudrillard's struggle with the notion of consumption. The use of an historical critique and the many allegiances with critical and utopian theories, which Kellner positions within this study, become little more than exercises of the weakening of power theories in usurpation. In sidestepping Baudrillard's fatal theory, Kellner submits to Adorno's fatal destiny of the culture critic.

If Kellner wished to "provide comprehensive critical views of the entirety of (Baudrillard's) published works to the present time,"[7] then he also needed to include and mention a more comprehensive view of Baudrillard's communicative hopscotch that is played out in his many interviews. Of the thirteen interviews included in the bibliography, only seven are used in the text, four of which belong to the same source. The articles and interviews by Baudrillard are not a mere rehashing of Baudrillard's published works (as Kellner wishes us to believe), but important byways within the process of consumption which Baudrillard set out to illustrate as early as *The System of Objects* (1968). Baudrillard's interviews are an opportunity for us to see him practice his theories, because of the encounter they set in motion, which presuppose a *Grund* and its veer and origin, and effect, viz., the object form. Kellner could

have approached and played out this problematic as part of the undertow of a postmodern-praxis; a kind of Jamesonian reading without the social or the hermeneutic. Kellner could have also used his dedication to Adorno more wisely, and contrasted Baudrillard's object form to Adorno's micrology; or even more radically, used it as a whipping boy of the untenability of Lévinasian "desire." While armed with these options, all delightful in their (inter-esse) of the project of critique, Kellner shuns those spaces that comprise the edges of the other's position, and opts for a quick one-on-one check list of Baudrillardian binary concepts. A closer reading of Baudrillard could have unearthed a more intact version of his terminological formulation, yet from the manner in which Kellner exposes Baudrillard's notions and arguments, we are pillaged of the crucial yet atopic notion of the code within consumption, and consumption as code. In that oversight Kellner is confirming the very Baudrillardian concept of the disappearance of history, because he allows his critique to become *carceplexes* to the hyperspace of fatal theory. Baudrillard's functional catastrophe wins out over Kellner's use of a hopeful revolutionary form.

For instance, together with Baudrillard's article "Sign-Function and Class Logic,"[8] where we may find the short yet compelling account of the mechanics of agency (which Kellner faults Baudrillard for failing to develop), [9] we need only to leaf through *The System of Objects, The Consumer Society,* and *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, to find the uneliminable extracted portions of the "appareillage" and "découpage," of that which carves out the spaces of absence of the mechanics of agency. Yet nowhere in Kellner's study do we find mention of Baudrillard's noticing such a notion. The spaces of absence in the mechanics of agency are exemplified by the concepts of "lack,"[10] "digest,"[11] and "environment."[12] A provisional definition of the mechanics of agency could be understood as the consumed relations articulated on objects, and proliferated by objects as an active functionality. Yet, since Baudrillard's turning of a concept allows for the very atopy of its axis, it is important that we opt for a complex systems reading, and quiet the raging "magical thinking of ideology." Thus, and simply put, where Baudrillard is straining to see the subject without the environs of an historical, political, social, and cultural space,[13] Kellner strives to 'dream forward', by "enwrapping images" of a normative past, an obvious slippage into a Blochian political myopia by adopting knowledge in the service of hope.[14]

The language needed in radical social theory, radical politics, and political theory and which Kellner advocates is only convivial within its own objectifications, and furthermore, it is itself a persistent situation whether or not it passes beyond discourse and reality. Such a durability more than unlikely leaves us at an impasse, and yet it is where needs and use value seek to resurrect the "many worlds at once" that Kellner needs to justify the edifying of critical social theory. The service of hope, which

underlines Kellner's quick invalidation of Baudrillard's political atopy, turns on its normative bed only to find that it has slept through the mephitis of a grounding heuristic. The service of hope, to which Kellner submits, is also a telling example of an accumulation of theoretical weariness. This is also akin to a recent position of Jean-Francois Lyotard,[15] coupled with an historical resentment but without the benefit of a Margolian reading. In short, Douglas Kellner's study of Jean Baudrillard partakes in the short-circuit of metatheories. The upshot of such a study will yet be positive if the discourse is opened to a wider public, a public which would learn from the shortcoming of Kellner's rigid "unseduced" sweep through what exists as the challenge of seduction[16] and the "Ge-Schick" of consumption. In Kellner's refusal to even minimally "refract (himself) in another logic,"[17] he excuses himself from playing the game of spotting the "vanishing point(s)." He remains thus snared within the irony of a vantage point: the weakening cathodic substratum of sociological and psychological pronouncements.[18] To eliminate Baudrillard's "subject-object dichotomy,"[19] by questioning it with a fiercer dichotomous categorization[20] and chic theoretical juxtapositions[21] is not critical nor historical. More can be obtained from a closer cognitive mapping of Baudrillard's texts, than from a sarcastic resentment of Baudrillard as phenomenon. Kellner's study illustrates that it has become pointless to snare the materiality of content by form, and that asking for a "centrality of dialectics and mediation"[22], would merely be a ricochet of a metaphysics of history played out within the fatigued need of revolutionary structure. Heuristic is the stench of a shelved utopia.

Kellner invalidates Baudrillard's project without defining it, and asks that we go beyond it within a redemptive consensus. Within these parameters, Kellner's *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond* does not get beyond its other, but remains trapped between the *gebärde* and *gestuel* of its own con. Within the works of Baudrillard, and from a more careful reading of the atopy of his conceptualizations we can notice that he "produces" a disjunction of surfaces within the crystals of philosophical discourse. I would suggest that we take that lead and begin to read Baudrillard's texts as a fallout of a hermeneutics of disjuncture.[23]

Art-Philosophy
Firenze-Philadelphia

Notes

1. T.W. Adorno, *Prisms*, trans, by Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981).

2. Ibid., 34.

3. See P. Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans., by Michael Eldred (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xxxiv. See also Jean Baudrillard, *The Evil Demon of Images*, (Annandale, Australia: Power Institute Publications, 1987) pp. 51-52.

4. Adorno, *Prisms*, 34.

5. D. Kellner, "David Cronenberg: Panic Horror and the Postmodern Body," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 13(3) (1989), 100.

6. Ibid., 89-101. See also "The Ghost Dance," and interview with Jacques Derrida, by Andrew Payne and Mark Lewis, in *Public*, 1989, 61-66.

7. Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, (California: Standford Univ. Press, 1989).

8. J. Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos, 1981), pp. 29-62.

9. D. Kellner, *Baudrillard: From Marxism*, 18-19.

10. J. Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, ed. and intro. by Mark Poster (California: Standford University Press, 1988), pp. 22-25.

11. Ibid., 29, 35.

12. Baudrillard, *For a Critique*, 185-203. See also "An Interview with Jean Baudrillard," Judith Williamson, trans. by Brand Thumin, *Block* 15 (Spring 1989), 17-18.

13. See Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*, (New York: Semiotext(e) 1987), 81, 84, 120, 124-125; "The Year 2000 Will Not Take Place," in *Futur * Fall: Excursions into Postmodernity*, (Sidney, Australia: Power Institute of Fine Arts, 1986), 19, 21-22; and *Selected Writings*, p. 25, 45, 84. See "Banality in Cultural Studies," Megham Morris, *Block*, 14 (1988), 15-26.

14. Baudrillard, J. *The Evil Demon of Images*, Annandale, Australia: Power Institute Publications, 1987), p. 30; see also Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, pp. 125-126, 315-326, 385; also Baudrillard, *For a Critique:* "..abolish the cardinal reference to the individual, ..abandon the constitutive social structure of the individual ... for man never really does come face to face with his own needs. (This) applies equally well to "survival" needs. In this instance, man is not reproduced as man: he is simply regenerated as a survivor (a surviving productive force)" p. 86. See also Sloterdijk, *Critique*, pp. 180, 211 fn. 30; "..every living person is a survivor," (*überlebener*, literally, over-liver; -trans.).

15. "Il Post-Futuro", colloquia con Jean-Francois Lyotard, Lydia Breda, *L'Espresso*, n.2 xxxvi, 14 Gennaio, 1990, 103-105.

16. J. Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, (New York: Semiotext(e), 1988), pp.69-70.

17. Ibid., 70.

18. See Arthur Kroker, "Panic Psychoanalysis," in *Panic Encyclopedia*, Arthur Kroker, Marilouise Kroker, and David Cook, (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 188-189.

19. Kellner, 179.

20. Ibid., 1, 123.

21. Kellner uses the work of theorists such as Adorno, Bloch, Habermas and Marcuse against Baudrillard. In most cases, Kellner overlooks the problems inherent in these theoreticians for the thrill of entering into the game against Baudrillard. For instance, Kellner criticizes Baudrillard's claim that art has lost its critical negative function, while seeming

to forget Adorno's "timeless present" of the masses to which the communication of critical negativity is blocked. This problem was also expanded in the Adorno/Jauss debate over the subject and the public, which veils the problem of ontology in Adorno's dialectics. And, while forgetting Baudrillard's position on utopia (see *The Ecstasy of Communication*, pp. 88-89) and in using Bloch's notion of nonsynchronicity, Kellner instantly adopts the political myopia of the attached notions of "objective *Wirklichkeit*" versus the "*Noch-Nicht-Sein*" in the postponement of truth to a future date. In using Habermas (the strongest of his potential allies), Kellner overlooks Habermas's "colonization of the inner world," a rapprochement of the Habermasian "criteria of critique which no longer needs to be grounded in a philosophy of history" ("Dialektik der Rationalisierung" in *Die neue Unbersichtlichkeit*, Frankfurt, 1985, p. 167), with the Baudrillardian critique of the "religion of meaning" and "logic of representation." In using Marcuse, Kellner again turns away from the contradictions of critical theory which oppose individual and society, and allows the subsequent turning of the notion of society to that of a work of art. To sum up, neither the Great Refusal of Marcuse, nor the theoretical entanglements in Habermas, the postponement of truth in Bloch, nor that intact sensibility found within a "melancholy science" in Adorno, amount to an easy counterposition against the theories of Baudrillard, or towards the Baudrillard "scene."

22. Kellner, 216.

23. For further discussion of this notion, see my: *The Hermeneutics of Disjuncture: Baudrillard, Perniola, Rella, Cacciari and the Embrasure of Philosophy*. (forthcoming)

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MUTUAL VERTIGO

Lucio Angelo Privitello

Jean Baudrillard: *Selected Writings*. Edited, with an introduction by Mark Poster. California: Stanford University Press; 1988 vii + 230 pp. $32.50 cloth; $10.95 paper.

> "A strange arrogance compels us not only to possess the other, but also to penetrate his secret, ..."
>
> Baudrillard[1]

Mark Poster's introduction and edited selections of the writings of Jean Baudrillard fail this "strange arrogance." The book is useful if one wishes to scan nine selections, spanning seventeen years, all in two hundred twenty one pages; but it misses the very "object form" from which it evolves by including a grossly incomplete index and a blunt introduction. Both Poster, the volume editor, and Jacques Mourrain, the translator of three selections, have misunderstood or been unaware of works of Baudrillard that might have helped them write a more updated and informed introduction, as well as avoid a simply senseless translator's note. Baudrillard's *L'Autre par lui-même*[2]and "From The System of Objects to The Destiny of Objects"[3] could have given Mourrain and Poster an edge.

The introduction misses and overstates much about Baudrillard's work. For instance, contrary to Poster's assertion, Baudrillard has not "developed a theory" (1)[4]; rather he continually challenges theory by constructing an event out of theorizing the manner in which he ap-

proaches the object of his critique. Nor does Baudrillard "theorize from the vantage point of the new media" (1), for him the media is "what finally forbids response, what renders impossible any process of exchange" (208). Baudrillard plays with the media and theorizes from the symbolic benefit of a de-volition within the masses. This is his fragile disappearance strategy, and the irony of a "vantaged" point (213). Poster also understates Baudrillard's position when he argues that for Baudrillard, "culture is now dominated by simulation." (1) To Baudrillard, the concept of culture is no longer meaningful, and even more, "culture" and "simulation" are a bridging of a nonexistent gap altogether (86). Yet, as has happened in the neo-geo New York art scene (to the dismay of Baudrillard), America prepares a "culture" of Baudrillard's simulations. How? As this introduction attempts: by liquidating all referentials (167), feigning an understanding, and short-circuiting that precarious breaker of the "objective irony" in all systematics.[5]

Once past the introduction and into the texts of Baudrillard himself, one is quickly pulled into a process that participates in and simultaneously challenges a purely "horizontal era of events without consequences." (198) In his earlier pieces Baudrillard begins to expose the strained concepts of a protectionist reality, and from these pages one begins to see the development of several major terms; fault terms that were virtually ignored in the introduction.

In *The System of Objects*[6] (1968), for example, Baudrillard is concerned with the possibility of an understanding of "consumption" from a standpoint of a languaged animal. What we find in these pages is a break from the system's own mechanism of survival: tautological opulence. We are left with the crucial introduction of the concept of "lack" (22-25). The "lack" that Baudrillard notices is between the consumption of the "sign" and the "pleasure" it should bring (cp.,22,54). In *Consumer Society* (1970) the autonomous mechanisms of consumption are turned upon the individual as consumer. In this selection we are faced with Baudrillard's focusing on the object, obedient objects that cause to proliferate spaces of absence from one individual to another, and that are all neatly endowed in their own "digest" (29,35). In addition, seduction is depicted as the intricacies of disciplined consumption which accept the consumer's freedom by dazzling that freedom with the litany of needs.

For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign (1972) is a difficult but key piece in understanding the thought of the later Baudrillard. The selection, and the book from which it is taken, collects the major points of Baudrillard's earlier works and illustrates the development of those idioms that have come to be most closely associated with his work and thought. Perhaps most important to this development is the way in which *Critique* analyzes the sign form, tracing it through the stages of the logics of value and transforming a critique of Marxist theory into a critique of the possibility of theorizing in a system at all (64-65). *Critique* forces the object form ("the abstract equivalence of utilities") to shatter

(68,80). This shattering of the object form is developed in Baudrillard's works as the "duplication of the objects" (116); as "Interpretation" (149); and the special effect of passing "on the side of the object" (204). In *Critique* Baudrillard also expounds on the concept of the "code," which is presented in *The System of Objects* as the violent fissure between the consumption of the sign and the pleasure that consumption should bring. The "lack" found in the pleasure that is not brought, necessitates a conceptualization of the logic of the code. Unfortunately, yet true to form Baudrillard proceeds to define the code within the relation of lack, such that we are faced with a self-destructive definition. A tentative definition of the code would present the code as a language form assuming the lack of reciprocity between object and subject. It is an implosive "reality principle" where interference is not external with respect to the lacking object subject reciprocity, but a guarantee of a posited and anticipated discourse of it's own justification. Object and subject are thus obviated within and by the same language form. In short, the "code" is a "reality principle" that absorbs its own meaning, that is immune to the critique of reciprocity, and is classified as an assumption of its own axiomatics (110). Such is the "repressive simulation" of the code (114).

In *The Mirror of Production* (1975) Baudrillard further speculates on the code. Here, the "effect of quality" is shown to be an inherent deformation of the code. In this light Baudrillard attempts a reversibility of the bad dialectical relations of Marxist conceptual headlocks (103). *Mirror* marks Baudrillard's parting of the ways with all "repressive simulation," and with the need for the installation of the "code" as fulfillment of "lack" (25,45,84).

If one had access to one selection in this collection, then *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976) would be the most instructive since it shows the limits of the "effects of the system"; a system of exchange value that has already been saturated from the critique in *Mirror* (99). Yet, *Symbolic Exchange* goes much further. It is an example of theorizing in overdrive, which as the gear that transmits a greater speed to the drive shaft than provided by the engine seeks, in its acceleration, a "symbolic exchange" between system and critique. Such an exchange is believed by Baudrillard to occur only at the limits of theorization. An example of this is the possibility to "form" a death (124), which is not the "pathetic conclusion" (5) that Poster comments, but an extreme utopia of risk in the overdriven act of the subjects' theoretical passage to an object. The "pathetic" as Poster should have noticed, if he had scanned his selections more thoroughly, belongs to the social emotionalism of hierarchies.[7] *Symbolic Exchange* is a viable exercise in a passage of reversibility, which was begun in *The Mirror of Production*, and which opens up theory to a different metaphysics, by realizing the impossibility of a continued negotiation with the real. What Poster qualifies as "bleak fatalism"; "pathetic," "totalizing"; "hyperbole" and "vague formulations"

(5) unfortunately belong to the real; something Baudrillardian theory left a long time ago.[8]

As reality was held hostage in *Symbolic Exchange*, interpretation is sabotaged in *Seduction* (1979). Through Kierkegaard, the multi-dimensional master of seduction, Baudrillard learns that intimate release has no "more" (the real) challenge. One can only wait and see if Baudrillard himself will someday soon"(when this) affair (has) progressed so far...(break) it off without himself having made the slightest advances", "and then we in wanting to tell of it, realize, ...there (is) nothing to tell."[9] Such a phase of seduction could be the most graceful of phase-outs of seduction itself. "There is an art of disappearing, a way of modulating it and making it into a state of grace. This is what I'm trying to master in theory."[10] In *Seduction*, Baudrillard prepares a field to encounter his critics; a field where he seduces through the challenge of responses that reaches beyond regulated laws and fundamental values: "To challenge or seduce is always to drive the other mad, but in a mutual vertigo: madness from the vertiginous absence that unites them, and from their mutual involvement" (161). Poster avoids this challenge, and also limits the readers by his timid request for a greater degree of referentiality and "epistemology" (8). Instead, Baudrillard, tired of the fragility of sociology and philosophy of the "question/answer type" (142) opts for a "dissent of a higher logical type than that to which it is opposed." (122)

In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) we arrive at this dissent and "metastases"[11] (50) of the code into models and images. In contrast to the second-order simulations in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, which were operations of the code (182) in the context where the real was still wavering and put into play (121), in *Simulacra and Simulation*, production, signification, consciousness, the unconscious, and political economy are spiraled into a "hyperreality of floating values" and encounter theory and practice (121,122). In this inaugurated "realm beyond economic value" (113) referentials are artificially resurrected for the sake of theory and only for the sake of theory. The point Baudrillard conveys is that besides this artificial resurrection, there simply is not any theorizing left to do. The seduction and challenge of "drawing the other within your area of weakness, which will also be his or her's" is the strategy of Baudrillard that Poster cannot accept (162). *Simulacra and Simulation* throws us into the depths of the Baudrillardian sea. Yet he is too fair, and again, we are not allowed to drown because theoretical life-preservers are thrown to us: nostalgia (171); parody (177); the critical obsession with power (180), and melancholy (180).

After meeting theory on the narrow rescue of mutual vertigo and vertiginous absence (161), we are presented, in *Fatal Strategies* (1983), with the demise of the power of theory in its pre-paraphysical, and post-pataphysic stages. It is these boundaries which most disturb the critics of Baudrillard. They cannot decide to which of them, they, as critics,

belong. *Fatal Strategies* presents the "object" in one of its final stages, which is a development of the successive mentions of the object throughout the previous selection, and missed by Poster in his Introduction, and Notes. In these selected works of Baudrillard, the object begins as designating and classifying, and transforms into a sign of a relation (22), then shows itself as a proliferation of absent relations adopted as a need (29,44). The object was then shown to be a "promise of an ideal" extended to the individual for itself (66,69). In *Fatal Strategies*, the Baudrillardian travels with the object and arrives at the "ecstatic form of the pure object" in its strategic triumph over the subject (185). These last objects are beyond their own essence, and are caught in their own strategies. This twist is the fatality of present theory. Baudrillard thus presents us with a drastic possibility of theoretic catastrophe by showing how the characteristic of the "more" in "fashion," "art," "television," and the social cease "to be relative to their opposite ... (thus becoming) positively sublime" (186). Baudrillard has grasped the concept of the sublime, by letting it pass into the subliminal. Such a "fault" is caused by the catastrophe of things which are theorized between "dead point" and "pure event." This apocalyptic obscenity, a masochistic and not sadistic irony, constantly rides on the white horse of theory; Baudrillard's included (197). What is left at the orginary point of this theory/anti-theory are a few weak shelters: disappearance, wit, the irony of risk, and second events; all of which might, as Kafka's Messiah, be one day too late. The last selection in the volume under review is: "*The Masses*: The Implosion of the Social in the Media" (1985). The first page in this selection tends to be similar to Baudrillard's earlier style that disorients us, until we are reminded that Baudrillard is just making a "spectacle" out of a second approach to themes dealing with the media (202). With a brief mention of McLuhan's technological optimism, and Enzenberger's hybrid socialist-techno-humanism, we are quickly and gracefully plummeted beyond the social altogether (188). Through this entire last section it is very difficult not to notice that in some very ironic way the media is the gaze of the masses. If this is so, who could be left to be watched or gazed upon?

However thoroughbred these impressive selections may be, they are unable to canter, let alone gallop, reined in as they are by the lack of a well-conceived index and by the absence of a "violent" introduction (124). Any index for such a selection of writings should be very careful to point out important idioms used by the author, especially when these usages change and take on different forms as his thought develops. Yet this volume's index repeatedly fails to show an understanding of many such crucial terms. I have found thirty-five example of important terms ranging from "aesthetic" to "Zeuxis" that have not been indexed. A complete list of these missed items would be dizzying, because they make up the substratum of Baudrillard's most recognized theories. Some examples are, the concept of "lack", which is missed in *The System of*

Objects and *Consumer Society*; the concepts of "object form," "simulation models," "simulation logic", the "law of the code," and the concept of "concepts," all crucial terms missed in *The Political Economy of the Sign*. The concepts "code effect" and "repressive simulation" are missed in *The Mirror of Production*. The important concept of the "paraphysical," found in the pivotal selection *Symbolic Exchange and Death* was never indexed nor referred to in the introduction. Its sister concept, the "pataphysic" found in *Fatal Strategies* was also missed. These examples go on and on, and preempt any criticism of Poster that Baudrillard "fails to define his major terms." (7) Major terms can only be understood if one finds them in the text, and can chart their uses.

To what phase of the "image" will this encounter with a collection of the works of Baudrillard belong? A simulation phase? A hyperreal phase? In whatever phase, we may be certain that Baudrillard's pataphysic theorizing will not receive a paraphysial critique from the American academe. Once the "dead point" (190) of all response is crossed, where can challenge lie but in fragile disclosures: as the finger of Cratylus against the flux of becoming; the "constellations" of Benjamin against the temporal digestion of meaning; and the Cyreniacism of theory, as in the works of Jean Baudrillard?

Art - Philosophy
Firenze/Philadelphia

Notes

1. Jean Baudrillard, *Please Follow Me*, trans. Dany Barash and Danny Hatfield (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988) p. 76.

2. Jean Baudrillard, *L'Autre par lui-même* (Paris: Editions Galilee, 1987). Translated, and erroneously entitled *The Ecstasy of Communication*, by Bernard & Caroline Schutze, (New York: Semiotext(e), 1988), pp. 87-88. The Italian translation, *L'altro visto da sé*, trans., Maria Teresa Carbona, (Genova: Costa & Nolan), 1987, remains closer to Baudrillard's original title, which is unfolded and hinted to within the text. I would refer the reader to note pages 21, 41, and 65-66 of the Semiotext(e) edition for the allusions to the original title.

3. Jean Baudrillard, pp. 77-95.

4. All page numbers enclosed within parentheses are references to Jean Baudrillard: *Selected Writings*, edited, with an introduction by Mark Poster, (California: Stanford University Press, 1988).

5. On this point, see Jean Baudrillard, "Interview" in *Block* 14 (1988): 8-10; and "Chez Jean," Baudrillard interview with Eduardo Cicelyn, *Strip*, anno 1, n. 2., Giugno (1988), 13.

6. Italicized titles are references to the *Selected Writings* edition.

7. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. trans. Charles Levin, (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), p. 40.

8. A similar qualification of Baudrillardian "terminology" was recently expanded upon by Robert Hughes in "The Patron Saint of Neo-Pop," *New York Review of Books*, June 1, 1989). Hughes' approach, though more unscholarly than that of Poster, spins to a higher pitch of sentimental Gentilian somnambulism, believes "culture construct" free.

9. Soren Kierkegaard, *Diary of a Seducer*, trans. Gerd Gillhoff. (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1966), pp. 5-6.

10. Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault* (New York: Semiotext(e) 1987), pp. 128.

11. Jean Baudrillard, p. 50.

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THE HOMOGENIZATION OF AMERICA

Jacques Mourrain

Jean Baudrillard, *Amérique*, Paris: Grasset, 1986, [*America*, trans. Chris Turner (New York: Verso, 1989)]

> Take the smallest desert outpost, a street in a Mid-Western [*Middle West*] town, a parking lot, a house in California, a Burger King, or a Studebaker, and you have America, from north to south, and east to west. A hologram in the sense of coherent laser light, the homogeneity of basic elements scanned by a single beam. [59][1]

Baudrillard came to the United States in search of an astral [*sidérale*] America (16), a cosmic-politan society where the stars determine events (whether in Hollywood or in the White House). The "aeronautic missionary of silent majorities and fatal strategies" (31), came to this continent in order to witness "the future and concluded catastrophe of the social in the geology, in the reversal of depth evidenced in stratification, in the hills of salt and rock, in the canyons where a fossilized river flows, in the immemorial abyss of geological time and erosion, even in the verticality of the megalopolis" (17). What he saw, and what he narrates in *Amérique*, however, is not the story of a society or culture, nor the history of a people. The astral America, Baudrillard came in search for, is not found(ed) in the image that a people have of themselves, but in the images projected in their name.

Neither social engineer, nor visionary, Baudrillard never asked anyone to reflect on their condition, nor did he (tele)poll "Public Opinion" to

confirm an ideal (as is routinely done in journalism and in the social sciences). The tele-poll: implosion of the referendum by the Law of Large Numbers (the Baysean proposition) and the logic of the either/or (the Platonic corollary). If you think Minneapolis is "a Hellenistic city on the outer edges of the Rockies" (32), dial 555-1111 for YES or 555-1112 for NO. There is a two dollar charge for the call; and the results will be broadcast live from Pikes Peak.

Unlike its "oncle d'amérique," (*Habits of the Heart*, Bellah *et al.*), Baudrillard offers no (ab)solution to our contemporary social dilemmas (imagined or otherwise). *Amérique* is not a socio-graphy: re-constituted sociology with 10 percent real people/pulp. The "Amérique" that appeared to Baudrillard is simply (often very simply, in terms of stereotypes: historical-hysterical, vertical-horizontal, civilized-primitive, fixed-mobile, us-them) a reflection on a social landscape (a geo-sociology), which (like Eco's *Travels in Hyperreality*) reverberates the seduction (love/hate) of the westward "look" (pronounced *luke*)—the Tocquevillean tour: Come see the last primitive society (21) before the cataclysm—America, 5 days and 4 nights in Death Valley! For the secret (and secretion) of the social can be glimpsed (under the right lighting conditions) in the vaporization of meaning, in "the deserts of meaninglessness" (23). In this sense, *Amérique* is more ecologically oriented than its American uncle; not the adaptive logic of teleologies and tautologies, but rather, the fatal logic [*Logos*] of the conjuncture, of the occurrence—the dwelling [*Oikos*] where shit happens [*Ereignis*]. Fascinated [*sidéré*] by the "absolute and vain liberty of the freeways," rather than the "profound America of moralities and mentalities" (16), Baudrillard narrates this conjuncture: America as happening—the culture of the freeway (except for lunches) and freedom of choice (except not choosing) where "saying no" has become an affirmation.

But all of this, Baudrillard admits from the outset (17), was known to him in Paris. The new-clear age had long since radiated to Europe (as demographers say). And yet, in order to understand the occurrence, in order to encompass [*comprendre*] it, and perhaps to exceed and outmatch the event itself, Baudrillard tripped across America: Auto-mobile, auto-reference, auto-visual. "Travel ten thousand miles across America," Baudrillard suggests, "and you will know more about the country than all the institutes of sociology and political science combined" (109).

His quest(ion) began with: "How far can we proceed in the extermination of meaning, how far can we progress in the deserted and non-referential form without cracking up? A theoretical question here materialized in the objective conditions of a trip that is no longer one" (27). For a "trip no longer one," speed (auto-mobiles and hallucinogens) is essential, since "[s]peed is the triumph of the effect over the cause, the triumph of the instantaneous over the depth of time, the triumph of the surface and pure objectuality over the depth of desire" (19-20), and by extension, the fatal, ineluctable triumph of the new over the old. With

enough lateral exhilaration one can be transported [*metaphorai*] into the new-world of surface effects and instantaneity (real time), thus escaping the spirit of gravity which contained [*comprendre*] the old. But with speed the perspective of the narrator/observer is also altered and space contracts; since "[s]peed creates pure objects, itself a pure object, ... it re-moves the ground and all territorial references..." (19). National boundaries, continental divides, and cultures appear to shrink at the asymptotic limit of the speed of the lighting condition. Minneapolis and the Rockies converge; while New York and Los Angeles expand:

$$\lim_{s\to\infty} d(\text{Minneapolis-Rockies}) = \frac{1}{\lim_{s\to\infty} V(\text{NY-LA})} = 0$$

Under these conditions (tripping/speeding), spacio-temporal (Now-Here) dimensions achieve a (un)certain fluidity. If the "territorial references" in *Amérique* (like Porterville or Minneapolis) do not share a common, continuous plane this is because it is no place (utopia), in any Euclidean sense; not the intersection of two lines, but the convergence of two visions: a kind of gigantic hologram—a holographic image of America produced in a play of mirrors, where two homogenized perspectives, sufficiently out of phase at their point of convergence, generate the illusion of reality (Culture with an added dimension). *Amérique* is an image of America generated from the (crystalline) refractions of this double vision—a "holographic micro-model of America" (132). The first wave projects the fascination [*sidéré*] with the new, with the V-World (new-world)—the enchantment [*feerie*] of "a culture that fascinates the world, even those who suffer from it" [153]. The second perspective reflects an investment in the old (Europe): a synthesis of francophilia and xenophobia. An investment perhaps best illustrated by Monsieur Baudrillard's disdain for the "unconvincing bouquet" (158) of California wines.[2] These two monochromatic perspectives converge on a shinny support surface to produce a false sense of depth, where the asynchronous multiplexing of polarized snapshots (collage/montage) assures that every sentence contains the imperative of the narration—Kinetic and cinematic.. Kaleidoscopic (109):

America is neither dream nor reality, it's hyper-reality. (57)
The United States, it's actual utopia. (156)
obsessed, ..phobic, ..anorexic society. (80)
America is a gigantic hologram. (59)
This country is hopeless. (240)
America, how wonderful! (32)

These sound bytes are super-saturated and overdetermined with meaning, and yet essentially sense-less: a paradoxical condition of the medium of production and the speed of articulation. "Speed creates pure

objects," pure signification liberated from the constraints of syntax, reference, or intertextuality. Here basic elements of signification are swept by a single beam, and recombined to project the image of a place—a Now-Here. "Sex, beach, mountain. Sex and beach, beach and mountain. Mountain and sex. A few concepts. Sex and concept. *Just a life*" (64). But the images generated by these recombinant forms quickly dissipate—and Now-Here turns into No-Where. Unlike the permutations (meanings, images, ideologies, myths) produced within the old fissile (symbolic) economy of binary articulations and matrices (grids) of intelligibility, these recombinant (rhizomatic) forms can no longer rely "on the shroud of the signifier," nor on a transcendental structure, for reference. Like political sound bytes, which are effective due to the context of production (Speed: 15 sec. ads) and a particular syntax (tautologies—terse synthetic propositions), these polarized snapshots of "Amérique" only co-here in the context of the trip, and with the aid of speed (Virilio). "And yet, these implacable tautologies have a certain poetic force," Baudrillard maintains, to which he adds: "as does anything that is essentially sense-less" (124).

"Everything here is true (if you wish)," Baudrillard acknowledges of a fellow traveller's tale, "since the text itself is in the very image of the hysterical stereotype with which he gratifies [or is it graffitis?] California [read 'Amérique']" (206). But the truth value of the propositional content of these polarized snapshots cannot be gauged by the usual binary criteria (T/F:Y/N): within the old fissile economy of "negativity and contradiction" (156).[3] *Amérique* is formed "in the image" of our V-Clear (New-Clear) age: a fusion economy where things are increasingly transparent and meaning is merely a surface effect—a crystalline refraction. In the V-Clear age, tautologies have acquired a new significance and oxymorons (the synthesis of incommensurables) proliferate; sound bytes encapsulate total(ized) positions and attitudes; and meaning, sense, and ideology are short-circuited by the specialization and excrescence of information (the by-product of an inflationary culture). Discourses, which at one time required the mediation or masking of ideology, have become liberated by the "promiscuity of the sign," by the vertiginous hyper-connections of free-floating signifiers (polarized snapshots). Today everything occurs on this "sacred horizon of appearances," in a kind of hyper-trans-appearancy that no longer requires the testimony of the referent, that no longer relies on the ground(ing) of history.

Whereas fission was explosive, excessive, exponential, and excrescent, our fusion economy is implosive. Fusion is the (forced) convergence of incommensurable elements (paralogy): disparate entities (signs, objects, propositions, figures) brought together by force of the container, the vessel, the support surface, the medium. In this implosive economy, considerable (symbolic) energy is focused on the vessel, on the container, on the setting where convergence takes place (where shit happens), since little energy will be generated from substance (of the

argument).[4] The medium is not the message through some form of transference (like form over function). The medium multi-plexes (not always in a complex form) and dis-articulates the sememes of culture to fill the gaps of understanding. In a fusion economy, meaning is not produced but effected (surface effects–Deleuze).

In *Amérique* Baudrillard narrates this fusion (symbolic) economy at play, not, however, from the point of view of a Europe of profundities (as he believes), not of a Europe marked "by the stamp of History, State, and Ideology" (150), but rather with and within the "Protean and proteinic" logic that articulates the new-world. He insists that "[t]he confrontation, rather than convergence, of America and Europe produces a distortion, an unbridgeable gap, [and n]ot merely a time-lag, but an abyss of modernity separates us" (146), and maintains that "[w]e [Europeans] dwell in the realm of negativity and contradiction, while they [the primitives] live in the realm of paradox" (156), the text, however, celebrates the fusional logic of our V-Clear age. The asynchronous multiplexing of polarized snapshots, sound bytes, holograms and simulations, tripping/speeding, these are all expressions of a new clear age. The dichotomies Baudrillard uses to describe (graffiti) his trip in "Amérique"—idealism vs. pragmatism, history vs. the perpetual present, the principle of truth vs. simulation, terroir (where fine wines grow) vs. open space–and the distinctions he creates to mark the separation between us and them, implode under the anti-gravity (in the Nietzschean sense) of narrative devices. Distances (geographic, social and cultural) separating Europe and America, the old and the new, are short-circuited by a trip at the speed of the lighting condition. "Amérique" is not narrated from the land of "contradiction and negativity," but beyond the looking glass where paradox dwells. Baudrillard's trip (*Amérique*) highlights what is at stake in the epistemological (language) game of re-presentation: para-doxa and para-logos. And for those seasoned travelers who have attempted to express the "native's point of view," paradox is all too familiar: you cannot get there from here.

The play between substance and style, the tensions between propositional content and performance, the simultaneous creation and destruction of difference, are not, however, products of an immanent contradiction, but of a double vision–a new-perspectivism. As Baudrillard wrote somewhere, the role of presentation, the purpose of (social) theory, is to outbid and outmatch the event, to pass and exceed it [*doubler*], to trump it [*redoubler*]. Perhaps, this is where we may find the convergence of *Amérique* and America. "Who knows?"

Tastings Coordinator
Wine & Spirits Magazine

Notes

1. Page # in ( ) refer to Jean Baudrillard's *Amerique* (Paris: Grasset, 1986). The translations here are free-form and motivated (recontextualized). Go see *America* for the real thing.

2. The case of wine seems to unearth deep-rooted (primal) sentiments of national investment. There are two other references to wine in the text: "Fine wines... never really make it across the ocean" (157), unlike Baudrillard, they don't travel well; and, quoting G. Faye's (a)version of Californian wines: "the luke-warm wines of Sacramento, a parody of oenology" (206). Wines of Sacramento? That could either be the projects of UC Davis undergraduates or the wines of Gallo. Next time Monsieur Baudrillard or M. Faye are in East Bay (San Francisco) they should try an '83 Lytton Springs Reserve Zinfandel, or perhaps an '84 Jaeger Merlot, or an '85 Clos du Bois Marlstone, or an '87 Handley Chardonnay, or an '87 Grgich Hills Fume Blanc, or an '86 Byron Reserve Pinot Noir, or an '88 Trefethen White Riesling, just to name a few.

3. The simplicity and predictability of the exposition (the under-exposure of America) tempts us to pass judgement on the text in the name of a higher authority – some form of metanarrative (moral, social, political, or aesthetic); as if *Amérique* actually (in reality) indexed some-thing, as if the word "Amérique" had a referent that exceeded its image, its projection.

   A recent issue (7/89) of SPY magazine (the magazine parody) reacts to what they call "Euro-gibberish" (such as Baudrillard's (a)version of America). Seduced by the desire for an adequate re-Ding (the hermeneutic seduction), it turns *Amérique* into America in an act of translation while losing sight of the medium that summoned the message.

4. The Iran-Contra-Verse is a good example of this fusion economy at play where the confrontational setting (Summer TV) absorbs, like a media black hole, the gravity of the situation; where the executive and the legislative enter into a simulated dialogic in the name of all the weighty signifiers: Truth, Democracy, Loyalty, Justice, Freedom.

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THE WORKING CLASS AS ZOMBIE: SIMULATION AND RESISTANCE IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Chris Doran

Baudrillard's obsession with simulation has prompted many of his admirers to see TV as a privileged site for contemporary analysis.[1] Yet Baudrillard himself has extended his analysis beyond the conventional mass media and now includes sociological theory itself as simulational. In particular, he has singled out the works of Marx and Foucault for detailed criticism concerning their own simulation of 'reality principles'.[2]

Although initially sympathetic to Marx, Baudrillard's later work sought to undermine Marxism's unquestioned linguistic assumptions and to show its oppressive rather than its emancipatory nature. Despite being in general agreement with Foucault's historical analysis, Baudrillard believes that it stopped just short of the "current revolution of the system";[3] when contemporary power, as well as theories of such power, became simulational. For Baudrillard, Foucault did not realize that contemporary power is a dead power, one that has lost its embodied referents and which is now resurrected as a mere sign system. As a result, Baudrillard accused Foucault of collusion in the simulation of the 'real'; because despite Foucault's apparent relativism, he still wanted to cling to a 'reality principle'.

Although Baudrillard's insights are suggestive, they remain at the level of theoretical critique and are in need of empirical documentation. I hope to make a start on this problem by examining an issue which links up Baudrillard's critique of both Marx and Foucault, namely the relationship between the working class and state power since the rise of the state-produced human sciences[4] in the early nineteenth century. Specifi-

cally, I want to analyse working class resistance to the imposition and current operation of these state reality principles.

In the first part of this paper, I will briefly illustrate the death of working class embodied experience and its subsequent resurrection as a simulation model. I will demonstrate that throughout the nineteenth century, the state imposed reality principles of science on workers' bodies. Equally important, these same workers resisted by making reference to a self-evident truth given by their common experience; what Baudrillard calls 'parole'.[5] Nevertheless they were seduced. These sciences gave them healthy bodies, yet killed their experiential knowledge.

With the emergence of the welfare state, the working class were then resurrected as the state-created simulation model of 'Labor'. As a consequence, Labor's resistance to the state was now made part of the simulation model itself.[6] As Kroker and Levin suggest,

> all the social movements which bet on liberation, emancipation, the resurrection of the subject of history, of the group, of speech as a raising of consciousness, indeed of a seizure of the unconscious of subjects and of the masses are acting fully in accordance with the political logic of the system.[7]

The central problem now appears and is the explicit focus of Part 2. If this discursive power now works by means of its ability to produce simulated versions of 'resistance' as well as 'reality', how then does one actually resist? At first glance, Baudrillard's analysis appears to be of little help. In fact, he seems to have just the opposite problem. Although he accuses Foucault of fabricating simulated models of power, we might ask the same question of him. Is he also colluding in the creation of a simulation model? Will his apparently relativistic theory become an exercise in power because it promises a new 'truth' about contemporary society? Granted, his state-produced sociological theory would be based on a very different 'reality principle', that power is always simulational and operates by creating the 'real'; yet it is already suggesting itself as a new model for contemporary sociological theorising, a kind of hyper-relativism in which all privileged versions are constantly being deconstructed. In opposition to this viewpoint however, I will argue that Baudrillard, at one level, is doing quite the opposite. My claim is that Baudrillard constantly practises a form of resistance to this spread of simulation. Although he himself says there is nothing outside of simulation, he constantly resists such a statement. Like the working class in the nineteenth century, he does this by invoking a notion of truth as given by experience. However, this alternative interpretation of Baudrillard is not directly apparent in his content. Instead, it is hidden in his frame.

Hitherto, most sociological theory has tended to ignore questions about the frame of analysis. This is a terrible neglect. By using analogies from molecular biology and mathematics, I will show not only the profitability of any analysis of 'frame', but I will also show that Baudril-

lard's own analysis operates as a contemporary virus. Consequently, much of the paper will be concerned with bringing this viral resistance to the surface by juxtaposing the content of his analysis against its frame. To do this, I will utilise an earlier form of viral resistance within more conventional sociology, namely the ethnomethodological critique of structural functional sociology.[8]

Finally, this analysis will prove helpful in my own formulation of a contemporary means of resistance. I will conclude by suggesting that contemporary resistance might speak at the level of the simulation model itself. It might use an encoded form of parole; the talk of zombies, those who know they are dead but nevertheless insist on speaking the truth of their own experience. An interesting and unexpected paradox thus emerges. My analysis concludes by suggesting that contemporary sociological theory need no longer be thoroughly dominated by relativism. The notion of parole, suitably framed, may be capable of acting both as a form of resistance and as one practical solution to the problem of relativism within sociology.

The Death of Experience

I will begin by selectively illustrating the transformation of the working class over the last century and a half into coded, discursive units, and the simultaneous death of their embodied experience. Today, only officially-created, scientific versions of their reality are acceptable. Nevertheless, if the central problematic is that the working class have had certain scientific interpretations imposed upon them, any theoretical analysis must be especially careful not to repeat the same error itself. Thus one initial problem is the type of methodology to be employed.

Parole: A New Methodology

Despite the originality of Baudrillard's thought, there are several problems which prevent any straightforward application of his insights to this analysis. First, his insistence that we treat Marxism as a code fails to address a more important point for the working class. It was not Marxism that was imposed on their bodies but rather another theoretical discourse, one put into place by the state. Consequently Baudrillard's analysis is only a partial one. It fails to address how such theoretical codes, such reality principles, were imposed *in practice.*

One way to understand the emergence of the working class as a simulation model is, to return to early nineteenth-century Britain and to document their codification by state officials like the factory inspectorate. Foucault is useful here not only because he alerts us to the powers

of surveillance and discipline that the state started to impose, but also because he locates the body as a privileged site on which this power operates. Nevertheless, Foucault has certain limitations.

Although his work traces this rise of the human sciences as techniques of state power imposed on the population, he fails to acknowledge not only that 'class' was a meaningful concept at this time but that the working class vehemently opposed these state impositions. And when they were resisting this new discourse of power it was quite explicitly because these new frameworks damaged their bodies.

> Q. You say that you first went to work at the factory at the age of 12 years; are you certain your legs were perfectly straight when you began your work?
> A. Yes, I am.
> Q. Then you are sure that the present appearance of your legs is owing to the work at the factory?
> A. Yes, I first felt myself getting weak at the knees.
> Q. Was that from standing too much?
> A. Yes, we could not sit down but for a few minutes.[9]

This interchange is highly unusual. It comes from the 1832 Sadler committee investigating factory workers' health. For almost the first and last time in state history, the working class were allowed to speak directly of their own concerns. No attempts were made by state officials to formulate or reinterpret what was 'really' intended. Within months however, a 'scientific' royal commission was introduced to discover the same information. It would ask specific questions requiring specific answers. This second commission marks the beginning of the state's codification of working-class experience.

Hopefully, the analytic lesson is clear. We must discover working class experience unmediated by state science. As analysts we must forego theoretical interpretation, and instead give credence and prominence to actors' own meanings. Baudrillard talks of parole as being akin to the 'spoken word', my aim is to encode such language and make it available for analysis. This results in a rather novel methodology; an analysis of how working people actually interpreted their world at this time. They interpreted these new codes as oppressive, and they vigorously resisted them[10] by making reference to a world of health that had immediate practical relevance for them, one which needed no interpretation. Their world was self-evidently obvious, because they shared a common cultural and linguistic background, a symbolic order. They had no problem understanding their world, it was changing it, which was the difficulty.

Seducing Working-Class Bodies

Elsewhere, I have described how the symbolic world within which the working class understood their own bodies, became subjugated. As a

result, by the end of the nineteenth century they started accepting a state-produced 'official' version of their health.[11] Here is an outline of that transformation.

Despite our usual belief that the welfare state was a creation from the ashes of World War 2, its origins can in fact be traced back to the 1830s. The original blueprint of this coded state as a combination of traditional state interests in property and wealth, plus a newly found concern for the subsistence of the masses, was all set out in Jeremy Bentham's last work, his *Constitutional Code of 1832*. He proposed a science of state power in which the state would be all-powerful and discursive. Crucially, this state was to be created by lowly state officials who would not only enforce the law, but also obtain 'scientific' information in order to continually produce the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number'. The gathering of this information is what results in the codification of the working class.

It is from the 1830s onwards that we get the explosion in state information. In Britain, the factory inspectorate, the poor law officers, the numerous statistical societies, as well as the frequent royal commissions, are all pre-occupied with obtaining information on the working class. At first, the working class vehemently resist this codifying state and its new techniques of codification. George Bull said the following at a public meeting of factory workers in 1832;

> If, instead of making us pay these men and for the printing of these books, they had appointed a Committee of old washer-women and promised them tea-drinking, and left them to decide whether children should work more than 10 hours a day, there would have been some credit due to them.[12]

In 1833 workers wanted their health protected, yet the state's introduction of the factory inspectorate was not welcomed. It was seen as a means for regulating only the worst excesses of the political economy framework then in place; while the inspectors themselves were dismissed as state spies.[13] In the decades after the 1830s, the state's new 'sciences of the body' are increasingly imposed upon the working class. Fervent state officials constantly force working people into understanding their bodies in ways that are conducive to state interests. For example, by the 1870s, workers were being encouraged to see themselves in terms of 'accident risks'. Their earlier demand for a non-specific, general health preservation was transformed. A state-scientific discourse about accident probabilities, created by the factory inspectorate, led to the *problematisation* of a much narrower concern, namely accident compensation. As a result, workers' earlier outright resistance has been transformed into ambivalence. The 1880 Employers' Liability act allows employers and workers to set up accident insurance schemes that will provide small but certain payments, in return for workers not sueing

their employers in courts. This, of course, leads to a definite improvement in workers' immediate material existence. As one parliamentarian said,

> Nobody would contend that workmen were not in a more advantageous position under a system from which they derived compensation in all cases of injury than they would be if no such system existed.[14]

And although many working people are starting to agree with this evaluation, others steadfastly refuse this re-interpretation.

> The workmen never cared for compensation itself; it might have been a necessity for their social circumstances, but no idea of compensation ever urged them forward to agitate for the obtaining of this Act; it was primarily, I may say, absolutely, with the desire to protect their lives and limbs so far as human precautions could do so.[15]

Yet the seduction of the certainty of payments was too strong. Eventually, nearly all the working class were seduced. Today, anybody who now might argue for a version of health outside the parameters of the welfare state, is not only dismissed, but is not even understood. Health today must only be *comprehended* within state-produced parameters.

Digitalized Bodies

Although Foucault proves very useful in analyzing this surveillance of working-class bodies, he does not realize the extent of the transformation which occurred in the World War 2 period and after. As Baudrillard points out, the age of the panopticon is dead. Instead we have the beginnings of simulation.

> Truth which is no longer the reflexive truth of the mirror, nor the perspective truth of the panoptic system and the gaze, but the manipulative truth of the test which probes and interrogates.[16]

The working class were placed in precisely this situation after World War 2. After the collapse of both the frameworks of political economy and parliamentary reform,[17] plus the ensueing Second World War, it was strongly argued that the state should play a central role in the post-war reconstruction. Thus the 'recombinant state' emerged.

Like a cell concerned with its own self-reproduction, the post-'45 state had the onerous task of its own self-reconstruction. In the molecular cell, proteins (the essential building blocks of the cell), are produced through their 'translation' from amino acids via the codifying action of DNA. In a similar fashion after World War 2 working people's experiential world

got 'translated' into the official discourse of Labor by the codifying action of state sciences.

The gaze of the factory inspector or the poor law officer was replaced by the omnipresence of the 'form', a device totally embedded within this new framework of coded state power. The questions it asks presuppose the framework, and reproduce that framework in their answers. As Baudrilard says,

> Digitality is with us...the most concrete form you see it in, is that of the test, of the question/answer, of the stimulus/response.[18]

Modern workers' compensation forms are one example of this language of scientific state discourse. They ask questions to get supposedly objective answers. Yet the questions asked presuppose only the relevant information which the state wants.[19] Throughout, health is downplayed, accidents are prioritised, and diseases are made marginal; all by the construction of the form itself. The worker's response is merely to fit him or herself within this pre-determined code. The questions are digitalized. Yes/No responses are all that is required. Workers' health has become codified into state interests.

Baudrillard is aware of the similarities between this type of endeavour and our present day understanding of molecular biology:

> what biochemistry hypostatizes is the ideal of a social order regulated by a kind of genetic code or micromolecular calculus of PPBS (Planning Programming Budgetting [*sic*] System) that irradiates the social body with its operational circuits.[20]

The welfare state like the molecular cell, grows by recombination. Rather than using the genetic code as a means of growth, it uses the grid of 'objective' state science. Working class bodies have to be continually encoded into scientific discourse. Vast amounts of contemporary statistics and social scientific reports are premised on this digitalising process. As a consequence, everyone must speak the official language which is created from this process.[21]

Sociological Viruses

As Benjamin has noticed, with the rise of modernity reproduction has taken the place of production:

> reproduction absorbs the process of production, changing its finalities and altering the status of product and producer...the fact that anything might be simply produced, as such, in two copies, is already a revolution.[22]

In addition, I have suggested that the modern welfare state can also be understood as a recombinant one. So how then do we resist a system that is based on these principles of reproduction and recombination? As Baudrillard has suggested, resistance based on working-class subjective action is now the property of the Marxist code which insists on transforming working-class speech into the discourse of labor power.[23] Yet spontaneous working class resistance is either ignored or transformed into coded discourse.[24] Thus there appears little choice. Contemporary resistance must be put forward discursively, i.e., as disembodied. But how is this to be done?

The answer lies in understanding the behaviour of viruses in contemporary biology and by showing parallels in both modern mathematics and sociology. Hofstadter makes a direct comparison between viruses and Godel's theorem within mathematics.

> The analogue of Godel's theorem is seen to be a peculiar fact, probably little useful to molecular biologists (to whom it is likely quite obvious). It is always possible to design a strand of DNA which, if injected into a cell, would upon being transcribed, cause such proteins to be manufactured as would destroy the cell (or the DNA) and thus result in the non-reproduction of that DNA... an invading species of virus enters a cell by some surreptitious means, and then carefully ensures the manufacture of proteins which will have the effect of destroying the virus itself.[25]

He continues by describing exactly how this is done,

> What actually happens when viral DNA enters a cell? The virus 'hopes', to speak anthropomorphically, that its DNA will get exactly the same treatment as the DNA of the host cell. This would mean getting transcribed and translated, thus allowing it to direct the synthesis of its own special proteins, alien to the host cell, which will then begin to do their thing...In a way this resembles the story of the Trojan Horse.[26]

Godel's genius was to introduce self-reference into mathematics; to make it self-reflective and introspective. The unsettling consequence was that Godel introduced incompleteness as a fundamental attribute of mathematics. Ethnomethodology (EM) achieved a similar result within structural-functional sociology by using the same methods. It introduced the uncertainty of relativism as fundamental to the sociological enterprize. Both Godel and EM operated as viruses within their respective disciplines.

As a result, sociological theory has remained at this meta-sociological level ever since. In the English-speaking world relativism has become an orthodoxy, while Baudrillard has developed similar insights into his theory of simulation. Nevertheless, despite Baudrillard's apparent relativism, his theory tacitly re-introduces a notion of truth into sociological theory, but at yet another meta-sociological level. In other words, it too

is viral. But before I can demonstrate this viral nature of Baudrillard's own work, we must first become comfortable with the more general features of contemporary viruses.

Viral Strategies

The godelian/ethnomethodological virus involves introducing a self-referential paradox into the disciplines of mathematics and sociology. In both cases, a variation on the famous Cretan paradox is utilized. As is well known, the Epimenides paradox entails the Cretan, Epimenides, making the famous self-referential statement "all Cretans are liars." This utterance can be interpreted on two levels. At the content level, it refers to the general category of people—Cretans; but at the level of frame, it refers to Epimenides himself, because he is a Cretan. As a result of this self-reference, a recursive loop is generated in which the truth or falsity of the statement cannot be determined. Consequently, one can now understand this sentence at a higher logical level; not as a simple statement about the veracity of Cretans, but as a formal paradox—a sentence whose truth value constantly oscillates.[27]

In order to reproduce this paradox within modern science, a method for creating interpretations at the level of both frame and content had to be introduced. In mathematics, 'godel numbering' fulfilled this task.

> numbers are made to stand for symbols, and sequences of symbols... and this coding trick enables statements of number theory to be understood on two different levels: as statements of number theory and also as statements about statements of number theory.[28]

Within sociology, the use of ethnomethodology accomplished a similar encoding task. At one level EM described the social order produced by ordinary members in society. But at another level, it gave meta-descriptions of that social order; that is, it could also produce analyses of sociological descriptions of the social order.[29] This was possible because

> the interpretive procedures by which the positivistic sociologist produces and sustains a sense of social reality are effectively no different from those employed by ordinary members of society to achieve the same.[30]

Having identified the main elements of the viral strategy, let me now show how the paradox is constructed. Both of them follow a three part sequence. First, Godel introduced his numbering system for expressing conventional arithmetic notation. He showed that it was possible to assign a unique number to each arithmetical sign and symbol. For example,

Constant sign	Godel number	meaning[31]
V	2	or
=	5	equals
0	6	zero
s	7	the immediate successor of
(	8	punctuation mark
)	9	punctuation mark

EM also constructed a system for translating the world of everyday life into social theory. EM told us how the social world was continually created by the tacit and unnoticed interpretive techniques used by ordinary people in their everyday lives. In other words, it described the framework of the social world, rather than its content. For EM, the problem of producing correct versions of social reality was unanswerable.

> The basic theoretical question was no longer to be the obstinately unanswerable one of why 'in principle' social order is as it is (or claimed to be). Rather it was to become that of how 'for practical purposes' are particular manifestations of social order achieved.[32]

The ethnomethodological solution was to study how ordinary people produced versions of their reality, which if not correct in any scientific sense, were correct for their practical purposes. As a result, descriptions of how social order was created could then be represented within social theory. For example, a famous experiment by Garfinkel showed how the social order of 'normal' femaleness was an extraordinarily complex social construction. Agnes, a dubiously sexed person, was able, by utilising a myriad of artful practices, to produce himself/herself as 'normally female', although in many other 'biological' facets, s/he might have been considered a male.[33] The second part of this viral analysis is to show that, like Godel, EM can be used to refer to sociology itself. That is, it can introspect and reflect upon itself. Mehan and Wood have given a good overview of the thrust of this type of ethnomethodological research. It consisted of analyses of how sociologists themselves constructed 'objective' social science by using the very same common sense interpretive techniques as ordinary people did. Prior to this, sociological description had always prided itself on being scientific, that

> sociology...is capable of producing descriptions and explanations of social phenomena which correspond with actual events in the world.[34]

Nevertheless, the insertion of EM into sociology produced the opposite conclusion. For example, in an analysis of how sociologists conduct their research, Cicourel showed that the very process of producing objective data constantly requires common sense interpretation.

> The interviewer and the respondent must engage in interpretive work in deciding if a response is appropriate. Yet this interpretive work is neither part of the sociologists' theory nor of their method.[35]

Thus, sociology could not give objective statements about the world because sociologists were always interpreting the world in two different ways. In content, they interpreted it as sociologists; but in method, they interpreted it as ordinary 'members' of society. The conclusion which thus emerged was that traditional sociological knowledge could not retain its scientific validity because of this pervasive presence of members' interpretive practices.

The third step of the analysis is to reflect upon analyses of sociology that ethnomethodologists themselves performed. Mehan and Wood were writing within a framework which proclaimed itself as sociological, that is, they saw themselves as sociologists. Thus, we might expect when reading their own analysis to accept their findings as valid. But the actual content of their analysis said that sociology could not be true because the methods used to get 'objective' data were merely the same common sense methods used by ordinary people. A crucial problem thus emerged. By being sociologists, Mehan and Wood should have expressed a truth, but the truth they expressed was that sociology was flawed.

The higher level interpretation that then hits us, is that their own analysis must also be flawed. The analogy with the Cretan paradox now becomes obvious. Because they as analysts can also be interpreted on two levels, as ethnomethodological sociologists and as culturally competent members of the social world, they too were tacitly using common sense, interpretive methods to construct their own critique of sociology. Thus no type of sociology whatsoever, could produce objective statements about the world because tacit common sense interpretations could never be banished. EM, in a very prosaic and mundane manner, had convincingly demonstrated the relativism that lurked in the shadows of conventional sociology. In other words like mathematics, sociology was incomplete.[36]

Resistance as Virus

By using a similar viral strategy an opposite conclusion can be produced from Baudrillard's work, namely that relativism is not all pervasive. In order to demonstrate my proposed solution a modified Godelian

construction, called in mathematics an 'explicit Henkin sentence', will be used.[37]

The Godelian theorem/virus was, as we have already seen, a suicidal one because, "strings of the Godel type... assert their unproducibility within specific formal systems."[38] As a result, Godel's theorem destroyed earlier hopes of completely formalizing mathematics.[39] The Henkin sentence is also a virus but it is one that can reproduce itself in the host system. As Hofstadter explains,

> this phage [Henkin virus -CD] asserts its own producibility in a specific cell, and the sentence asserts its own producibility in a specific formal system. They can be constructed exactly along the lines of Godel sentences, the only difference being the omission of a negation.[40]

The equivalent of the Godelian sentence was "all Cretans are liars." Its equivalent in ethnomethodological terms would be "sociological knowledge is not scientifically correct." This type of sentence introduces relativism into sociology when it is realized that sociologists constantly use members' interpretive practices. With the 'omission of the negation' this sentence becomes "sociological knowledge is scientifically correct." And it is to the detailed construction of such a Henkin sentence-virus that I will now turn. To produce this Henkin sentence, one copies the godelian construction but one starts from a meta-sociological position. One begins with the acknowledgement of relativism as an accepted and common feature of today's world, that social analysis today has accepted the veracity of meta-sociological analyses. As already indicated, the rise of relativism stems quite straightforwardly from the ethnomethodological-Godelian critique of sociology. In this sense, all relativists might be regarded as meta-sociologists. They understand that their accounts are always less than objectively true. They now stand at a higher logical level, able to treat sociology itself as an object of inquiry, with Baudrillard himself as an archetypal meta-sociologist. My own methodology has also demonstrated its awareness of this relativist critique of the social sciences. For example, I have applied the ethnomethodological device of taking ordinary people's talk seriously, as well as accepting the provisionary and interpretive nature of my own analysis.[41]

Despite their claims to relativism, relativists can indeed be shown to proclaim a truth value, but that this is done tacitly, in terms of their method. They tacitly proclaim a truth based on the grounds of their own cultural experience or, as Baudrillard might say, the Symbolic order. In order to construct this Henkin paradox, it is once again necessary to place frame against content. We have already seen how EM acted as a coding device for analyzing the frame of sociological theory. Now my parole-methodology will be used as a coding device for analysing the frame of Baudrillard's theory. My historical analysis of the working-class, symbolic world has its counterpart in the first step of the godelian

analysis, the ability to code the framework of number theory into numbers, or the ethnomethodological ability to code members' knowledge into a sociological system. In my historical analysis I discovered that relativism was a totally different problem in the early nineteenth century than it is today. I examined ordinary working-class experience, its members' parole, and came up with some surprising results. Then the working class saw social scientific knowledge quite straightforwardly as relativistic, and incapable of telling them the truth of their own experience. They also saw it as oppressive and as a means by which state power was imposed on them. Hence they resisted it vehemently. In its place, they appealed to a self-evident truth which had no difficulty expressing itself as such, despite its background in their common symbolic experience.

The second step in this Henkin construction is to pose the problem of self-reference. That is, my methodology applied to Baudrillard's work itself. Baudrillard's theory is about how codes of meaning are imposed. Yet he says little about how they were imposed, whether they were resisted, or how they were resisted. With my methodology, I show how state officials have imposed relativistic codes of meaning since the early nineteenth century. Thus, when we introspect on Baudrillard's writings, it might appear at first, as if Baudrillard is following in this long tradition. He is a state official, a university lecturer and thus, in some sense, a modern counterpart of the state officials of the nineteenth century. He can be interpreted as imposing his relativistic knowledge on others, via a claim to social scientific truth, albeit at this meta-sociological level of truth as relativism.

Nonetheless, the insertion of my parole-methodology into Baudrillard's theory will show that in his practice, he does the opposite of what he says in his content. When we examine his actual textual practices, he too resists relativistic state-produced knowledge; in this case, his very own theory. He does this by tacitly appealing to experiential validity. At first, such an appeal might appear worthless, seeming to hold little or no truth value. Yet these types of appeal are a well-accepted but unnoticed feature of the sociological relativists' position. Let me explain.

Although ethnomethodologists examined members' knowledge, they only saw it in terms of the limits that it put on objective, sociological knowledge. Because it could not guarantee objective scientific truth they concluded that it introduced relativism. They did not examine the other interpretation hidden within their own analysis; namely that this members' knowledge, which they themselves shared, was not disputable. That is, they treated it as their bedrock, as self-evident.

This knowledge had a truth value derived only from its common shared experience. There was never any need to prove its truthfulness, because everybody took it for granted. It was true "for all practical purposes." In effect, the acceptance of such self-evident knowledge ensured one's membership within this sociological community. But, although these

ethnomethodologists saw this members' knowledge as inferior to objective scientific knowledge, they never disputed its 'for all practical purposes' veracity. In fact, because it was such an assumed part of their background knowledge, all they thought possible was that it might be explicated and brought to the surface. Also for the 'practical purposes' of doing sociological research, these ethnomethodologists completely accepted the veracity of this members' knowledge, and by incorporating it into their scientific research, made it scientifically valid. At this juncture, I argue, they ceased being relativists because they were now tacitly insisting on the truth of their common, shared experience.

It is this other hidden interpretation of ethnomethodology; its truth as experience and for "all practical purposes," that I want to prioritize. This fact allows me to reverse the polarity of ethnomethodology's godelian equivalent, and to construct the content of the Henkin virus. My claim now becomes 'sociological knowledge may be correct' rather than fallible, because relativistic sociologists themselves tacitly accept the truth of their own cultural competence. Truth, for the practical purposes of doing sociological research, can now be guaranteed not by scientific objectivity but by one's membership in a common culture. In a sense, this is similar to the early assertion by feminists that they could speak a 'truth' given by their common experience. Yet because their common experience typically involves power relations, their theorizing always involves an awareness of such relations. Unfortunately the ethnomethodologists accepted, as culturally given, the stability of the social order and saw no power relations at work. Thus the sociology they produced had no concern with power. My work, as might be expected, has more similarities with this feminist research. The major difference with my analysis is that its reliance on parole is made at a different logical level, as I hope will become apparent later.

This appeal to the truth of cultural experience is present throughout Baudrillard's writings and reflects his own personal involvement in acts of resistance, such as the events of May 1968 in France. In his earlier works, the truth value given to the symbolic realm was obvious:[42]

> Utopia wants speech against power and against the reality principle which is only the phantasm of the system and its indefinite reproduction. It wants only the spoken word, and it wants to lose itself in it.[43]

While in another text, he writes,

> only that which assumes its meaning through continual reciprocal exchange eludes exchange value, in the gift and the counter-gift, in the ambivalence of an open relationship, and never in a final relation of value.[44]

Throughout, Baudrillard proffers the symbolic order against the world of the code, but he does not try to interpret it. His notion of the symbolic

comes not just from the writings of people like Levi-Strauss, but from his own experience in the symbolic order. For example, he says with regard to power, "each person knows deep down that any form of power is a personal challenge, a challenge to the death."[45] And in several other places, he utilises other aspects of parole, "something in all men profoundly rejoices in seeing a car burn."[46] These assertions are not scientifically established, rather they are 'true' because they appear self-evident to Baudrillard; "something in us disaccumulates unto death, undoes, destroys, liquidates and disconnects so that we can resist the pressure of the real, and live."[47] Thus like the working-class resistance of the last century, Baudrillard resists by using parole. But unlike the working class of the nineteenth century, Baudrillard's resistance is at a higher logical level. It is at the level of the code itself; it is scientific![48]

At this point, the analogy-in-reverse with structural functional sociology should be made explicit. Structural functionalists proclaimed 'objective truth' but in their tacit 'methods' they used relativistic, experientially-based, common sense techniques of interpretation. Baudrillard does the opposite. He proclaims a relativistic position for his own theory, but in his textual methods, he constantly appeals to a tacit, self-evident notion of truth, adequate for his 'practical purposes.' This tacit use of parole is constant throughout his work.

The third and final step in our imitation of the godelian strategy is to intensify the self-reference again and to understand the position of my own analysis. Like Baudrillard, I too am aware of the recent developments in sociological theorizing and the world of relativism that we now inhabit. I understand full well that my analysis is an interpretation, one of many possible ones; that it is meta-sociological. Yet when I reflect upon my own tacit, textual practices in the way that I investigated Baudrillard's and those of the working class in the nineteenth century I also have to acknowledge that my analysis, in terms of its textual methods, used similar working-class strategies and truths. I too accepted the veracity of the self-evident understanding of the nineteenth-century working class and did not seek to discover 'what they really meant'.

I too have tried to resist the colonizing power of the social sciences, by appealing, without interpretation, to the assertions of working-class experience. But then perhaps that should not be too surprising. Like the ethnomethodologists who came to the realization that they themselves incorporated dual interpretive capacities, as sociologists and as competent members of society,[49] I too must acknowledge my dual membership that is based on both my sociological training and my cultural background.

Like the ethnomethodological critique of sociology but only in reverse, the end result is that, at the level of content, I claim that my paper is a relativistic one, yet I am forced to acknowledge that, in my method, I have tacitly expressed the veracity of working-class parole, based on my own shared cultural background. Like the Epimenides paradox, it forces us to

move to a higher level of interpretation. At this level, my paper, via the textual methods utilized, tacitly says that it is not relativistic because it is based on my shared cultural belief in the veracity of experience and distrust of state science. Like the nineteenth-century opponents to the codifying state who resisted via appeals to the self-evident truth of their own bodies, I too have made a similar claim, albeit from within the framework of state science, rather than from outside. The conclusion reached is outrageously naive, yet the methods used to produce it reflect conventional and well-accepted procedures within recent sociological theory.

Finally, we have finished the construction of our explicit Henkin sentence. I have tried to show in a formal way a means of resisting the simulation effects of much of contemporary social scientific theorizing. As I also suggested, the results are not what might have been imagined. One form of resistance to the simulation effects of modern sociology is to insist on the truth (for all practical purposes) of experience, by exploiting the analyst's dual membership both within the sociological community and as a 'member' of a cultural community. Here truth is guaranteed, not by rigorous scientific methods, but by the analyst's membership in a community.

As a youngster growing up and loathing the prospects of working at Vauxhall Motors like my father, it was not difficult for me to choose the alternative of further education. Yet it is here where one realizes that the contemporary simulated versions of Labor are at odds with one's own experience;[50] they are mere sign systems.

> labour is no longer a force. It has become a sign among signs... all that is asked of you is not that you produce, nor that you make an effort to surpass yourself...but that you be socialised.[51]

Throughout my academic socialization it was clear that the theoretical discourses of sociology, even the sympathetic ones like Marxism, did not describe my experience. Yet the paradigms of structural functionalism and Marxism provided the dominant ways of understanding social experience.

Nevertheless, it is obvious to me and many others that, today, power is becoming lodged in the different forms of media. UB 40 in a cryptic note on the importance of reggae music in their early experience suggested that the reggae they loved was "reggae before it was discovered by cops, sociologists, and TV producers."[52] More recently, John Lydon has made a similar Baudrillardian point, succinctly and rather bluntly claiming that, "The written word is a lie."[53] Nevertheless in the realm of the academy, such voices have largely been ignored.

We members of the *simulated* working class know our quandary. It is of no use to call for the articulation of working-class experience; that possibility was colonized some time ago. In the process, working-class embodied experience was destroyed, codified, and resurrected as a

simulation model. Consequently, any contemporary resistance must, I suggest, fully accept this death, and instead produce itself in terms of this resurrected experience.[54] We must resist at the level of the simulation model itself, that is, of scientific discourse.

> You cannot defend against the code with political economy or 'revolution'...All dissent must be of a higher logical type than that to which it is opposed. [It is] thus necessary to play a game of at least equal complexity in order to be in opposition to third-order simulation.[55]

The game played in this paper was to produce an analysis which, at the level of framework, i.e., the simulation model, was seductive. One way to get out of the quandary of relativism was by moving to a higher logical level, the meta-meta-sociological! Simultaneously, this claim acted as a means of resistance to contemporary simulation. I argued for a truth value which pointed beyond relativism, namely the veracity given through common cultural experience. While such a position was implicit in the sociological relativists' position, I have drawn a higher-level interpretation out of that tacit dimension of relativistic social science. I suggested that at the level of frame, relativism could be avoided by appealing to an experiential truth based on common cultural experience.

But at the level of content, I found that the culture I belong to has been consistently antagonistic to such scientific discourse. Most social science merely dismisses working-class culture as being "anti-intellectual," but another interpretation is hidden within that dismissive stance; that historically this anti-intellectualism constituted a way of resisting the destruction of working-class experience by the onslaught of this science of state power. Yet with the generalization of this simulation model after 1945 and the rise of a new generation totally immersed in this simulation experience, the necessity of resistance at a higher logical level emerges; resistance to the simulation framework of state science itself.

Coded biological organisms can be resisted by the action of viruses which are understood as being neither dead or alive. Coded society can be resisted by the action of zombies who are also understood as being neither dead or alive. That is, at the level of frame, I insisted that we understand ourselves as coded, that we must operate within the simulation model itself, that we must formulate ourselves within the disembodied discourse of contemporary science. But at the level of content, I suggested that we must heed our particular cultural backgrounds. And in my case, as I have documented, this demonstrated itself as antagonistic to much of state science, a discourse seen not only as seductive but as oppressive. This paradox of frame versus content, which I have set up, is not unintentional.

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Notes

1. For examples of this emphasis on TV, see K-H Chen, "Masses and the Media: Baudrillard's Implosive Postmodernism," *Theory, Culture and Society* (Vol.4,No.1 1987), 71-86; and A. Kroker and D. Cook, *The Postmodern Scene* (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1986), 267-279.

2. See J. Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983) for a more explicit analysis of these 'reality principles'.

3. J. Baudrillard, "Forgetting Foucault," *Humanities in Society* (Vol.3,No.1 1980), 87-111.

4. Foucault's notion of the human sciences encompasses not just the social sciences but also those clinical and applied sciences which routinely impinge on the human body. Our common term "health sciences" comes close to Foucault's intention here.

5. For Baudrillard's most extensive discussion of parole, the spoken word, see chapter 5 of *Mirror of Production* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975).

6. Even academic Marxism, whose discursive formulations include theoretically "correct" methods of resistance, can also be seen as a state-produced imposer of reality.

7. A. Kroker and C. Levin, "Baudrillard's Challenge," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*(Vol.8,Nos.1-2, 1984), 15.

8. Ethnomethodology showed how social order was created, and thus acted as a 'form' to a 'content' which was structural functionalism. I aim to demonstrate how coded power was imposed, and thus my paper will act as a 'form' for a 'content' which is Baudrillard's theory. The viral nature of this work depends on combining form and content in a self-referential fashion.

9. *Report from the Select Committee on the 'Bill to regulate the Labour of Children in the Mills and Factories of the United Kingdom'* (Vol.XV, 1831-2), 28.

10. Here Foucault's methodology shows its weaknesses. He has little empirical analysis of the working class, and pays only scant attention to how these codes were vigorously and strenuously resisted. For examples, see M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Peregrine books, 1977) part 4.2.

11. C. Doran, *Calculated risks: An Alternative History of Workers' Compensation,* (Unpublished dissertation: University of Calgary, 1986).

12. Quoted in S. Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick*, (London: Methuen and Co.Ltd., 1952), 57-8.

13. For example, see B. Hutchins and A. Harrison, *A History of Factory Legislation*(London: Cass and Co. Ltd., 1966), 56.

14. *Hansard* (Vol. 19: 1893), 751.

15. Quoted in P. Bartip and S. Burman, *The Wounded Soldiers of Industry,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 164.

16. J. Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983), 52.

17. For the most insightful analysis of the death of both the frameworks of liberal democracy and of classical economics, see K. Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).

18. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 115.

19. See C. Doran, "Workers Compensation Today: Political, Medical and Health Issues" in *Sociology of Health Care in Canada*, ed. B. Bolaria and H. Dickinson (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch, 1988), 460-472.

20. J. Baudrillard, "The Structural Law of Value and the Order of Simulacra" in *The Structural Allegory*, ed. J. Fekete, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 66-67.

21. The scientific representatives of the working class, their union spokespersons, are as adept at using this language as anybody else. For example, the following, concerning workers' compensation, comes from the Ontario Federation of Labor, *The Workmen's Compensation System in Ontario: A Critical Overview* (n.d) "where permanent disability results from the injury, the pensionable loss suffered by the employee shall be calculated from the nature and degree of the injury, the loss of real earnings, and a fully indexed pension shall be established to be paid bi-weekly during the lifetime of the employee of a sum equivalent to the periodically assessed calculation of loss." (p.21). Any trace of the experiential language used to resist the state in the 1830s has now disappeared. The scientific representatives of the working class have been seduced into understanding the world quite differently. They resist, but only from within the parameters of coded discourse.

22. Quoted in J. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 99.

23. The unfortunate position which modern Marxism finds itself in, is that it too is caught up in this mediation of working people's experience. As Baudrillard has shown in the *Mirror of Production*, Marx insists that the working class are alienated only because they have lost control over their labor power. "And in this Marxism assists the cunning of capital. It convinces men that they are alienated by the sale of their labor power, thus censoring the much more radical hypothesis that they might be alienated as labor power" (p.31). As with their subjugation under the imposition of official discourse by the modern welfare state, workers are subjugated to a similar imposition from Marxist thought: "dialecticized under the sign of revolution by Marxism, it is always the case of an imposition of meaning" (ibid., p.155).

24. Thus modern forms of resistance, such as graffiti in New York city, have typically been ignored as irrelevant, whilst other forms like the punk phenomenon have been transformed into discursive analyses. For example, D. Hebdidge, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979).

25. D. Hofstadter, *Godel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*, (New York: Vintage, 1979), 536-7.

26. Ibid., p.538.

27. Although the introduction of the Epimenides sentence results in a formal paradox, the consequences for mathematics and sociology are slightly different. As Hofstadter says, "Whereas the Epimenides statement creates a paradox since it is neither true nor false, the Godel sentence G is unprovable...but true" (p.18).

28. Ibid., p.18.

29. For examples of such analyses, see J.M. Atkinson, *Discovering Suicide* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978); P. Filmer, et al, *New Directions in Sociological Theory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1973); J.D. Douglas, *The Social Meanings of Suicide* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967).

30. Filmer et al, *New Directions in Sociological Theory*, 36.

31. Adapted from E. Nagel and J. Newman, *Godel's Proof* (New York: New York University Press, 1958), 70.

32. J.M. Atkinson and P. Drew, *Order in Court* (London: MacMillan, 1979), 21.

33. See H. Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1967) for details.

34. Atkinson and Drew, *Order in Court*, 18.

35. Quoted in H. Mehan and H. Wood, *The Reality of Ethnomethodology* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), 51.

36. For more detailed analyses of the early ethnomethodological critique of sociology, see P. Filmer et al, *New Directions in Sociological Theory,* Part 1. For an example of the hostile reaction it received at the time, see E. Gellner, "Ethnomethodology: the Re-enchantment Industry or the California Way of Subjectivity", *Philosophy of the Social Sciences,* (Vol.5, 1975), 431-50. Since then, the ethnomethodological virus has mainly taken one of two routes. Firstly, its viral attack on social scientific knowledge has been downplayed. EM is now seen merely as a sub-discipline within sociology concerned with the micro-organization of everyday life. In other words, EM's self-referential character is largely forgotten. For a recent overview of the tenuous position which contemporary ethnomethodology holds within present-day sociology, see W. Sharrock and B. Anderson, *The Ethnomethodologists,* (London and New York: Tavistock, 1986) chapter 7. Their exposition tries to distance EM from its earlier critique of sociology and claims that the theoretical aims of each faction are, in fact, dissimilar.

    The other route taken led away from relativistic critiques of social science, and, instead, pursued them in the realm of natural science. In this growing field, now dubbed the "Social Studies of Science" the relativistic, rather than objective nature of natural science is constantly investigated. However, S. Woolgar in his recent edition, *Knowledge and Reflexivity,* (London: Sage Publications, 1988) once again directly confronts the problem of relativism within social science, specifically the self-reference problem within the Social Studies of Science programme. Here again the consequences of such analysis seem to have promoted heated debate. Latour's chapter within the volume is but one example of the controversy which this issue generates. See also my "Jumping Frames: Reflexivity and Recursion in the Sociology of Science", *Social Studies of Science,* (Vol.19, 1989), 515-31, for a discussion of a related controversy within this field.

37. Hofstadter demonstrates the relevance of such sentences to my work, by showing how they operate as mathematical viruses. He explains that implicit and explicit Henkin sentences have isomorphisms in the world of molecular biology. These are the 'tobacco mosaic virus' and the 'T-even phage' (or virus), respectively. However, it is the 'T-even phage' which is the more successful virus. That is, "when a T4 phage invades an E. coli cell, after a brief span of about twenty-four or twenty-five minutes, the cell has been completely subverted and breaks open. Out pop about two hundred exact copies of the original virus–'bicentuplets'–ready to go attack more bacterial cells, the original cell having been largely consumed in the process...The essential fact is that it is a battle between a host which is trying to reject all invading DNA, and a phage which is trying to infiltrate its DNA into some host cell which will transcribe it into mRNA (after which its reproduction is guaranteed). Any phage DNA which succeeds in getting itself reproduced this way can be thought of as having this high-level interpretation: 'I can be reproduced in Cells of Type X'." (pp.540-1). The beauty of the explicit Henkin sentences is that they are similar to the T-even phages; they can reproduce themselves in the host cell. "Explicit Henkin sentences direct the construction of their own proofs–they are analogous to more complex viruses which direct their host cells in putting more copies of themselves together" (Ibid., p.543). My intention, by using the explicit Henkin

construction, is to also produce a virus which can be reproduced within the host system.

38. Ibid., p.536. Also, see chapter 16 for a fuller discussion of the analogies between Godel's mathematics and molecular biology.

39. This hope was especially prominent in the first third of this century and was characterised by Russell and Whitehead's magnus opus 'Principia Mathematica' which, as Hofstadter says. "purported to derive all mathematics from logic and...without contradictions" (p.23).

40. Ibid., p.541.

41. In other words, by situating my own work within the wider framework of relativistic social science, I have shown that I share the same assumptions about the relativistic nature of the social world, as do other meta-sociologists; such as those in the ethnomethodological, social constructionist, and post-structuralist schools of thinking.

42. Although he also realized that this symbolic world was always in danger of being codified. "Against the spoken word, political economy, throughout its history, supports discourse in which everything that is exchanged is put under the instance of the code"(*Mirror of Production*, 137).

43. Ibid., p.167.

44. J. Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), 212.

45. J. Baudrillard, *Forgetting Foucault*, 106.

46. J. Baudrillard, *Mirror of Production*, 141.

47. J. Baudrillard, *Forgetting Foucault*, 101.

48. This appeal to the symbolic as an ineffable truth counterposed to the codification of the world is only part of Baudrillard's tactical and textual practice. Throughout his texts he tries to resist his own theory, by destroying it at the same time as creating it. As he says, "In truth, there is nothing left to ground ourselves on. All that is left is theoretical violence"(*The Structural Law of Value*, 59). His most prominent methodological strategy, his refusal to interpet 'symbolic exchange' seems to have had its desired effect because several would-be imposers of his theory have criticized him on exactly these grounds. For instance, D. Kellner, "Baudrillard, Semiurgy and Death", *Theory, Culture and Society*, (Vol.4 No.1, 1987), complains, "Baudrillard never defines the concept of 'symbolic exchange' which simply stands as a positive antithesis to productive activity" (p.140).

49. R. Turner, ed., in *Ethnomethodology* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1974) suggests the impossibility, for sociologists, of avoiding this reliance on common-sense knowledge. "The sociologist inevitably trades on his members' knowledge in recognizing the activities that participants to interaction are engaged in; for example, it is by virtue of my status as a competent member that I can recurrently locate in my transcripts instances of 'the same' activity" (pp.204-5).

50. For example, J. Goldthorpe and D. Lockwood's 1969 study of the *Affluent Worker*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), was an analysis of the town I grew up in, the workplace where my father worked (and where I also worked, albeit very briefly). Yet its inability to document that experiential world despite its widespread acceptance within the sociological literature, not only reinforces my claim that the simulated world produced by these authors is at odds with the experienced world, but that it is their version of that world which gets imposed as 'reality'.

51. J. Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, edited by M. Poster, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 130-1.

52. UB 40, *Labour of Love*, (Dep Int Records, 1984).

53. Public Image Limited, "Rise" on *Album*, (Electra/Asylum Records, 1986).

54. For example, in 1976, 'popular culture' was recognised by an emerging generation as merely a simulation model of its own lived experience. By necessity, the subsequent resistance had to employ the framework of the simulation model itself in order to be heard. But at the level of content it insisted upon the authenticity of its lived experience. I suggest that contemporary resistance to the recombinant state must adopt a similar strategy.

55. J. Baudrillard, *The Structural Law of Value*, 57

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"THE VOID IS NOT SO BLEAK": RHETORIC AND STRUCTURE IN CANADIAN EXPERIMENTAL FILM

Michael Dorland

First we eat, then we talk about God

Hegel

The Discourse of Commoditism

In a recent and perhaps predictably bleak survey of the distribution in Canada of films by filmmaker-artists, filmmaker-lobbyist Mike Hoolboom found that

> ...there isn't a single film artist in Canada who's able to make a living [from filmmaking]...or who could even afford to pay the RENT....I think it's time some of us got together and decided whether the situation as it stands is acceptable or not, and if not to what lengths we would be willing to go in order to change it. So far as I'm concerned the bottom line is clear: as someone devoted to my art I should be able to make my work and live.[1]

Hoolboom's words, including a call for Canadian content quotas in movie theatres[2], fully echo the spirit if not almost the letter of those of an earlier filmmaker turned lobbyist. In April 1974, Peter Pearson, chairman of the then feature filmmakers' lobby, the Council of Canadian Filmmakers, told a Commons committee:

> In six years, we have learned that the system does not work for Canadians. The film financing system does not work. 13 features were produced in English-Canada in 1972; 6 in 73; only 1 in 1974. The film distribution system does not work. In 1972 less than 2% of the movies shown in Ontario were Canadian....The film exhibition system does not work. The foreign-dominated theatre industry, grossing over $140,000,000 at the box-office in 1972 is recycling only nickels and dimes into future domestic production. It is no wonder then that the Canadian Film Development Corporation cannot possibly work, and neither can we.[3]

And Pearson's words in turn echo those of an earlier critic also turned lobbyist, Gerald Pratley, in his baleful assessment of the state of Canadian filmmaking several decades before.

> The history of film production in Canada is short and mostly undistinguished. It is one long, frustrating chapter of plans made and never realised...of large sums of money invested in brave ideas and ending in bankruptcy....Due to a combination of two factors—the country's proximity to the USA and lack of initiative on the part of the government....—most of Canada's talented people left the country. There was no work....[4]

One could keep tracing such arguments back in time. And if one did one would find that instead of film they would apply to an earlier economy and some other, previous commodity—lumber, canals, railroads, wheat—but whatever the commodity, the logic of argument would remain the same. Namely, that the regularization of production by government policy was a *civilizing* act, that is to say, a cultural action. In this logic, the measure of the rational organization of production is assessed in cultural terms. Culture, it would seem, was to be a, if not the, barometer of Canadian development. Thus according to the front-page of the Toronto *Globe* on July 1, 1867, "we celebrate the inauguration of a new nationality to which are committed the interests of Christianity and civilization over a territory larger than that of the ancient Roman empire...." Thus Joseph Tachéspeaking in the Commons in 1883: "After...having concluded a political union between [the Provinces], it was desirable that this political federation...be crowned with an intellectual, a scientific and literary federation....[that would be] the crowning of the great structure created by the statesmen whose genius accomplished the work of Confederation." Thus too, in a more recent example, Flora Macdonald's first speech as minister of Communications in July 1987 in which she stated that "...our ultimate goal is the development of a Canadian film culture." "This goal," she went on, however, would first be best assured "if the industry has a sound industrial base."

Mike Hoolboom's spring 1988 report on the distribution problems faced by the Canadian film artist thus articulates itself within several deep continuities: a) the discursive logic of Canadian cultural (here film) policy that is in turn but a moment in b) a productivist logic of which culture is the quantitative aggregate. Such a logic may not necessarily

lend itself to a theory of art and perhaps even less to a theory of indigenous or Canadian art: indeed, such a logic could be taken as a blank cheque for the importation of culture since what matters is, above all, that quantities augment, their source being secondary. Where this would leave a theory of indigenous art is a question I will hold in abeyance for now. Instead of a theory of art, then, this is more a theory of political economy, and in particular the one that in the Canadian tradition Michal Bodemann has identified as the dominant discourse of "commoditism."[5] According to Bodemann, commoditism consists of 1) a view of Canada in terms of commodities or, in other words, a commodity view of social (and for that matter aesthetic) relations; 2) a view of Canadian commodity production as fragile and in need of a protective shield and, as a result of the need for protection, 3) the necessity to relegate power to a circumscribed elite.

In Hoolboom's text, the commodity nature of the film artist stems from the fact that she/he can neither make a living nor pay the rent from her/his art. (As he puts it of himself, "as someone devoted to my art I should be able to make my work and live".) This precarious commodity status is the reason why it is (always) necessary "to lobby for the many things we need locally and federally (Canadian content in theatres for instance, censorship, copyright)." Thus the necessity to relegate more power to a circumscribed elite; in this instance, the film artist: "it's time now to turn some of the ingenuity and inspiration that's gone into making artist's film into changing a situation where we continue to speak unheard, to create unnoticed, to put work into a void."

Let me be perfectly clear here that this is in no way to be construed as an attack on Michael Hoolboom. Instead, I am puzzled both by the sudden fits of attention as well as the accompanying arguments that get put forth on behalf of Canadian experimental or "artist's film", of which Hoolboom's is but one recent example, yet an example that, conscious or not, can be situated within a tradition of Canadian argumentation. More broadly, though, the questions I want to raise are: what are the arguments that have been made for Canadian experimental film and why are they being made again now?

What is most striking in Hoolboom's text is that it is *not* an argument for Canadian artist's film *per se*. He would respond that it wasn't meant to be that: "my small piece on distribution [was] meant really just for filmmakers so we could have a sense of where we all stand in relation to one another and the great world beyond."[6] Instead, it is the argument for Canadian production, whether codfish catches or artist's film. Interestingly Hoolboom does not, in the distribution survey, make a *single* claim for Canadian artist's film *other* than its insufficient commodity status. Yet Hoolboom's argument is the more or less standard argument for Canadian production (here cultural production) but could, as I have tried to suggest, apply equally to railways, to Avro Arrows or Telidons. This sort of generic argument implies that cultural production is *as valid* a form

of Canadian production as any other: that is, a form of production whose validity derives not so much from an aesthetic argument, as from an historical (and often state-supported) regularization of the ability of the producing social group to specialize in that type of production. There would appear in Hoolboom's text not to be the slightest doubt that the type of production he specializes in can be anything but legitimate especially since, as he suggests, he has a calling for it ("as someone devoted to my art..."). As Max Weber reminds us in *The Protestant Ethic*, this kind of unquestioned acceptance of one's earthly calling is an early but unmistakeable sign of "the spirit of capitalism"; that is, of a moral justification for worldly activity.[7]

The Experimental Documentary

Inadvertently perhaps, Hoolboom's text suggests other clues in this direction. Since he makes no particular claims for Canadian artist's film, his emphasis on commoditism makes his discourse the same as that which was used to argue for development of Canada's film "industry". The latter, and principally through state-subsidy in response to the discourse of commoditism, had from the poverty-stricken beginnings noted earlier both by Pearson and Pratley, grown, using 1986 figures, large enough to be able to make a $930,000,000 contribution to the Canadian GNP.[8] Yet the latter too is and remains part of a cinema which Peter Harcourt first termed "an invisible cinema"[9], an 'industry' that continues to, as Hoolboom puts it of artist's film, "speak unheard...create unnnoticed, to put work into a void". In other words, the continued relative invisibility of Canadian cinema has not been an obstacle—on the contrary, it has probably been crucial—to some producers' ability to make a lot of money. And Canadian cinema has managed to commodify itself to just under the billion-dollar mark without benefit of particularly elaborate aesthetic claims in support of its practices. The discourse of commoditism in the Canadian context is, one may suppose, thus relatively efficient, which may explain its popularity, and which might account for the fact that such discourse is surfacing in Canadian experimental or artist film.

A second implication of the discursive continuity that has prevailed in Canadian cinema generally—and this suggests not merely a rhetorical continuity for reasons of political-economic efficiency but an internal and structural continuity—would be that Canadian experimental or artist cinema, to the extent there is such a thing, is an extension of the Canadian cinematic project generally, to the extent that there is such a thing. Here I will attempt what can no doubt be considered a formidable reduction. I would suggest that if Canadian cinema has been fundamentally preoccupied with that particular variant of documentary which Deborah Knight has defined as "exquisite nostalgia"[10], then Canadian experimental or artist cinema is a variant of that: not experimental cin-

ema so much as an overwhelming preoccupation with one aspect of it or what one could call *the experimental documentary*.

If one takes just about any of the "classics" of Canadian experimental cinema – for instance, Snow's *Région Centrale* (1971), Wieland's *Reason Over Passion* (1968-69), Chambers' *Hart of London* (1968-70), Rimmer's *Canadian Pacifics* (1974-75), Hancox's *Landfall* (1983)– what do they have in common? They are examining elements of consciousness (machine- or apparatus-consciousness for Snow and Rimmer, political-iconic consciousness for Wieland, tragic consciousness for Chambers, or a poetically metaphysical consciousness for Hancox) in their relations to a "real" place that is both the specific sites of their actual making and, beyond, Canada. They are documenting possible forms of consciousness that might arise in response to Northrop Frye's famous notion that

> Canadian sensibility has been profoundly disturbed, not so much by our famous problem of identity...as by a series of paradoxes in what confronts that identity...less...the question 'who am I?' than...some such riddle as 'where is here?'[11]

In Canadian cinematic terms, that disturbed sensibility has been described by Bruce Elder as a "naive realism", that is to say,

> a kind of self-abandonment in the face of reality [that] implies a form of consciousness which is alienated from the world and whose sole activity is limited to passive observation – a consciousness then which plays no role in the structuring either of reality or of our perception of it. The continual rehearsal of the process of becoming familiar with the everyday things around us suggests the extreme alienation of this consciousness as it tries to come to terms with a world beyond itself.[12]

Canadian experimental film, I'm suggesting, has been a coming to terms with documenting the transition from naive to a more self-conscious realism, but a realism nonetheless.

In the 1987 Power Plant retrospective of Toronto filmmaking that he curated, Blaine Allen observes of the work of Toronto filmmakers over the previous decade:

> Principally they involve the reclamation of place and the artist's voice and identity. They evoke the play of entanglement and alienation, of proximity and distance, of having a sense of location and of not knowing just where you are....Perhaps the most consistent element in the films is the evidence of the filmmaker him or herself, included almost as an act of reassurance.[13]

But why stop at Toronto? One could say the same of Richard Hancox's poetry films, taking him as a filmmaker from PEI, or Barbara Sternberg's *Transitions* (1982) made in Nova Scotia, or the frantic ending of Rim-

mer's Vancouver-made *Canadian Pacific II*.

The concept of experimental documentary allows one, I would suggest, to grasp what Allen calls "the reclamation of place and the artist's voice and identity" as separate yet related strategies, moving from 1) *abstract place* (of which Snow's *Région Centrale* is perhaps the best example), through 2) the personal, autobiographical or home movie phase of Canadian experimental film[14], through 3) the dialectical fusion of the two (place and identity) or what one could call the *abstract personal* of, say, Chambers' *Hart of London* or the quest-romance portions of Elder's *The Book of All The Dead* cycle.

A third implication, then, of such continuities (the rhetoric of commoditism and the structures of the documentary of consciousness) would be that Canadian experimental or artist film, in its preoccupation with the Canadian landscape, has tended to act as the "artistic" analog of what the Laurentian thesis has been in Canadian social thought. This thesis, whose principal exponents were the University of Toronto economic historians Innis and Creighton, could be somewhat crudely understood as a narrow geographic determinism or environmentalism. A little less crudely, W.L. Morton writes that "the implications of the Laurentian thesis are... a metropolitan economy, a political imperialism of the metropolitan areas and uniformity of the metropolitan culture throughout the hinterlands."[15] Paradoxical as it would seem, this would suggest in the argumentative economy of Canadian experimental film a high degree of dependency upon more developed metropolitan economies for the arguments necessary to further practices that may, in important respects, be quite at variance with those very arguments. For instance, it is very striking (at least to me) how much what reputation Canadian experimental film possesses is due to non-Canadian critics: whether Gene Youngblood on Rimmer[16], Brakhage on Chambers or Elder[17], Sitney on Snow (and for a while on Wieland)[18], Rabinovitz on Wieland[19], etc. Even Seth Feldman argues for the domestic relevance of Canadian experimental film because "it is already seen internationally as Canada's foremost contribution to contemporary cinematic discourse."[20] That this external "critical imperialism" has internally helped configure Canadian experimental film within the dominance of Canadian metropolitan economies and the uniformity of metropolitan culture throughout the hinterlands can perhaps be illustrated by Richard Kerr's canon of "the rich heritage of Canada's avant-garde artist" that includes Frampton, Elder, Snow, Brakhage, Sitney, etc.[21] There are no doubt other such effects discernible.

The C-words

I have been trying to suggest that a Canadian coming to terms with Canadian experimental film has dispensed with the need to develop aes-

thetic arguments on its behalf because a) it can function without them to the extent they are implied within the recourse to Canadian production traditions and b) because these aesthetic arguments have been supplied from without. In this sense, the lack of an aesthetic argument in Hoolboom's case for Canadian artist film is less surprising than it might first seem.

Here, though, one would have to examine other arguments beside Hoolboom's that have been made for the Canadian artist film and I propose to look at two such texts shortly. However, the general principle of such arguments has been recently and succinctly summed up by T.D. Maclulich[22] in relation to literature as "attempts to incorporate Canadian writers into the international avant-garde....to show that the works of one or more Canadian authors are just as metafictional, self-reflexive or deconstructive as the works of leading European or American authors." For Maclulich considers that "the current enthusiasm for avant-garde forms of critical theory holds little promise of remedying the deficiencies—if they are deficiencies—of past Canadian criticism", largely, he argues, because a criticism removed from its social context makes meaningless such hybrid literary-political categories as Canadian literature, Canadian cinema, Canadian experimental or artist film. It is, he suggests, because of the continued, stubborn and—why not say it?—*stupid* presence of the C-words (Canadian culture)—that the continuing question: "what is 'Canadian' about Canadian literature/art/film?"—becomes the only question that will justify isolating Canadian literature/art/film as a distinct field of inquiry.[23]

Let me then turn to two such Canadian texts, one about Canadian experimental film, the other about Canadian art, and see how they both deal with 1) the incorporation of Canadian art into the discourse of an international avant-garde and 2) the Canadianness of their objects.

The two texts are R.Bruce Elder's classic "Image: Representation and Object" on the photographic image in Canadian avant-garde film[24] and an unpublished paper by Gaile McGregor on Canadian art and postmodernism entitled "Geography, I-site and (Post)Modernism."[25]

Both texts at first glance seem to illustrate Mclulich's thesis on attempts to incorporate Canadian artistic production into an international avant-garde, here that of postmodernism. Elder says that Snow "was perhaps the key innovator...of postmodernist filmmaking" while McGregor suggests "that Canada, having come into its own as an independent cultural entity at a later date than the United States, simply skipped modernism altogether, thus ending up 'further ahead' simply as an after-effect of its early retardation." But the seeming affinity of Canadian artists for postmodern practices, while giving these Canadian practices the *cachet* of current (if not by now slightly tattered) theoretical fashion, only serves to unconceal specific characteristics of Canadian art itself: 1) for Elder, that "Canadian avant-garde film is *anti*-modernist in conviction" (my emphasis); and 2) for McGregor, that the Canadian oeuvre is character-

ised by "the discrepancy between what it says and what is said about it."

While it is not very clear exactly what Elder means by the anti-modernism of Canadian avant-garde films, as he only refers to this once, it is, I think, possible to understand by this a preoccupation with the ambiguity of representations of the external world as opposed to modernist works that, in his definition, "'present' the structure of their own internal relationships." Unlike the modernist painter or writer, the (anti-modernist) Canadian filmmaker's "raw materials are...the stuff of the world, observed from a certain point of view." At best, the photographer/filmmaker can only discover the world, it is not created by him/her. As Elder explains this in an earlier text[26]:

> The representation of the world is not a parallel construct to the real world articulated in accordance with certain aesthetic demands; it is a trace of the real world informed by the same structural principles as the real itself. This of course profoundly affects the nature of the filmmaker's enterprise. His task is no longer creation but rather revelation. The process of making such a work is not the forging of an imaginative construct through an act of will but rather one of attentive submission on the part of the filmmaker; the goal of art is no longer seen as that of producing beauty but rather truth.

The "truth" of the photographic representation and what distinguishes it from painting, poetry, drawing or fictional writing is that it "cannot depict objects or events which never actually existed." The truth of Canadian avant-garde film's anti-modernity—for this is what is at issue, a *Canadian* theory of modernity is, to generalize from Elder's discussion of Snow, that it is *historical*: "The study of how things evolve over time is one that can properly be termed historical." Historical temporality "embraces the past and the future; it is not confined to the present alone. It leads one out of the present...toward that which is furnished only by reflexive acts of consciousness...." This, of course, opens up the question of the historical consciousness in the Canadian mind which is too large and tentative a question to get into here; I simply want to draw attention to it.

McGregor suggests something strikingly similar: Canadian art is historical. Canadian art's "apparent postmodernism...[is] rooted in, and presaged by, culture-specific features in the oeuvre of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." Unlike the American artist who "spoke loudly of 'creating', the Canadian typically conceptualized his task as 'taking a view'—that is, reproducing the landscape-as-given. Before Confederation, the field of landscape painting was dominated by the British military topographers, with their passion for scientific exactitude; afterwards it was the camera which provided the exemplar for 'artistic' activity."

And so, she continues,

> The nature we infer from Canadian landscape painting,even when not explicity inimical, is alien, impenetrable, overwhelming

> to the point of claustrophobia...It is a world...which categorically denies us entry...the characterizing feature of the Canadian world view is...neither affirmation nor abhorrence but a radical, deep-seated ambivalence.

For McGregor, the Canadian oeuvre is tentative, self-deprecating, isolated, evasive, yet ordered, replete with enclosure images, while also replete with signs of anxiety about the integrity and meaning of these enclosures. "The Canadian's obsession with such motifs reflects/reveals an obsessive need—stimulated by that first encounter with an unassimilable environment—to pin down, map, explore the ambiguous interface between self and non-self."

If now one thinks again of Snow's *Région Centrale*, Wieland's *Reason over Passion*, Chamber's *Hart*, or the works of Rimmer, Hancox, Elder, etc., then perhaps my earlier characterization of Canadian artist film as experimental documentary may not be quite as reductive as it might first have seemed.

By the end of her text, McGregor suggests that the "apparent alignment" of Canadian art "with a particular world 'ism'" is "absurd", leading her to conclude that "we may have to rethink not only modernism and postmodernism, but the whole problem of so-called international culture." Elder is not nearly so tidy, but if I can extract some kind of conclusion from his text it would be that "Canadian cinema *in all its forms* has been preoccupied with...the attempt to comprehend the paradoxes inherent in that medium" (emphasis added); that medium being *Canadian* cinema, one aspect of which, but only one, might be the paradoxes of the photographic image that Elder analyzes at length in his text. In other words, both texts return us to Maclulich's suggestion that the question "what is Canadian about Canadian literature/art/film?" is the only question that will justify isolating Canadian literature/art/film as a distinct field of inquiry.

Taciturn Beavers or Dissimulations of Canadian Discourse

Foregrounding the Canadianness of Canadian experimental film allows the emergence of a radically different object from the shadows of its discursive disguises. Not a cultural export commodity produced for the international market of advanced aestheticism, but an anti-aesthetic searching for commodification within the domestic staples economy. Not avant-gardism but, within a marginalized "national cinema", a marginal experimental form of documentary seeking governmentalization in the name of a national policy of cultural production. Not a precursor of the postmodern, but an anti-modernism in a solipsistic economy of total cultural solitude. For the discourse of Canadian experimental film is a discourse of strategic dissimulation structured by what Mackenzie King, with Canada in mind, once called "the economy of God".[27]

In such a divine economy, angelic elites sing hosannas of praise to the selfless who transform raw materials into the bounties of cultural wealth. This is the divine economy of Northrop Frye's pastoral New World vision of Canada as David Cook summarizes it:

> we need a more imaginative way of seeing things that retains the social vision of the pastoral myth, yet honours the technological underpinnings of the myth in the energy of the taciturn beavers.[28]

And honouring the energy of the taciturn beavers is, according to Frye, the task of the angelic critic. For, outside the divine economy, and particularly so in Canada, there can be only "the sense of being imprisoned in the belly of a mindless emptiness... at its bleakest and most uncompromising." In that de-divinized emptiness, "the ego's one moment of genuine dignity...is the moment either of death or of some equally final alienation."[29]

But it is precisely those very moments of final alienation which Canadian experimental film has attempted to document again and again —surviving the attempt, as testified for example by the turn of Bruce Elder (our leading film theologian) from the discourse of lamentation to that of consolation. Similarly, it is the intuition of having participated in that documentary achievement (i.e., not so much an aesthetic as an ontology) that, I would suggest, grounds the discourse of commoditism.

That Canadian experimental film has so far received little critical consideration other than of its taciturnity argues not only for continued revision of the corpus but, above all, for its (re)writing. This time, outside the economy of God.

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Notes

1. "Artist's Film Distribution in Canada: Some Thoughts About", *The Independent Eye*, Newsletter of the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre, Spring 1988, 6-9.

2. Quotas for Canadian films on Canadian screens remain as utopian a demand as ever, although hardly a radical demand as even such a longtime 'observer' of the Canadian film scene as Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, is in favour of a 10% screen quota today. See the MPAA brief published under the title "The domino game: Canadian distribution as a global threat to the American way of life," Annexes to the brief, *Cinema Canada* No. 152, May 1988, 19-21.

3. Cited in Council of Canadian Filmmakers monthly column, *Cinema Canada* 14, June/July 1974, 64.

4. Gerald Pratley, "Canadian Film" in Peter Cowie, ed., *A Concise History of the Cinema*, London: A. Zwemmer, 1971.

5. See Y. Michal Bodemann, "Elitism, Fragility and Commoditism: Three Themes in the Canadian Sociological Mythology," in S.D. Berkowitz, ed., *Models and Myths in Canadian Sociology*, Toronto: Butterworths, 1984, 210-228.

6. Personal communication, undated, 1988.

7. See *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: Scribner's, 1958.

8. See Federal-Provincial- Territorial Meeting of Ministers on Film and Books, "Cultural Sovereignty" Document 830-202/006, March 3-4, 1986, 8. As no breakdown of the figure of $930 m is given other than the mention that it includes "all the traditional/established cultural sectors", one may conclude that it is largely a rhetorical aggregate.

9. See Peter Harcourt, "The Invisible Cinema", *Ciné-tracts*, Spring-Summer 1978, 48-9.

10. See "Exquisite Nostalgia: Aesthetic Sensibility in the English-Canadian and Quebec cinemas," *Cine-Action* 11, Winter 87-88, 30-37.

11. See *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*, Toronto: Anansi, 1971, 220.

12. Bruce Elder, "On the Candid-Eye Movement," in Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson, eds. *Canadian Film Reader*, Toronto: PMA, 1977, 92-3.

13. See Blaine Allen, "It's Not Finished Yet (Some Notes on Toronto Filmmaking)" in *Toronto: A Play of History* exhibition catalogue, The Power Plant, Summer 1987.

14. Here one of Elder's earliest texts makes this clear: "That such films should be of a deeply personal nature is hardly surprising....For such a filmmaker...filmmaking becomes one of the simple tasks of daily life, perhaps even the center of his life. And if all aspects of his life become grist for the mill of filmmaking, then naturally his life becomes, if not itself something of an art form, then at least something which is valued and consciously cultivated as the source of his art." See *Autobiography: Film/Video/Photography*, ed. John Stuart Katz, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1978, 43.

15. See W.L. Morton, "Clio in Canada: The Interpretation of Canadian History," in Carl Berger, ed. & intro., *Approaches to Canadian History*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970, 46.

16. See for instance "The New Canadian Cinema" in Feldman & Nelson, 323 ff.

17. See, for instance, the excerpt by Brakhage from a 100 page transcript of a Spring 1987 symposium held at the University of Regina featuring Brakhage and Elder, "Jack Chambers" in *The Independent Eye*, 10:1, Fall 1988, 12.

18. See "Structural Film" in P. Adams Sitney, ed. & intro. *Film Culture Reader*, New York: Praeger, 1970, 326 ff.

19. See for instance "The Development of Feminist Strategies in the Experimental Films of Joyce Wieland," *Film Reader* 5, 1982, 132-9.

20. Seth Feldman, ed. & intro, *Take Two: A Tribute to Film in Canada*, Toronto: Irwin, 1984, 246.

21. See "On (Experimental) Film" in *Cinema Canada* 145, October 1987, 78-9.

22. In "Thematic Criticism, Literary Nationalism and the Critic's New Clothes," *Essays in Canadian Writing* 35, Winter 1987, 17-36.

23. Ibid., 31, 32, 33.

24. In Feldman, Take Two, 246-263.

25. Forthcoming in an expanded version in Gaile McGregor, ed. *Canadian Art and Contemporary Theory*, University of Toronto Press.

26. On the Candid-Eye Movement, 88-89.

27. In *Industry and Humanity: A Study in the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction*, Toronto: Thos. Allen, 1918, 363, cited in Joyce Nelson, *The Colonized Eye: Rethinking the Grierson Legend*, Toronto: BTL, 1988, 52. The passage reads as follows: "Each nation may yet find the salvation of its own industrial life by losing itself in an effort to save the industrial lives of other and rival nations. It is in such ways, through the course of time, that the economy of God gains world expression."

28. David Cook, *Northrop Frye: A Vision of the New World*, Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1985, 101.

29. Northrop Frye, "Haunted by Lack of Ghosts: Some Patterns in the Imagery of Canadian Poetry" in David Staines, ed., *The Canadian Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1977, 37-38.

Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale, Volume 14, Numbers 1-3 (1990).

QUOTING WOMEN'S BODIES: *OUR MARILYN* AND CULTURAL MEDIATIONS

Rhona Berenstein

In 1954, a 17-year-old Canadian teen-ager defied convention, history (or historical precedent) and the Canadian National Exhibition organizers by being the first Canadian (in fact, the first individual) to swim across Lake Ontario. Marilyn Bell, "Canada's sweetheart" as a popular song of that momentous year proclaims, swam her way not only into Canadian history, but also into the representational and psychological terrains explored by Brenda Longfellow in her film *Our Marilyn* (1987); terrains which are, in part, articulated through the observations and autobiographical ruminations provided by the film's narrator. That the narrator's name is also Marilyn and that she is both visually and aurally counterpointed to and aligned with *their* Marilyn (Monroe), suggests that this is a film at once concerned with documenting an event in English Canadian history and with negotiating that event through non-traditional means. Longfellow's film is thus more than a documentary, it is an exploration of the interplay between the Marilyns, the overlap between national (in this instance Canadian and American) boundaries, international stars (both in film and sports), women's bodies and women's histories.

That this film is greatly informed by a feminist consciousness is suggested not only by its attention to images of women, but also by its elaboration of the relationship between those women and their representation in the media. Through the juxtaposition of media documentation of Bell and Monroe with either deconstructed versions of that documentation or alternative sounds and images, Longfellow dangles the spectacle of female bodies before the audience, while simultaneously

denying or dissolving the traditional forms of that spectacle, its status as a familiar patriarchal lure. The women who populate this text are not merely there to be seen (in fact at moments optical printing serves to render them *unseen*, to remove the discernible contours of their bodies from the viewer's field of vision). They do not function solely as objects of historical discourse, but enter into that discourse as active participants.

Longfellow's women, marked by the similarities in their names, traverse *Our Marilyn* as bodies, voices and memories which also insist on the profound differences between them. In *Alice Doesn't* Teresa de Lauretis argues that "the" feminist project entails the interrogation of the contradiction between *woman* and *women. Woman* refers to "the configuration of patriarchal ideology" and *women* to the "historical subjects who live in a tangential relation to that configuration."[1] This woman/women distinction, based as it is on the interplay between difference and similarity (that *woman* and *women* are at once alike and distinct), suggests that differences between or within[2] women cannot be theorized as absolute. It is this relationship between difference and similarity which serves as de Lauretis' point of entry into Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames* (1983), not only in terms of her description of that film's construction, but also as an attribute of the text's positioning of her as a spectator.[3] It is this same refusal to posit difference and similarity as an *oppositional pair* and a similar attention to subjectivity and spectatorship which structures Longfellow's film.

In analyzing the relationship between *Our Marilyn* and contemporary Canadian[4] feminist filmmaking, Kay Armatage's *Speak Body* (1979) can be compared to Longfellow's text from a number of perspectives. Although ten years old, Armatage's film, which is centrally concerned with the (impossibility of the) representation of abortion, explores, as does Longfellow's, the interplay between the presence and absence of the female body, the representation (or lack thereof) of an experience which is grounded in that body, and the combination of documentary with experimental film forms. Even at the level of its title Armatage's film begs comparison with Longfellow's since it suggests, as does the title of this article,[5] that the female body may not only be spoken (represented), but may also speak for or of itself.

Our Marilyn articulates this tension between the *spoken* and *speaking* body most explicitly through its alternations between documentary and experimental film elements. Longfellow confronts the viewer with original newsreel footage of the beginning of Marilyn Bell's swim across Lake Ontario: black and white images of Bell diving into the water amidst a cheering crowd and a flotilla of accompanying vessels. And she reinserts those same images, with variations, throughout the film. The effect therefore of her literal reversal of this inaugural sequence (through the use of a negative image), its repetition within a matter of a few seconds, its passage through the optical printer and processes of step-printing, is

not only to draw attention to its status as a document of this swim, but also to draw attention to it as a *constructed* image of the female body and furthermore, a kind of visual *pattern* .

The alternation of documentary images with experimental reconstructions of those images suggests that this film mediates the historical real according to three main trajectories: (1) a traditional compilation and reproduction of (primarily Canadian) historical events; (2) the exploration of history conceived as public memory;[6] and (3) the re-presentation of history not merely through personal memory, but moreover through women's memories. *Our Marilyn* arguably suggests an alternative register for negotiating the past and the present, one which addresses the patriarchy's official history while simultaneously transforming it into a single interpretation among the many which circulate through the film. By attending to women's memories, their reconstructions of the past, Longfellow explores a number of issues which are critical to feminist historiographic inquiries. In her discussion of women's history Linda Gordon addresses the two main trends which have developed in that field:

> Women's historians have sought to proclaim a truth heretofore denied, disguised, distorted, defamed, and thereby to expose the meretricious lies of earlier mandarins. This goal, of course, presupposed the possibility of truth, achieved through historical objectivity . . . . Another pole, rejecting the possibility of objectivity and accepting the humanistic and story-telling function of history, stimulated us to create new myths to serve our aspirations. I would like to find a method in between.[7]

While Gordon is referring primarily to written history, I think that the "in between" method which she mentions finds expression in *Our Marilyn*. One of the primary ways in which the objective and mythological coalesce in the film is in the figure (an auditory spectre never visually represented) of the narrator. In a sense, the relatively constant narrator recalls one of the main conventions of the traditional documentary film. Bill Nichols has noted that the "narrator in direct address often serves to bridge sequences; to make manifest the logical principle that orders the sequence into larger units, segments, and a textual whole."[8] While the third Marilyn (the narrator) does serve a minimal bridging function in that the repeated interjection of her voice on the soundtrack introduces it as a continuous element, she by no means serves the kind of logic-rendering role that Nichols describes. On the contrary, her voice oftentimes serves as a marked counterpoint to the "facts" being presented via imagery. For example as the rolling titles note that Bell has "one mile & a half to go," the narrator a split second later reports that she has "only three and a half miles to go."

The narrator's tellings and re-tellings of her relationship to Bell and Monroe can be said to function as a form of oral history in this film; she

weaves personal and public memories into a complex tapestry of fragments, of partial truths. Marilyn, the narrator, is however more than the storyteller of oral history since she is also a fictional character (played by Linda Griffiths). That she is fictionally informed, that her memories of her own naming are in this sense manufactured and that Bell and Monroe are both oftentimes addressed through her, underscores this film's exploration of the blurring of boundaries among the real, fiction, history and memory (as both reconstruction and imagination).

In its de- and re-constructions of historical events, *Our Marilyn* can be most readily described according to Deborah Knight's concept of "exquisite nostalgia."[9] In applying this notion to the corpus of Canadian film, Knight notes:

> What the films present to the spectator is the image of a lost or almost lost object of desire. Exquisite nostalgia is an aesthetic response to the present image of the endangered object of desire. And if it has been argued that Hollywood cinema's inevitable object of desire is the fetishized, objectified female protagonist, the object of desire in Canadian or Quebecois cinema is more often something conceptual and abstract, something of aesthetic, historical, or humanist significance.[10]

While Knight's comments are noteworthy, they are insufficient to account for the lost objects in *Our Marilyn*. In Longfellow's film, exquisite nostalgia must refer both to Hollywood's object of desire (i.e., woman) *and* Canadian film's. Thus, it is Bell, Monroe, the narrator, Longfellow, etc. who are rendered aesthetically, historically or "humanistically" significant. Knight goes on to assert that the Canadian cinemas are "marked by the recognition of incompleteness . . . . So not only are [they] . . . marked by their inscription of difference—by the failure or refusal to produce the sense of an 'imaginary unity'—but also profoundly by their inscription of deferral, by delay of pleasure, a pleasure which can only be experienced as it is drawn out in time."[11] Longfellow's painstaking attention to the middle of Bell's swim, its temporal, spatial and auditory exploration, reinforces Knight's assertion, for it is precisely a sense of deferral and (ultimately) incompleteness which characterizes that middle, the portion of the swim which was *not* documented by the media in 1954.

That the Canadian cinemas refuse to provide a sense of imaginary unity in their spectators is a point well taken by Knight, since it at one and the same time refers to textual practices, as well as to the wider socio-historical and political context of viewership and more generally identity, in the Canadian milieu.[12] A number of years ago MacLean's magazine ran a fill-in-the-blank contest that read, "As Canadian as *(blank)*," and it came as no surprise that the winning entry, both witty and telling, was "As Canadian as *Possible*." This phrase brilliantly encapsulates the popular (as in popularized) problematic of Canadian identity. This identity and thus perhaps Canadian spectatorship, fluctuating between

positions of presence and absence (the presence of some sort of "Canadianness" in the recognition that it is possible and the absence of that which is deemed possible) is precisely what, according to Knight, characterizes Canadian films.

Longfellow is aware that her film allows a certain degree of spectatorial fluctuation when she notes the tension between "the Canadian public who clasp the swimmer's victory to [its] psyche as the narcissistic mirror image of national accomplishment . . . [and] the carniverous universal spectator who crosses borders and nations, trailing his proprietorship of a piece of the blonde bombshell–Monroe."[13] In its simultaneous embrace of Bell and Monroe, Canadian spectatorship is at once national and international, in the sense that being Canadian is already to be both.[14] In its simplest form, this concept finds expression in Canada's and by extension Canadian citizens' cultural and economic dependence upon and identification with the United States and to a lesser degree Britain.

The investigation of the fluid passage between national identities and national boundaries is explored by Longfellow in her representation of fluid itself, as in a large body of water: Lake Ontario. The lake's mediation and dissolution of the Canadian-U.S. border finds expression in the swimming bodies which traverse it. As the story goes, Marilyn Bell swam across Lake Ontario in 1954. As the film goes, Longfellow's body shot in super 8 and then transferred onto 16mm. film, swims the middle part of that journey, the part situated so and so many miles off-shore from Youngstown, New York and so and so many other miles away from Toronto; the part that swims across a border not delineated by a line on a map or a fence between properties. Instead the water, characterized by a constant exchange of fluids (both Canadian *and* American) and the bodies which travel through it, resist the awareness that a border has been crossed.

The pivotal role assumed by the lake and its flowing waters in Longfellow's film is reminiscent of Luce Irigaray's discussion of fluids in *This Sex Which Is Not One*. As Carolyn Burke notes of Irigaray's theory, " 'fluids' is partly an analogy with female expression, and 'solids' with the dry self-consistency of male logic . . . . Because 'woman' speaks 'fluid,' her meanings can not be frozen into static images or metaphors."[15] While this description risks falling into an essentialized notion of "feminine fluidity," it does serve as a potent analogy to the function of water in *Our Marilyn* –the means with which to deny fixity and a unified vision of the women in the film. When Irigaray notes that fluids are characterized by instability and that "fluid is always in a relation of excess or lack vis-a-vis unity,"[16] she seems to speak directly to Longfellow's text and to the filmmaker's manipulations of the bodies, voices and images of women as they travel through the waters of Lake Ontario.

It is precisely in the swimming bodies, the bodies that struggle against the waves which are at one moment American and at another Canadian, that this blurring of borders is experienced. While it is Bell's and

Longfellow's bodies which literally swim through the film, Monroe's is similarly linked to a sense of fluidity (both metonymically and through the narrator's association of her with water), and it is certainly telling that two of the Marilyns who appear in Longfellow's film are explored primarily because it is their status *as* bodies which brought them fame (Monroe as an abstracted body, an image to be consumed, and Bell as a physically determined body, the athlete who "swam her way into Canadian history"). It is just as significant that the third Marilyn, the narrator, traverses the film as an implied though never visually represented body, one connected to the others by name, by her repeated claim to having grown up *between* their bodies and by the almost fluid sense of identification fostered by her voice-over which ripples through the text and which repeatedly aligns the Marilyns, folds them into each other.

As visually and aurally represented figures, the Marilyns suggest a sort of multiplication or folding over of proper names, bodies and pronouns. Susan Suleiman in her article "(Re)Writing the Body: The Politics and Poetics of Female Eroticism," notes:

> What seemed, at first, an unproblematic desideratum–let woman speak her own body, assume her own subjecthood–has become problematized, complicated by the increasingly difficult questions: what exactly do we mean when we speak of woman as subject, whether of speech or writing or of her own body? . . . Is there such a thing as woman's body, woman's sexuality? Is there such a thing as woman . . . ?[17]

For the purposes of this discussion, instead of asking "can woman write her own body?", I prefer Longfellow's suggestion that "a form of representation could be imagined as a writing with, and not against, the body"[18]–a writing which situates itself somewhere between representation and materiality, between the body and the discourses which circumscribe it.

To return to the concept of "folding over" is thus to return both to female corporeality and its representation. Irigaray in her description of female sexuality asserts:

> A woman 'touches herself' constantly without anyone being able to forbid her to do so, for her sex is composed of two lips which embrace her continually. Thus, within herself she is already two–but not divisible into one–who stimulate each other.[19]

Instead of being characterized as singular and unified, female sexuality is doubled or as Irigaray notes later in the same article, plural. While our two lips may indeed fold over to embrace each other, they are not identical, and it is here that I find a useful comparison with Longfellow's film. For just as the Marilyns are constantly engaged in a process of doubling and tripling, that process is characterized by the interplay between

difference and similarity. In applying Irigaray's notion of autoeroticism to *Our Marilyn*, I do not mean to imply that a unisexual or a distinctively lesbian aesthetic is at work, but rather to suggest that in the folding of names, bodies and pronouns, the Marilyns (and Longfellow) engage in a kind of circulation of identities which coalesce and cross throughout the text. For example, when the narrator notes that she was named after Marilyn Bell, her voice forms a counterpoint to and extension of the images of Bell and then Monroe which appear on the screen. A few moments later, a sense of difference is interjected when the narrator states: "Your body against the flag . . . . hers against the red satin sheet of a playboy centerfold"—pronouns seem to serve as distancing devices not only between the narrator and Bell, but also between Monroe and the other Marilyns. However, later the narrator again interjects: "Growing up between your bodies, I could never decide what was the difference, I'm trying to remember." The three Marilyns are thus aligned, the second person pronoun collapses Monroe and Bell and situates the narrator between them.

Irigaray in attempting to describe the characteristics of a feminine syntax states that "there would no longer be either subject or object, 'oneness' would no longer be privileged, there would no longer be proper meanings, proper names . . . . Instead, that 'syntax' would involve nearness, proximity, but in such an extreme form that it would preclude . . . any establishment of ownership, thus any form of appropriation."[20] It is precisely this kind of syntax which orders (or refuses to order) the women in *Our Marilyn*, refusing a singular identity, multiplying the proper name in an almost dizzying fashion, circulating bodies and national boundaries in a text that defies naming as a form of ownership. Thus, as the filmmaker notes of the images of herself, "this figure subjected to the relentless weathering of the optical printer, tends increasingly toward an abstraction of form, of colour, of movement, toward the final dissolution of a figural identity and the boundaries between body and water."[21] The body as image is dissolved, it is indiscernible.

The breathing, singing and whispering which often accompany the abstract (optically printed) images of a woman's swimming body in *Our Marilyn*, suggest that the audio level is at once disembodied (in the sense that it is never tied to a single body and that the body which visually accompanies it cannot be discerned as such), while it is also a sort of embodiment. Stephen Heath has noted that the "voice is a moment of the body in its sense and history, a grain, a weight, an existence of the body and of me across the body . . . ."[22] and thus although it may be unrepresented, a body is implied by a voice. In her article "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space," Mary Ann Doane distinguishes between voice-off and voice-over. For her, voice-off is inevitably anchored in a body, it is ideologically embodied in that it functions to render the illusion that off-screen space is an extension of on-

screen space. Voice-over, on the other hand, denies the extension of screen space, it is a "*disembodied* voice . . . [it] is necessarily presented as outside of that space. It is its radical otherness with respect to the diegesis which endows this voice with a certain authenticity."[23] In Longfellow's film, this distinction disappears—the narrator's (absent) body is not only referred to extensively in the film, but those bodies which do appear are often situated in a space which is never fully established.

In much the same way that a voice speaks of or from a body, so too is a represented body always "spoken" in being represented. The image of Monroe is perhaps the most extreme example of a spoken-body, a body whose mythical weight extends far beyond the level of once living flesh and blood. For Longfellow, Monroe, like the ornamental swimmers who appear in the film, most often must "assume a pre-determined position within a symbolic order whose specific routine antedates and anticipates the participation of any (always substitutible and reproduceable) individual."[24] Monroe's fate, her story that is "all too well known" in the narrator's words, is that of a body who is most frequently spoken for and spoken of.

Gloria Steinem has recently asked, "Could we have helped Marilyn survive?" and others have asked, "Can Marilyn Monroe be saved for feminism?"[25] I'd like to add the question asked by the narrator of *Our Marilyn*: namely "if you had lived, grown old, swum the distance, would we have loved you still?" While the narrator does not explicitly state it, one interpretation of her query is that in imagining Monroe growing old, in imagining her physical longevity, one also imagines a space from which she could speak—an impossible future space in which Monroe, the static and yet malleable locus of phantasy, speaks herself, speaks her own aging body. And yet this is of course a phantasy of another kind, a feminist hallucination of Monroe deconstructing or destroying herself. But if that moment will never come, when Norma Jean refuses her other proper name, refuses to be "always already spoken," can we not locate a space in which she challenges representation?

There is a sequence in Longfellow's film in which Monroe in Korea, draped in army fatigues, saunters slowly (since the images are step-printed) past the camera, almost swaggering as she makes her way and turns to smile fatuously, it seems, at us. While it may be difficult to imagine this as a distinct moment of Monroe's rebellion, the step-printed exploration of this sequence suggests Longfellow's subversion—an attempt to provide Monroe with a space in which to retroactively defy her absolute commodification.

That Bell's body in this film (and in Canadian history) is similarly beyond absolute appropriation is suggested both by Longfellow's representation of it (through original footage and her own body's re-enactment of the swim) and by its "Canadianness." Whereas Monroe's potential for subversion seems to most readily reside in Longfellow's manipu-

lation of her image, Bell's body itself as Longfellow notes, marks a "space of resistance."[26] It is perhaps easier to find in Bell's swimming body the seeds of subversion since the task she is engaged in implicitly signifies resistance—of the waves, the fatigue, the cold, the odds, the cultural baggage which incited this teenager to defy the Canadian National Exhibition organizers who asked an American to perform the swim.

But how can this resistance, this act of physical endurance, this woman's swimming body be recuperated in relation to "Canadianness," in relation to the English Canadian spectator? It is precisely the problematic of this recuperation that Longfellow's film compellingly addresses. For in tracing Bell's swimming body alongside Monroe's parading body, the Canadian spectator or perhaps *this* Canadian feminist spectator is confronted with a familiar dilemma; i.e., which woman most speaks to me, which national icon is to be embraced, is there a difference between them? That the options are limited to women is of course no less telling, since the inability to assume a unified spectatorial position and the impossibility of a coherent and singular national identity both suggest an alignment with femininity in Irigaray's *and* patriarchy's senses; an alignment with a perspective that cannot access a logic of sameness, with a framework which cannot accommodate a rationale for absolute difference and, in its most stereotypical sense, with a psyche that just can't make up its mind. That this notion is strikingly Canadian can be argued from an explicitly political perspective as well, especially in the Canadian government's penchant for middle-of-the-road politics in national and international affairs (e.g., a fondness for abstentions from United Nations' votes). When a lack of fixityis articulated as indecisiveness, it often manifests itself in a politically regressive or stagnant manner. However, in the context of the film, it is a radical technique which refuses closure and the lures of historical objectivity.

Our Marilyn is a film in which a Canadian historical event and figure resist absolute appropriation (both as images and as national myths) not only in their retention of a degree of corporeal "power," but also in Marilyn Bell's repeated association with an American actress who not only shares her name, but also shares some of the dangers associated with national and international fame. In doubling Bell and Monroe (and in tripling them with the narrator and her explanatory and personalizing voice) the film flows between individuality and collectivity, between discrete nationalities and cross- or inter-nationalities, and between the past and present. If this film can be said to address history, it is precisely in the sense in which it denies the historical real at the moment it articulates it, though it might be more accurate to suggest that it denies notions of patriarchal history which rely upon linearity and objectivity. Instead it is in the cross-national circulation of female names, identities, voices, bodies and images that history articulates itself as an imaginary construct, as a concept engendered in and by the conflation of documentary discourses with public and personal memories.

Longfellow's Marilyns swim through this text as figures which are at once alike and unlike, mirror images and discrete personalities. As Marilyn the narrator notes:

> I'm still trying to remember the difference, to decipher the loss between the body in perpetual motion and the mortuary stillness of a photograph, these images tracing a memory through my own history, your bodies always moving before me, growing up between your bodies, never one without the other, I kept moving and dreamed of another story .

In attempting to re-present *Our Marilyn* , I have tried to "speak it" in its complexity and thus to respect that the film itself, flowing as it does through the interstices of discourse and through the waters of Lake Ontario (the lake at whose shores I grew up and against whose waves my story began), must necessarily exceed my representation of it. I have attempted to trace its movements between an image in focus and one which is not, between Canadian identity and its impossibility, between the female body which moves and its frozen counterpart, and finally between my body which moves as I sit im/mobile in front of the screen and these images which have moved me.

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Notes

1. Judith Mayne discussing de Lauretis in, "Feminist Film Theory and Women at the Movies," *MLA Profession.* (1987) : 16.

2. De Lauretis makes what I think is a crucial point when she notes that feminist film theory does not go far enough in a recognition of differences between women (e.g., race, class, sexual orientation, nationality), nor of differences within women; i.e., "a heterogeneity of, as in, the individual spectator." Teresa de Lauretis, "Aesthetic and Feminist Theory: Re-Thinking Women's Cinema," *New German Critique* 34 (1985) : 17.

3. I have chosen to highlight spectatorship in this discussion since my passion for this film emerges both from how it positions me, as well as from my ability and willingness to position myself in relation to it on the basis of, for example, my gender, politics, theoretical interests, and nationality.

4. I should note that this film can be discussed much more extensively in relation to the Canadian documentary and experimental film traditions. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will limit my discussion to a comparison with Armatage's film.

5. I would like to briefly mention this paper's title here. Its source is a variation on a quotation by Mary Ann Doane who notes that "the female body . . . must always be placed within quotation marks." Mary Ann Doane, " Woman's Stake: Filming the Female Body," *October* 17 (1981) : 24. In "Quoting Women's Bodies," I hope to suggest a dual interpretation; i.e. quoting first in Doane's sense that all women's bodies which exist in the realm of representation necessarily represent something besides bodies and second, in Brenda Longfellow's terms, that the body itself can serve as a site of resistance and can thus, to a certain degree, speak of itself and not merely be spoken of.

6. For an interesting discussion of the ways in which public and personal memory intersect in the construction of history, see Michael Frisch, "The Memory of History," *Radical History Review* 25 (1981).

7. Linda Gordon, "What's New in Women's History," *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986) : 22.

8. Bill Nichols, *Ideology and the Image* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1981) : 198.

9. That this concept may be somewhat reductionistic is true, however, I find Knight's point to be both suggestive and well-taken and thus choose to include it here with a view to enhancing my analysis of *Our Marilyn* and not limiting it to a transnational or transhistorical reading.

10. D. Knight, " Exquisite Nostalgia: Aesthetic Sensibility in the English-Canadian and Quebec Cinemas," *cineACTION!!* 11 (1987-88) : 32.

11. Knight 32.

12. For the sake of simplicity, I will use the terms "milieu" and "identity" in their singular forms, although it should come as no surprise that there exists no unified Canadian consensus on national identity and moreover, that wherever discrete identities do exist they are regionally, sub-culturally and linguistically differentiated (that this film centers upon white middle class North American women further reflects the limitations of the notion of Canadian *identity*). This is especially significant in relation to French Canadian identities and in the context of this film, spectatorship. Since Bell's swim took place in the heart of Upper Canada, its relationship to French Canadian history is that much more complex and may serve more to reflect national differences than allegiances.

13. Brenda Longfellow, "The Writing of the Body." Unpublished essay : 2-3.

14. Being a woman connotes the same sort of dual identity; i.e. being woman and being not-woman, since woman may be considered the patriarchy's Other or as explored by a number of French feminists, its negative, its underside, and that which defies representation.

15. Carolyn Burke, "Irigaray Through the Looking Glass," *Feminist Studies* 7.2 (1981) : 298.

16. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985) : 117.

17. Susan Suleiman, "(Re)Writing the Body: The Politics and Poetics of Female Eroticism," *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. S. Suleiman (Cambridge MA., London: Harvard UP, 1986) : 7-8.

18. Longfellow 17.

19. Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One," *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, eds. Elaine Marks & Isabelle de Courtivron, trans. Claudia Reeder (New York: Schocken Books, 1981) : 100.

20. Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* 134.

21. Longfellow 15.

22. Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1981) : 189.

23. Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space," *Movies and Methods*, vol. 2, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985) : 572.

24. Longfellow 8-9.

25. Mayne 14-15 (Steinem quoted in Mayne).

26. Longfellow 1.

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"I WAS NAMED AFTER HER: BRENDA LONGELLOW'S *OUR MARILYN*"

Seth Feldman

Marilyn Bell, age 14, entered Lake Ontario at Youngstown, New York late in the evening of September 8, 1954. She touched the breakwater near the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto 21 hours later, the first person to swim the lake. Brenda Longfellow's film, *Our Marilyn*[1], depicts Bell's swim through archival materials (newsreel footage, popular songs, radio broadcasts) and newly shot, optically processed imagery of a woman (Longfellow herself) in the water. Added to the montage are stock shots of women performing aquatic gymnastics. A small number of shots taken from a newsreel of Marilyn Monroe entertaining troops in Korea is optically slowed and freeze framed. Linking all this footage is the voice of a female narrator who begins her meditation on both Marilyns with the words, "I was named after her."

At first viewing, it may be argued that Longfellow's 1987 film won its prizes (The Prix du Publique at The 4e Festival International de Film et Videos de Femmes de Montreal and a shared Grand Prix at The Oberhausen International Film Festival) by using all these varied devices to make Marilyn "ours." The film elicits the pleasures inherent in expanding upon latent recognition. As does that other bit of Canadian historiography, Trivial Pursuit, *Our Marilyn* calls upon us to remember that we knew something about this obscure moment. Upon seeing the film, we will know it again. Marilyn Bell's swim is promised to us as part of the pleasures of the half-remembered made known, made ours. Ultimately, we will enjoy a redemption of ourselves.

The "our" of Our Marilyn is also evoked in a nationalist vein through the comparison to "theirs" (i.e. The Americans') Marilyn Monroe. Our Marilyn, like our self-image, is smaller, more pristine. She exists within a

diminutive history. Our Marilyn must be periodically rescued from being lost in the obscurity of our culture. She exists in opposition to their Marilyn who, as part of the American cultural hegemony, is the ostensible cause of just such local obscurity.

Our Marilyn, of course, chose to swim away from the United States to land in the fragile history of Canada. Her passage itself is also a kind of "making ours"—or, more precisely, a continuation of the time honoured ritual of the geographical ordeal. Getting from there to here and suffering every inch of the way is one way in which Canadians claim their cultural integrity—be it the Golden Spike, Terry Fox or Marilyn Bell. The object is to make oneself one with the land, the land that is, when all else is lost, Canada's enduring culture and history.

Marilyn Bell, the film tells us, took up the challenge when the CNE officials denied the lake swim to Canadians, refused to let the lake be "ours." "The American" Florence Chadwick, originally hired for the crossing, had to be pulled out when she could no longer endure the suffering, i.e. could no longer trade the body for territorial possession. The news—told first to the viewer and then to the on-screen Marilyn Bell—is both times followed by the proclamation, "The Lake is Yours." And, as the film's title implies: "you, who have made the lake yours, are 'ours'—are us."

Making the self corporeal as land and then claiming that self through a process of sacrificing the body is not uniquely Canadian. But it is undeniably patriarchal. "The lake is yours" (spoken by Bell's coach, Gus Ryder) is an echo of another voice in the documentary tradition, that of Ernest Hemingway in Joris Ivens' *The Spanish Earth*. Over shots of Republican soldiers advancing, Hemingway intones: "This is the moment that all the rest of war prepares for, when six men go forward into death to walk across a stretch of land and by their presence on it prove—this earth is ours."[2]

This claim of place through hard won physical presence is also the structural basis for the traditional Griersonian narrator. Implied in Hemingway's (or, in its Canadian manifestation, Lorne Greene's) very presence is the possession of what is seen by virtue of the narrator's work. He has come to know it, he has come to describe it, therefore it is his. In the traditional Griersonian narrative (revived nightly by all the world's anchormen), space (the here) and time (the now) are made, are owned, and are intelligible only through our complicity in that prior ownership. Were this not "our Beirut" or "our politician" or "our disaster" the image would be unintelligible, particularly in the commercial context that makes that image possible.

At its first level, then, *Our Marilyn* quotes this possessive vision by appearing to occupy the structural shell of traditional Canadian documentary revelation. Like a good Griersonian work, the film provides us with voice over image, voice defining image, pseudo-synch and music where it works. "This woman," it appears to say, "went forward across

a stretch of water and by her presence made it ours." And this narrator, having organized a proprietary ordering of the imagery before us, is here to perform an act of surrogate appropriation on our behalf.

It is upon this base of a conventional Canadian history through conventional documentary means, that Longfellow constructs a second layer of signification. *Our Marilyn* may also be viewed in the context of a richer tradition—the Canadian response to Griersonian rhetorical styles that runs, roughly, from the suppressed feminist work of the Wartime NFB through Unit B, Studio D and to Michael Rubbo's terminal *cinema verite*. Jane Marsh, in her preparations for *Women are Warriors*, came a little too close to seeing the historical contradictions that frustrated a straightforward reading of historical imagery. *City of Gold* assures us that we will never know what was on the mind of the Klondike prospectors we see. In *Not a Love Story*, the camera refuses to see with the pornographic intent normally elicited by the genitalia it is viewing. Rubbo freely admits, on screen, that he never quite made the film he intended.

Longfellow shares this ironic detachment (making *Our Marilyn* even more nationalistically "ours"). Her optical processing of the archival footage seems to suggest that the footage itself means little. What little meaning she finds in the historical record is cut further by the images of synchronized swimmers—swimmers whose labours create only perfectly symmetrical and perfectly pointless patterns. The hopelessly saccharine ballads that celebrate the swim demean themselves and the event they depict. In the end, the quizzical narrator leaves questions unanswered. What was finally accomplished by Bell's swim? What would have happened had the other Marilyn "swum the distance?" Was the importance of the event finally negated by the naivete with which it was celebrated?

This said, *Our Marilyn's* importance is not as a continuation of the Canadian rebellion against Grierson but rather as an assertion of an entirely new direction. Rather than being entirely informed by a stance of ironic detachment, the film works at this third level as a kind of dialogue with that stance. Most appropriately, Longfellow's dialogue begins with that first line of voice-over: "I was named after her." Actually, no one was: not Brenda Longfellow, not any of the authors of the narration, not the narrator, Linda Griffith. What we have from the outset is a fictional persona who, to mix the film's prevailing metaphors, must swim "between two bodies."

Unlike the Canadian documentary narrators who have had to negotiate their position *vis a vis* on-screen events, the fictional Marilyn must concentrate upon calling herself into being. The Canadian tradition might hide behind unnamed and unquestioned authority. The Canadian rebellion may assert: "I am Michael Rubbo and I don't know if I can make this film" or "We, the women of Studio D, decided to explore...." Longfellow's first line says, "who am I?"

But if the fictional Marilyn as narrator counters the Canadian tradition by bringing her own self into question, she also takes the first steps toward a validated pre-textual reality. The undefined speaker discussing the as yet unredeemed subject, she points toward what we may accept as truth. The perspective established in *Our Marilyn's* first line points us in this direction in three different ways:

First, the use of a female voice-over carries with it a challenge to the authority of the voice traditionally associated with male narration. The female voice, at the moment when Longfellow makes *Our Marilyn*, has reached the level of a well established adversarial signification. At least in the practice of progressive filmmaking the female narrator, by her presence, speaks against the established signification of her imagery, against the proprietary ordering of that imagery and, perhaps against the proprietary ordering of imagery *per se*. She then, perhaps most importantly, finds a way to speak amid the ruins of this deconstructed signification. Her means for accomplishing this is, in fact, her own fictionality. Longfellow's hypothesized woman speaks "as if" and in so doing may connote the veracity of a double negative: "I am a construct working with the now exposed devices of a previous construct for my own purposes." The female voice moves here from the connotator of "deconstruction" to the manifestation of a fully formed "other."

The second pertinent aspect of the fictional narrator's perspective is her use of the first person. On one level, this speaking body is the audio equivalent of Longfellow herself as she swims in the footage newly shot for *Our Marilyn*. The film would seem to suggest this reading by ending with the revelation of this new footage as the source for the optically enhanced material that might otherwise have been mistaken for part of Bell's original swim. But Longfellow's decision to film herself in Lake Ontario and optically process the footage to substitute herself for missing images of Bell's swim is more than a simple homage to her film's protagonist. Nor is the revelation of this device at the end of the film only attributable to the anti-illusionism of modernist practice. In the context of *Our Marilyn*'s use of the body as territorial metaphor, Longfellow's physical presence becomes the act of claiming the film's subject as "ours." its difficulty as part making of the film itself "ours." In one sense, to paraphrase the passage from *Spanish Earth*: "Longfellow by her presence makes this film ours." However, for the two women swimmers, this patriarchal territoriality is never quite decisive. Just as we are not sure who is speaking, we wonder which of the swimming bodies is really the subject here. All we do know is that we have bodies swimming, that the first person voice belongs to a corporeal being. This embodied voice also represents an equation of the uncertain identity of the speaker *cum* speaker and the equally uncertain identity of the subject *cum* subject: she who depicts the swim is also swimming.

It is this sense of process and incompletion in the narrator's role that is most easily associated with the investigation of the historical Marilyns,

Bell and Monroe. "I love what you withheld from the world," Marilyn the narrator says directly of Monroe and, by implication, to Bell. It is an odd statement when taken in juxtaposition with the conventional history of the two women. Even *Our Marilyn* appears to demonstrate that neither woman withheld much of anything: Marilyn Bell swimming to exhaustion, Marilyn Monroe playing out her star's role to the end. But what is withheld in both acts is, of course, the physical suffering, the self that, in patriarchal mythology, claims a place. The phrase, "what you withheld," also points us back to a narrator who is withholding a reality that exists beyond the representational powers of the medium. The third Marilyn, the fictional persona, exists no place, at least no place that can be located with the conventions of narrative or filmic structure. Yet, as the first person singular insists, she exists (perhaps in a new tense, something like "the first person other").

The narrator's stance is, thirdly, her declaration of a personal relationship to the image. More specifically, the phrase, "I was named after her," construes a personal relationship predicated on a representational construct: naming. It acknowledges the propriety relationship enjoyed by the speaker over the imagery ("here *I* see it," rather than "here it is.") And then it serves to undermine that relationship.

Immediately after hearing the opening phrase, we are told that the narrator Marilyn was named for Marilyn Bell because her mother was enduring an especially difficult labour during the hours when Bell was making her crossing. The idea of linking the two names was, then the product of this physicality. The embryonic narrator was named for the endurance shared by Marilyn Bell and her mother—and that she herself comes to share with the images of Longfellow (and the film) recreating Bell's swim. The narrator's opening assertion then is used for a feminist undermining of the patriarchal use of naming for the bestowing of homage or legitimacy. Within the film, the naming was collective or perhaps, to quote a phrase used later by the narrator, the women were "beyond naming." All the Marilyns share the name on the basis of their female physicality. Put another way, none of the three had to "make a name for herself," the bodies being their own names.

To finally exhaust the reading of that first line, it is possible to see it as a failure of the identity it proclaims and as a proclamation of the importance of that failure. "I was named after her." Actually no one was; no *body* could be. The fictional nature of the narrator takes us from the world of naming to the world of bodies. Later in the film (it is tempting to say, "in the body of the work") we are pointed to the tangibility of those bodies by comparisons made between them that are framed in physical terms: Marilyn the narrator's birth during the hours of Marilyn Monroe's swim; Marilyn Bell in a cold lake intercut with Marilyn Monroe on a cold stage in Korea.

What informs all of *Our Marilyn*, then, is both the potential for a critique of representation and a movement away from that critique. To go

further though, it is necessary to look more closely at the means by which the film's three Marilyn's share their interactive exposition. The film is structured around this idea of the multiple perspective, be it the shared nationalist rendering or the second sense, the mutual experience of being Marilyn enjoyed (if that is the word) by the three women. In this latter usage, each of the three depends for her identity upon the other two. This is most obvious in the case of Marilyn the narrator as she swims between two the bodies. But it is equally true of Marilyn Bell and Marilyn Monroe as they exist within the delicate balance of Marilyn the narrator. Being linked by the name is also an avenue to dispensing with the name and naming *per se* as all three come to be actually, formally linked by what they withhold.

The precedent here is a seminal non-fiction film of this decade, Chris Marker's *Sans Soliel*. Marker's tripartite exposition is between his authorial presence, the film's female narrator and the fictional documentarian, Sandor Krasna. The mutual dependence of all three unfolds as the narration variously affirms and undermines the representational quality of the imagery. Janine Marchessault describes the mechanism succinctly:

> Unlike his one time collaborator Resnais where the interaction between imaginary (-) and real (+) is cumulative, Marker never collapses the two terms; rather there is always a social edifice operating outside the image–a pre-text from which the image is drawn. This pre-text does not attend some theoretical parade of essences and origins but it is highly material, ideological, reified; it is a concrete social reality.[3]

The net effect of Marker's narrational construct is a Brechtian quotation of the truth, a truth that is, if necessarily missing, nevertheless true. By the same token, *Our Marilyn's* "concrete social reality" works its way through the representations of Marilyn Bell and Marilyn Monroe to its identification as that reality which all three women in the film make true by its withholding. The film goes so far as to tell us that whether or not there was a "real" Marilyn Bell or Marilyn Monroe there are means for working with their invention. There is also a criterion, the physical female body, by which that work exists outside the representational apparatus at the artist's disposal. Longfellow, like Marker, points toward the necessity of a world outside the constraints of the apparatus.

Longfellow's choice of subject matter is, to these ends, especially apt. Her evocation of Marilyn Monroe might have pointed only to an evocation of the hyperreal Marilyn; her depiction of Marilyn Bell might be read as only the Canadian version of that hypereality. But Longfellow's presentation of both women–linked to a fictional self–points away from the hyperreal, back to the withheld, the body, the pre-text. An alternative reading is impossible. To suggest that only the hyperreal Marilyn–that which, at least in Marilyn Monroe's case, had not only displaced the corporeal but had killed it–is worthy of comment would be to foreclose any

possibility of the visceral understanding that underlies the film.

Finally, *Our Marilyn* leaves open the thought that it may be impossible to swim that other distance, from the Modern to a succeeding era. The swim, in its physicality and its eternal present, *is* the succeeding era. The body *per se*, even beyond (but thanks to) its feminist context, maintains an ontological reality. Everbody's toothache exists beyond representation and beyond the critique of representation. And everybody's toothache defines the present.

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Notes

1. *Our Marilyn* is distributed in Canada by DEC Films, 394 Euclid Avenue, Toronto M6G 2S9 (telephone: 416 925-9338). As of this writing the film has no American distributor.

2. Quoted in Richard Meran Barsam, *Non-Fiction Film: A Critical History* (New York, 1973): 93-94.

3. "Sans Soleil," *CineAction!* (Spring, 1986): 3.

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POSTMODERNISM AND THE DISCOURSE OF THE BODY

Brenda Longfellow

I want to to begin with a cursory tour through the postmodern discourse on the body then shift gears and, with the help of certain alternative film practices, attempt to think through the possibility of resistance as this relates to the body. My journey will end up as a kind of round trip that returns us to the body, to a corporeal destination with a difference.

Before I begin, though, let me shamelessly exhibit my lack: I am neither a philosopher nor a meticulous reader of postmodernism. My point of departure is simply my own confusion, occasional anger and political unease with some of the more excessive claims of this discourse, particularly as these relate to the theorization of the body and the repudiation of any project of social transformation. It's a writing influenced by my theoretical and practical engagement with feminism, a practice for whom the issues of the body and social transformation are of not inconsiderable importance.

My own interest in thinking through the possibility of political resistance in relation to the body was sparked through the process of making *Our Marilyn*, a film which was inspired by Marilyn Bell's historic swim across Lake Ontario in 1954. While I began the film thinking I would examine the production of a mythological body through the media and the excesses of 1950's boosterism, the process of making the film, of creating certain images, of speaking with marathon swimmers about their experience, moved the whole project in a slightly different direction. I became fascinated with the visceral experience of the swim itself, with the almost hallucinatory image of a body exerting itself beyond the limits of physical endurance: a body struggling against the relentless onset of

pain, tortured limbs and organs, madness and surrender; a body, finally, whose insistence on the irreducibility of the corporeal, seemed to me to mark a margin of difference and, even, a space of resistance.

I. The Body under Erasure

Let me offer an apocalyptic citation from the postmodern scene: "If today there can be such an intense fascination with the state of the body, might this not be because the body no longer exists[?]".[1]

Let's start with the first clause, with the intense fascination with the state of the body. Postmodernism, both as cultural practice and critical discourse does seem to be characterized by an enduring obssesion with the body. At first glance, the proliferation of body talk might seem to be directed toward healing the split between mind and body that has so thoroughly structured our Cartesian heritage; the split that has allowed philosophy and theory to present themselves as emanations of pure Idea, Spirit or the Dialectic and its like. It is a division which Robin May Scott has suggested commences with Kant,[2] who inaugurates a radical scission of sensous experience from the categories of understanding. This binary logic is currently the object of a sustained feminist critique which argues that western philosophy's repudiation of the body must be read as a version of patriarchy's fear and loathing of an all too mortal reminder—the maternal body. I would suggest that much feminist theory from De Beauvoir on is, in its most generalized strategic form, a writing through and against this breach, a writing which insists with varying degrees of stress on the embodied-ness of meaning and subjectivity. The odd thing about the entry of the body into postmodernism discourse, however, is the extent to which the body is all too often staged only to be made to disappear: the body, tantalizingly absent and present, desired and lost in a theoretical fort/da game.

Much of this paradoxical relation to the body, I'd suggest, has to do with the foundational precepts of poststructuralism which, in their radical anti- humanism, bear Kant's inheritance in a direct line of descent. Certainly, the Foucaultian tradition, with its reduction of the body to a surface on which the technologies of power and knowledge inscribe their effects, may be situated within this epistemological context. As Arthur Kroker has argued:

> ...the thesis of bio-power is profoundly structuralist because it is radically Kantian and it is Kantian to the extent that the new genetics, language theory and cybernetics are strategies—yes nothing but political mechanisms—for suppressing the maundering fanaticism of sensuous experience. The Kantian subordination is not only the vital principle but the actual epistemological context within which Foucault's reflections on power take shape.[3]

As we move further into the giddy world of postmodernism (and giddiness does seem to be a kind of sine qua non, attended by an intensifying hyperbolization of terms) the body receives its death blow at the hands of Baudrillard.

With the dissolution of referential being or substance into simulacra, "no more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept",[4] the implicit Foucaultian distinction between body as ground and power as agent disappears. With Baudrillard the reader witnesses the final dissolution of the distinction between subject and object where both disappear into the relentless flux of signs. Any realm of sensuous experience is always already absorbed by technique as the reigning "medium and principle of a whole new generation of sense... of neutrality and indifference".[5] The body is mediated and refashioned through technique, emerging wholly as an extension of technology and information processing.

This erasure of the body, however, is only made possible through the collapse of certain logical levels. Within Baudrillard, the hyperreal world of fashion advertizing, rock videos or amusement parks are not given as representations, they are the *real*, the hyperreal, more real than real. Here the classical hermeneutic of surface and depth is reversed in a move that constitutes surface as the determinate and ultimate guarantor of depth, where TV is life and life is TV.

But what is, at one level, a prophetic vision of a nightmarish future or an intellectual model moves, without acknowledgement of its discreteness or its limits, into a social and historical phenomenon. Description transmogrifies into evidence, and the model, as Ross Gibson points out, "ceases to be postulative and appears as probative and unimpeachable . . . a sophistic system[. A] model is presented not as a model but as a state of things. . .".[6] At this stage then, there is no longer any question of correspondence or mediation between image and the real: for Baudrillard the hyperreal, the proliferation of images and the massive colonization of being by technology are the exclusive means through which the body is experienced.

It seems to me that this kind of reductionism has to do with the fact that the object Baudrillard writes against, the object of criticism, is really only the most simplistic form of representation: that of naive realism or simple denotation where the image is perceived as an object in the real world. As Meaghan Morris points out, it is the icon and not the verbal sign which Baudrillard employs as the general model for considering all of semiosis.[7] This model of denotation, however, is never really jettisoned but constitutes the basis on which Baudrillard collapses the hyperreal into experience—in the assumption of a spectatorship which is indissociable from the images it receives, where the equivalent to the diabolical conformity of the image is the diabolical behaviour of the masses.

Film and literary theories over the last two decades have travelled a good distance in elaborating more sophisticated models of spectatorship, work which has problematized any simplistic relation between sub-

ject/spectator and the assumption of any unmediated relationship between text and meaning. Hugely informed by psychoanalysis, this work has opened up the possibility of a whole counter-praxis of parodic readings, negotiations and transactions where the process of spectatorship allows for a certain play of phantasy, shifting positions and idiosyncratic readings. In short, it is a theory of reading where implicit spectatorial positions in the text and those assumed by an active reader/spectator do not *necessarily* coincide. Baudrillard, however insists on the equivalence of production and reception. In the *Orders of Simulacra*, he writes:

> . . . no contemplation is possible. The images fragment perception into successive sequences, into stimuli toward which there can be only instantaneous response, yes or no—the limit of an abbreviated reaction. Film no longer allows you to question. It questions you, and directly.[8]

or

> Montage and codification demand, in effect, that the receiver construe and decode by observing the same procedure whereby the work was assembled. The reading of the message is then only a perpetual examination of the code.[9]

or

> . . . you decode it according to the same code, inscribed within each message and object like a miniaturized genetic code.[10]

The point, insisted upon by psychoanalysis, however, is that the process of suturing the subject into meaning or gender is never complete, finite or without slippage. The process of the subject is not the once-and-for-all surrender to abyssal pleasures, the nihilist dreams of the postmodern, but a continual productivity, a continual process of oscillation between punctual meaning and its loss, between identity and its subversion. It is a process, moreover, which incorporates the specificity of personal biography, of the familial and haphazard contingencies of history which produce difference, which produces the particularity of our private histories of desire. All of which is to say that the interpreter, the user of signs, is also a producer of meaning, a site in which the complexity of cultural determination and personal history meet. As C. S. Peirce has observed: "a sign ...is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, it creates in the mind of that person, an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign".[11]

One could add: an idiosyncratic or oppositional sign. The distinction between sign and interpretant in Peirce serves as a reminder of difference, that the subject is not exhausted by received linguistic positions nor entirely consumed by the images she receives. Moreover, Peirce's in-

sistence (and this is something Teresa de Lauretis points out) that the interpreter is the site, the body in whom, the significate effect of the sign takes hold, restores the body to the centre of the process of meaning.

In some ways, it seems like an all too simple or vulgar point to bring up the fact that our quotidian experience is bounded by the body, that the body's daily processes, its brushes with mortality, its aural and tactile relation to the world, constitute the stuff and substance of subjective experience. Irreducibly. We are bodies immersed in a field of sensory impressions, a field which generates its own effects and its own primordial phantasies concerning the relation of bodies to themselves and to others. In that light, there is something I find lovely in Lyotard's assertion that: "the body is to my mind an essential site of resistance because with the body there is love, a certain presence of the past, a capacity to reflect, *singularity* . . .". [12]

It seems obvious. And it seems to me that any theory or writing concerned with resistance has to work through the concept of embodied experience, of the body as a site of semiotic and sensuous activity, of semiosis as a process of interaction between the two.

This is the concept of experience which Teresa de Lauretis is developing as

> ...the process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed...as a complex of meaning effects, habits, dispositions, associations, and perceptions resulting from the semiotic interaction of self and outer world. The constellation or configuration of meaning effects...shifts and is reformed continually for each subject, with her or his continuous engagement in social reality, a reality that includes—and for women centrally—the social relations of gender.[13]

Semiosis, in this regard, would involve not only intellectual but emotional and energetic meaning effects, habits and concrete action upon the world.

II. The Body on Film

Here I would like to consider certain practices of film where the issue of the body is certainly not dead, where the image is not necessarily an "evil demon", nor necessarily complicit in the disappearance of history, the body or the real. There are two schematic categories I am beginning to work with: the ethical and phantastical, although it is difficult to maintain hard and fast distinctions between the two.

A. The Ethical.

This category is inspired by Vivian Sobchack's essay entitled "Inscribing Ethical Space, Ten Propositions on Death, Representation and Documentary". [14] Sobchack quotes John Fraser's *Violence in the Arts* to

the effect that: "what does invite [empathy] is anything that permits one to see the other as agent . . . . [T]wo of the most important factors making for empathy are a sense of the individual as engaged in work and a sense of the physicality of the body".[15]

Sobchack argues that the indexical representations of documentary, as opposed to the iconic and symbolic representations of the narrative fiction film, inscribe a very different relation between the spectating subject and the body images she perceives on the screen, a relation bounded by the intra- and extra-textual knowledge that the subject/spectator inhabits the same world with the referents of documentary representations. As she observes:

> The world into which documentary space extends and to which its indexical signification points, is perceived as the concrete and intersubjective world of the viewer. That is, as much as documentary space points offscreen to the viewer's world, it is a space also "pointed to" by the viewer who recognizes and grasps that space as, in some way, contiguous with his or her own. There is an existential and thus particularly ethical bond between documentary space and the space inhabited by the viewer.[16]

This space, she continues, "points to a lived body occupying concrete space and shaping it with others in concrete social relations which describe a moral structure".[17]

I am beginning to think that if film does have any political vocation at all, it is in the vitally sensual way that film is capable of constituting an emphathetic relation between bodies. I am reminded, in this respect, of Peter Watkin's film *The Journey* which is organized around collective and familial discussions of a series of photographic enlargements of victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These images feature irradiated bombing victims, seared flesh, grostesque blistering, patterns of a kimono burned into a back, a schoolyard of children's corpses. These images provide an intense introduction to the horrors of nuclear disaster to the families Watkins visits in Sweden, Ireland, Middle America and Russia. The film documents and observes these individuals in their contemplation of these images. A process of identification, projection and introjection occurs where children are asked to imagine themselves in the situation depicted in the image, and where the parents respond to the images of the dead schoolchildren as if they were their own. What we observe in the film is a process of politicization which occurs as an empathetic identification with bodies.

It is no doubt the inevitability of that response that prompted the American State department to repress these images, as Joyce Nelson has argued in *The Perfect Machine: Television in the Nuclear Age*.[18] Nelson points out that the official press corps sent to cover the results of the bombings focused entirely on two aspects: the visual spectacle of the mushroom cloud in the sky and the sheer blast power of the bomb as

evidenced by the virtual flattening of both cities. It would take several decades, Nelson adds, before the United States government declassified information and photographs concerning the irradiated bombing victims.

B. The Phantastical. This second category will be dealt with in relation to my film *Our Marilyn*.

OUR MARILYN: the title circulates around the question of the positionality of the subject, that tests the inviolability of the identity between body and proper name. Which Marilyn is ours? Is it Bell, Monroe or the narrator, a contemporary consciousness, growing up, as she puts it, "between these two bodies"? In this condensation of bodies under the proper name, differences are elided and the possibility of possession, of categorization and identity, is thwarted by the uncontainable flux and movement of a body on which the fantastic historic genealogy of Marilyns is written. Here such genealogy is conceived and ordered in terms of the logic of the unconscious, as a perpetual mobility in which the relation between events and bodies is traced through an associational implosion and a continuous intermingling of bodies and categories triggered by the figure of Marilyn.

Like all genealogies, *OUR MARILYN*'s is selective and intentional, positioned around the edges and on the nether side of official accounts and visual records. Its passion is to test the confluence of the personal and the public, of the difference betweeen contemporary and historic readings and interpretations of the event, and the physical and psychic experience of the swim itself. A difference that is, of necessity, invented, phantasized and constructed between the interstices of official discourse. Here then, the visual record, the stock footage culled from newsreels, archives and newspapers is interpolated and layered in the film both as citation of the official historical account, and as raw and plastic material, as a resource to be worked, slowed down, step-printed and repeated toward the writing and tracing of the corporeal and hallucinatory experience of the swim.

The evocation of the experiential in the film is contained in the images of the body/my body, swimming, a body mediated through innumerable transfers between Super 8 footage, to 16mm black and white, through the willful manufacture of the grainy texture and surface authenticity of historic footage. I rewrite this body through the optical printer—its image, bleached, inscribed on different stocks, printed again and again, bearing the physical traces of authorship—of a body figuring a body, and the traces of its transformation where the body dissolves into abstraction, into carnal sensation and motion. If the film may be classed as a documentary, it is as a document not of an historical referent, but of this process of transformation, this writing of history through the traces and the hallucinations we construct of it.

In that rewriting and rememorization of the event of the swim, what constitutes the body and the body of the film is the relentless and agoniz-

ing play of the middle. As regards the official record of this event, the swim across Lake Ontario, existing documentation–like an abbreviated narrative–can only recall beginnings and ends: Bell's entry into the water and the finale as she touches the wharf on the Canadian shore. It was these instances alone which were captured and registered in the public accounts of the swim, these instances which were instantly assimilated into the tantalizing and reassuringly familiar narrative genre of the success story: Horatio Alger, David and Goliath, The Tortoise and the Hare and, last but not least in its national resonance: The Triumph of the Canadian Underdog Against American Champion. What is excised in this narrative, however, is the bodily performance itself, the relentless repetition of the swim for 21 hours, 55 strokes a minute.

To rewrite the story around the experience of that middle is to write close to the body, is to imagine/image an oneiric universe of corporeal sensation. To rewrite from the middle, as well, is to suggest a different form of spectatorial pleasure which is not bound to the narcississtic identification with self-discovery and victorious closure, but inheres in an implicit invitation to surrender to the hallucinatory ebb and flow of bodies. A surrender and imaginary regression to a territory of tactile, acoustic and visual flux where the body might re-experience its most atavistic pleasures.

The recurrent problem and difficulty confronted by feminist film theory and practice has been how to image the female body differently within a tradition of representation in which the body image of woman has served as the ground of the most intense pleasure and anxiety within film. "One is always in representation", writes Cixous", and when a woman is asked to take place in this representation, she is, of course, asked to represent male desire".

One way around this impasse has been to figure the "feminine" under the sign of a certain negativity. As Kristeva writes, "...women's practice can only be negative, in opposition to that which exists, to say that 'this is not it' and 'it is not yet'. What I mean by 'woman' is that which is not represented, that which is unspoken, that which is left out of namings and ideologies".[19] In *OUR MARILYN* a certain negativity is figured in the refusal of synchronicity: the "marriage" of a voice to a body in a fiction of presence and a totalization of identity. Here the radical rupture between voice and body, the heterogeneity of the voices and commentary, always retrospective in relation to the visual immediacy of the swimmer's body, suspends the latter in a refusal of referentiality on the side of the 'as yet not spoken', as that which is exterior to the symbolic contract. In addition, the long sequences of black leader, accompanied only by the sound of her breathing and the unremitting cacophony of waves and wind, positions representation on the edge of the 'as yet unseen', of a body struggling into vision. And yet this negativity in the film is never absolute, its function is not to univocally refuse representation [as if such a thing were possible] but to interrogate the possiblity of an other, of a

figuration of voice, body and desire beyond the inherent limitations of hegemonic categories.

This interrogation begins with the recall and repetition of the images of Bell and Monroe: the swimmer and the movie star, both enjoined in a spectacle of femininity, though from different sides, both upholding the contradictory parts of a unitary whole–the classical opposition of virgin/whore. Both products of the fifties, they represent (and in Monroe's case, simultaneously) the polarities of innocence and experience, availability and saintliness, daughter and lover. Both are ideological markers in a discursive system which eludes and concludes them.

Here the body poses, gestures and performs for the other, the throng of expectant transfixed others whose gaze stands in for that transcendent other-the camera and behind it, the universal spectator. This gaze crosses the logical order of time and space, moves between a rough stage in Korea to a wharf in Toronto, collapses the antinomies of past and present and saturates the body in its sight with meaning and desire. Clearly this constitution of the body as object of surveillance and figure of desire functions within the range of the political technology of the body which Foucault has described. It is a process whose operations are most acutely condensed in the image of the ornamental swimmers where the body is ordered through the imposition of a choreographed discipline, to turn circles, to assume a pre-determined position within a symbolic order whose specific routine antedates and anticipates the participation of any (always substitutable and reproduceable) individual. And is there a body more emblematic of this process, than that of Monroe's? A body reduced to a plastic surface, to the transparency of a signifier embodying the collective and enduring phantasy of a body without organs, without flesh, without substance.

And yet there is a beyond, an invisible excess to the masquerade of femininity which emerges through the microscopic intensity of the optical printer. In two instances in the film the newsreel footage slows down, prolonging a gesture which reveals an undoing, a fraying at the seams of these ancient images of virgin/whore. One presents a coy compliticious Bell, her young virginal head draped in a towel which bizzarely ressembles a nun's cowl, who turns and stares into the camera. The other shows a transvestite Monroe, clad in a military uniform, who turns to offer a complicitous wink at the camera in an instance of delicious conspiracy. Here the voyeur, to quote a recent Chris Marker film, is "voyeurized" and the voyeuristic pleasure which resides in the phantasy of omnipotence and control over an oblivious object, is usurped by the willful "knowingness" of this gaze returned from the screen. What is revealed in the precise instance of that return of the gaze, however, is not a castrating stare, but a playful acknowledgement of the game.

To acknowledge the game and the masquerade is already to bear witness to the fact that there is a space reserved where she laughs, a space where she casts the masquerade as comic invention, a space of resistance

inscribed on the side of the 'as yet unspoken and unnamed' experience of her body.

Vertiginous in its repetition, the image of the swimmer is more obviously cast on the side of this difference. Subjected to the relentless weathering of the optical printer, the figure tends increasingly toward an abstraction of form, of colour, of movement toward the final dissolution of the boundaries between body and water. At this limit, the body charged with extreme pain, loses contours and solidity, is experienced as a kind of permeable matter crossed and fissured by physical impulsions and the mobility of instinctual drive.

What is at issue here, in the violent immediacy of these corporeal experiences, is the existence of a register of embodied meaning, which, as Kristeva notes "elude[s] social intercourse, the representation of pre-existing objects and the contract of desire"[20]. Persisting as a subversive undertow within the rational order of language, this register can express itself only intermittently in the explosions of poetry, in the recall of dreams and in the slips and parapraxes of the unconscious. These phenonmena—however intermittent—do call into question the imperialistic claims of the rational order of discourse to have fully colonized experience and meaning through the laying on of names. They testify, indeed, to a potential resistance where a form of representation could be imagined as a writing with, and not against the body. A utopian writing where the writer becomes swimmer:

> . . . she throws her trembling body into the air, she lets herself go, she flies, she goes completely into her voice, she vitally defends the "logic" of her discourse with her body; her flesh speaks true. She exposes herself. Really she makes what she thinks materialize carnally, she conveys meaning with her body. She inscribes what she is saying because she does not deny unconscious drives the unmanageable part they play in speech. (Hélène Cixous)[21]

To pose corporeal experience as a potential site of resistance is at once to call into question the axiomatic 'truths' of the Foucaultian and poststructuralist enterprise for whom the body only exists as a function of discourse or as a signifier whose effectivity and meaning are restricted to a diacritical relation between terms in a linguistic system. For what inheres in the poststructuralist screening out of reference is a radical negation of the lived body, of the possibility of a register of corporeal experience and meaning that is contradictory, subversive and resistant. What I have argued for in this rather eclectic and round about journey is that the body be considered as a productive site of semiosis which, in its visceral, emotional and reflective engagement with the world, moves language and meaning into new realms of possibility.

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Notes

1. Arthur Kroker, "Theses on the Disappearing Body in the Hyper Modern Condition ", *Body Invaders: Panic Sex in America*, ed. Arthur Kroker and Marilouise Kroker (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1988), p. 20.
2. Robin May Scott, *Cognition and Eros: A Critique of the Kantian Paradigm* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).
3. Kroker, p. 78.
4. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss et. al. (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983), p. 3.
5. Baudrillard, p. 99.
6. Ross Gibson, "Customs and Excise" in *Seduced and Abandoned: The Baudrillard Scene*, ed. AndréFrankovits (New York: Semiotext[e], 1984), p.46.
7. Meaghan Morris, "Room 101 or A Few Worst Things in the World," in *Seduced and Abandoned*, p. 101.
8. *Simulations*, p., 119.
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10. Ibid, p. 121.
11. C.S. Peirce as quoted in Teresa de Lauretis, "Semiotics and Experience ", *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984), p. 172.
12. J.F. Lyotard, *ICA Document on Postmodernism* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1986), p.31.
13. Ibid, p. 18.
14. *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, Fall 1984.
15. John Fraser, *Violence in the Arts* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), as quoted in Sobchack, p. 288.
16. Ibid., p. 294.
17. Ibid.
18. Joyce Nelson, *The Perfect Machine/TV in the Nuclear Age* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1987), p. 31.
19. Julia Kristeva, "Interview ", trans. Claire Pajaczkowska, *m/f* 5/6 (1981): 166.
20. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language/A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (London: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 238.
21. Hélène Cixous, "Sorties", trans. Betsy Wing, in Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clement, *The Newly Born Woman* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986), p. 92.

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LES PERFORMANCES CINÉMA/MUSIQUE AVEC PIERRE HÉBERT

LA DÉFENESTRATION AUDIOVISUELLE (NOTES POUR UN ESSAI*)

Réal La Rochelle

Signes
signes non de toit, de tunique ou de palais non d'archives et de dictionnaire du savoir mais de torsion, de violence, de bousculement d'envie cinétique

Henri Michaux, *Mouvements*[1]

Où m'entraînent ces images qui me glissent entre les doigts?

Pierre Hébert, *Les Trottoirs de Montréal*[2]

** Deux raisons pour parler de notes. D'abord, le corpus audiovisuel étudié, qui s'étend sur une période de cinq ans, est très large, et présente une grande variété d'expérimentations, tant cinétiques que musicales. Par ailleurs, aux événements audiovisuels et filmiques se greffe une abondante littérature descriptive et réflexive, ouvrant à des propos technico-esthétiques assez complexes. Pierre Hébert s'exprime abondamment par l'écriture, de même que par le dessin et la composition graphique; dans une moindre mesure, mais dans*

la même veine, les musiciens avec qui il travaille multiplient les textes (pochettes de disques ou dossiers de presse), ainsi que les cartes postales, les bandes dessinées, etc. D'où le recours nécessaire à quelques citations de ces artistes, constituant un pôle non négligeable de leur création, d'une pratique artistique qui veut s'expliciter et se dépasser par la réflexion critique et le métalangage. Ces deux raisons à elles seules expliquent pourquoi le présent texte est la contraction d'un matériau abondant, d'une analyse à développer et à raffiner.

Enfin, pour ce qui est de Pierre Hébert, il faudrait idéalement expliquer ses positions esthétiques actuelles à la lumière de son cheminement dans le cinéma d'animation depuis vingt cinq ans, à l'O.N.F. Evoquer, par exemple, la binarité entre une première phase de travail, durant les années 1960, tournée vers l'expression artistique abstraite et formaliste; puis d'une seconde, en opposition assez radicale durant la décennie suivante, davantage passionnée par des thématiques sociales et une pratique de type "intervention esthético-politique" se rattachant au courant marxiste-léniniste. Une analyse, même rapide, de ces deux périodes de production aiderait à éclairer certaines des tensions à l'oeuvre encore aujourd'hui dans les positions du cinéaste vis-à-vis du flot audiovisuel technologique, par exemple: "Sachant qu'il n'existera pas d'images qui puissent stopper le déferlement, comment résister aux forces destructrices qu'il recèle?"[3]

On comprendra que cette analyse, même en raccourci, dépasse le cadre de cet article.

* * *

Quand, au début de 1984, il terminait son film *Etienne et Sara* avec les musiciens René Lussier et Robert M. Lepage, le cinéaste d'animation Pierre Hébert venait de trouver une combinaison, un détonateur capable de briser les carcans d'un univers d'images et de sons dans lequel il se sentait à l'étroit, voire prisonnier. Dès lors, Hébert entreprenait, avec une fougue, une fièvre, un dynamisme singulier, de se tenir en position *hors-cadre*, de voyager en *contrebande*.[4]

Il pratique depuis plus de cinq ans une défenestration audiovisuelle sans précédent dans le cinéma québécois et à l'échelle internationale. Il est devenu, comme ce portrait d'Henri Michaux qu'il affectionne et cite, cette sorte de danseur improbable mais réel, que seul le trait cinétique peut matérialiser:

Un défenestré s'envole
un arraché de bas en haut
un arraché de partout
un arraché jamais plus attaché[5]

Pierre Hébert avait en fait amorcé son arraché au lancement en 1982 de *Souvenirs de guerre*, en calligraphiant alors, sous forme d'appel aux spectateurs, un "cri contre le vent":

... Que dire quand on voudrait qu'il suffise de voir et
d'entendre?
que te dire d'un film fait la rage au coeur, hors tout format
toute filière tout critère
animé seulement d'un impérieux déchirement?
dire que ces *Souvenirs de guerre*
après 20 ans de cinéma et l'abandon répété du cinéma
ramassent ce qui en reste...[6]

Dès lors, plus rien ne devait freiner une trajectoire qui, à travers les métissages de gravures sur pellicule et de musique actuelle, propulsait ses créateurs dans des "mouvements d'explosion, de refus, d'étirement en tous sens".[7] Prenant l'initiative, Hébert défenestrait le cinéma d'animation de ses habituels processus de production et de diffusion, se jetait dans la performance-visionnement de ses films, accompagnés de musique live (début novembre 1984 au cinéma Outremont); plus tard, en 1986, il risquait même la gravure sur pellicule en direct devant le public, mélangeant désormais le cinéma "muet" et la musique "aveugle"; performant non seulement dans les salles d'art et d'essai, à la Cinémathèque Québécoise et dans les festivals, mais dans les galeries d'art, les musées et les maisons de la culture; participant à des spectacles comme *Timber* (Ginette Laurin), *Technology of Tears* (Rosalind Newman), *Mutations* (Michel Lemieux). Parallèlement, ses dessins et gravures se retrouvent dans des livres, des cartes, des programmes, des pochettes de disque. Plus récemment, dans *Conversations*, il travaille avec Louise Bédard (danse), Sylvie Massicotte (écriture poétique) et Robert M. Lepage (musique). En janvier 1989, au Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, il improvise un dialogue cinéma/musique avec Fred Frith...

Protéiforme, Hébert et ses comparses risquent ainsi, dans leur imaginaire cirque sans filet, ce qu'ils nomment "une expression actuelle, ironique, dérisoire, humoristique... et tragique de ces sociétés en voie d'exception à l'Age des machines médiatiques".[8]

Cet itinéraire singulier en cinéma/musique est le produit d'une démarche aussi bien technique que poético-philosophique. Les enjeux de cette expérience englobent la mise à nu de la pratique filmique (cinéma d'animation, cinéma tout court); un discours sur cette pratique (une poétique distanciée de l'image en mouvement et du son musical); enfin des points de vue sur le monde, les choses, les êtres et

les corps, qui tissent une coulée idéologique sur les sujets des films.

Voici un premier tracé des principaux paramètres de ces enjeux et de ces discours.

Une expérimentation interrogative

La problématique de fond qui sous-tend le travail de Pierre Hébert se situe à un double niveau.

D'abord, celui du formel ou du matériel: le parti-pris de pratiquer un cinéma d'animation en performance live, l'exécution à vif de la gravure sur pellicule. Production filmique qui reprend à son compte la technique et l'esthétique des idéogrammes d'Henri Michaux, où le geste rapide et l'exécution sous tension conduisent à une animation brute, réduite à l'essentiel des traits de plume, scintillante par contraction technique, cyclique par l'*obligato* de la boucle de 16mm en déroulement perpétuel.[9]

Mais il y a plus: cette exécution des boucles de films est en symbiose avec une performance musicale, ce qui fait que l'iconographie cinétique des gravures n'a de sens que liée à des rythmiques et à des structures sonores musicales.

Cette dialectique images/musiques, sans être en elle-même novatrice ou exceptionnelle, prend donc sa valeur singulière du fait du travail cinématographique *en direct*, sans compter que l'exécution musicale, qui lui est complémentaire, basée pour une large part sur les techniques d'improvisation et d'inventions à chaud, oblige les musiciens à ne plus inventer que sur le seul plan sonore, mais en interaction avec la production de gravures en mouvement. Cette originalité audio/visuelle pourrait toutefois n'avoir qu'un caractère virtuose, ou formaliste, si elle n'était l'expression d'un projet thématique. Ici se situe le second niveau de la problématique de cette expérience, qui marque son caractère plus en profondeur.

Pour l'essentiel, cette question (ce "cri contre le vent") est celle des contradictions entre l'être humain et la technologie, de "l'esprit humain prenant racine dans le terreau technologique".[10] Tensions situées plus spécifiquement de nos jours entre l'homme et l'environnement technologique du "paysage" audiovisuel, dont la figure emblématique est la télé, la plus grande puissance internationale économique, technologique, culturelle et intellectuelle de production et diffusion d'images et de sons.

Sur ce sujet, la question que Hébert pose et repose jusqu'à la hantise est celle de la survie. Survie de l'être humain en général, objet et sujet de la domination télévisuelle universalisée; survie plus particulièrement de l'artiste dans un cinéma dont les conditions de production sont à une échelle humaine et artistique contrôlable, signifiante, l'Art réel, comme il le nomme dans le texte d'*Obscure*.

Il s'agit ici, tout comme dans les luttes écologiques planétaires contre la destruction de la planète, contre le nucléaire annihilant, d'une véritable guerre mondiale, celle-là même que Bernardo Bertolucci désignait au récent Colloque *Cinéma et réalité* du Festival de Cannes:

> À la fin de la troisième guerre mondiale, celle jamais déclarée, entre le cinéma et la télévision, la vraie victime, c'est le public.[11]

Quel sens prend alors ce questionnement incessant, dont les boucles de films sont les thèmes et variations? Est-ce un cri d'alarme pour un retour à la pureté du cinéma (celle dont rêve Bertolucci, par exemple: "...le droit du public à se retrouver pleinement dans l'obscurité amniotique d'une salle de cinéma, le lieu privilégié où l'on peut célébrer le rite collectif, international, intersocial de rêver tous ensemble le même rêve, le même film"[12]), auquel cas la revendication anti-TV milite pour une sorte de retour nostalgique à l'ancienne modernité du 7e art?

Ou bien, tenant compte des contradictions de cette guerre médiatique et y décrivant les souffrances du passage et de la métamorphose, est-ce que "le cri contre le vent" de Hébert est une tentative de dépasser la régression nostalgique, de survivre face à l'hécatombe appréhendée, de conserver à "la contamination TV-cinéma sa force stimulante, expérimentale, transgressive"?[13]

Dans quelle mesure, autrement dit, les performances cinéma/musique de Hébert sont-elles foncièrement postmodernes, plutôt que de simplement cèder à la mode branchée du rétro (qui se dit elle aussi "postmoderne"), du formalisme ancien néonisé, de la breloque-parure revampée en néo-modernisme?

Pour l'essentiel, je crois que l'oeuvre de Hébert est profondément, philosophiquement postmoderne. Elle a toutefois ceci de particulier: le poids des contradictions y est tel, les éléments du passé et de la nostalgie y ont une telle force, la tentation au formalisme toujours assez grande (en témoigne en particulier son *Adieu Bipède*) que son caractère postmoderne est constamment, si je puis dire, sur la corde raide, et comme frôlant la catastrophe.

Pour certains, cette situation reflète un état d'ambiguïté, de flou, une sorte de ludisme un peu vain où les enjeux du postmodernisme seraient brouillés, remis en question, voire freinés. Cette oeuvre ne bénéficierait pas, disons, de la clarté pasolinienne, elle serait plus proche des clair-obscurs de Walter Benjamin, des zones plus troubles des "passages".[14]

Ici, il ne faut justement pas prendre les vessies pour les lanternes, et ne voir que le premier niveau de lecture technico-formaliste du travail de Hébert et de ses musiciens. Eviter surtout le schéma moderne dichotomique de la clarté à tout prix contre les ténèbres, cette clarté se

voulut-elle "postmoderne". Car alors c'est tout un pan du postmodernisme lui-même qui est évacué, celui de la cohabitation des contradictions, qui ne peut éviter qu'en périodes de crises intenses, de bouleversements profonds, la production culturelle apparaisse quelque peu confuse.

L'essentiel, il me semble, est de saisir le sens de la trajectoire, le mobile profond de la volonté et de la démarche, de voir si la dynamique est un bond en avant. Pour Hébert, pas de doute, la flèche est lancée sur la bonne cible, encore que ce soit dans une sorte de forêt en broussaille, assez menaçante du reste. Une oeuvre de passage et de transition, une métamorphose douloureuse mais vivante sur la "guerre" passé/présent, cinéma/TV, technologie/être humain. Regard lucide, mais non désabusé, critique et non prostré.

Souvenirs de guerre médiatique et création de "libérateurs"

> ... Progressivement les formes "en mouvement" éliminèrent les formes pensées(...) leur mouvement devenait mon mouvement(...) J'étais possédé de mouvements, tout tendu par ces formes qui m'arrivaient à toute vitesse, et rythmées.
>
> Henri Michaux[15]

L'opus de Hébert multiplie les signes de l'image en mouvement hyper-commerciale et hédoniste, de mitraillettes audiovisuelles agressives: pub, télé industrielle, animation léchée et mélodramatique. "Est-il possible", se demande le cinéaste, "d'échapper à cette hégémonie du mouvement sur l'image, à ce triomphe de l'illusion et de la séduction?" N'est-il pas souhaitable, en lieu et place de cet hédonisme agressif et meurtrier, de trouver "des prescriptions perverses qui permettent d'avancer sur un chemin frauduleux?" [16]

La pratique filmique de Hébert se donne d'abord comme une réponse, une résistance à ce déferlement. Pour les musiciens René Lussier, Robert M. Lepage, Jean Derome (plus récemment aussi Fred Frith), le pendant sonore de cette action s'appuie sur l'improvisation et sur ces "images-bruits qui scandent notre vie quotidienne," ces "inspirations machinistes".[17] Ce faisant, les performances cinéma-musique de ces artistes ("confrontation, au niveau le plus global, d'une pratique singulière de la musique et d'une pratique également singulière du cinéma d'animation"[18]) trouvent un mode d'expression multiforme et original, assez unique en son genre, mû par une éthique anti-machiniste et anti-militariste.

Il y a plus. Ces dialogues audiovisuels sont construits sur une sonori-

sation large englobant textes et paroles, bruitages divers (live ou pré-enregistrés), de même que sur une palette iconique où la gravure sur pellicule domine, certes, mais sur laquelle se retrouvent aussi des photos, des diapositives, des dessins, des collages, des archives filmiques... Ainsi, ces matériaux "minimalistes" (pour reprendre l'expression de Serge Meurant[19]) ne sont pas sans rappeler les premiers âges du cinéma (*muet*) où la fabrication et la diffusion d'images en mouvement étaient soutenues de musique live, augmentée de certains bruitages, commentaires et boniments. La musique était néanmoins l'ossature de ces anciennes ambiances sonores improvisées, et c'est sans doute de la musique qu'est venu au cinéma le sens du rythme et de la structure.

Pour projeter dans la (post)modernité ce néo-archaïsme, Hébert a construit petit à petit une logique du spectacle images/sons qui, en secondarisant les "formes pensées" mais sans les abolir, a misé sur diverses hypothèses de combinaisons audiovisuelles basées sur les "formes en mouvement", sur les architectures rythmiques.

En 1984 au cinéma Outremont, à la première de toutes ces performances, Hébert, costumé dérisoirement en Père Noël, "bonimente" une rétrospective de ses films, certains des plus anciens accompagnés de musique live, d'autres (*Père Noël*, *Souvenirs de guerre*, *Etienne et Sara*) donnés tels quels avec leur sonorisation. À la même occasion, le cinéaste décide de construire *Chants et danses du monde inanimé - Le Métro* en même temps que les musiciens, et de le diffuser d'abord en "muet" accompagné de musique live, avant de le sonoriser avec cette musique.

L'expérience qui suit de *O Picasso: tableaux d'une surexposition* reprend ce modèle en le développant, en particulier en créant une sorte d'animation en boucle, qui à la fois répète un motif et le transforme imperceptiblement, donnant ainsi la sensation que les dessins et les peintures originales de Picasso vibrent et se mettent en marche cinétiquement sans faire oublier leur structure picturale initiale.

En septembre 1986, pour *Confitures de gagaku* de Jean Derome, Hébert pour la première fois exécute en direct une boucle 16mm de gravure sur pellicule, la fusionnant avec la compositon musicale, les diapositives et la danse. Encouragé par cette expérience, toutes les performances ultérieures seront construites sur ce travail en direct, avant de devenir, dans la majorité des cas, films au sens strict du terme. *Adieu Bipède* (1987), puis *Adieu Léonard!*, de même que les récentes *Conversations* (d'où devait sortir *La Lettre d'amour*) et les improvisations avec Fred Frith et Robert M. Lepage, deviennent ainsi des créations qui sont à la fois jeu, recherche, processus de production et de diffusion de films.

De cette manière, Pierre Hébert réalise cette autre donnée esthétique de Michaux, pour qui la fabrication de formes en

mouvement équivaut à aller "à une fête, à un débrayage non encore connu, à une désincrustation, à une vie nouvelle ouverte, à une écriture inespérée, soulageante..." [20]

La pulsion qui meut cette lucidité et ce combat dans la gravure sur pellicule, Hébert l'a partagée avec l'énergie musicale que René Lussier décrit comme proche du rock et du funk, lui qui se voit comme compositeur mécaniste, et son collègue Lepage comme folkloriste mécaniste urbain.[21]

Cette énergie sonore, elle questionne à sa manière "les fonctions traditionnelles de la musique", les explore et les dissèque par l'humour, la dérision sceptique, antithèse du beau son et de la mélodie trop léchée, du commercialisme sonore phonographique et radiophonique. "Un son est si vite arrivé!" dit-on pince-sans-rire, avant d'*énergiser* par le free jazz et le free rock ces composites explosifs "de dosage de voix, d'instruments acoustiques et électriques, d'ambiances sonores sur bande, de synthétiseurs désuets et d'instruments inventés".[22]

Pour créer ces trames vibrantes, les musiciens s'entourent allègrement de guitares, de clarinettes, de flûtes, de piccolos, d'ocarina, de guimbarde et, pourquoi pas, de claviers jouets! J'aime bien, affirme Jean Derome à la manière du père Ubu, "l'allusion que fait le mot confitures à l'idée de composite, de conservation, de tradition et d'improvisation. En anglais, confitures se traduit par JAM (qui veut dire aussi improviser) et par PRESERVE." [23]

Cette dialectique de l'impro structurée est celle-là même qui aide à souder les interactions images/sons entre les musiciens, l'animation pré-enregistrée ou en direct avec les textes et les voix, qui lie ces *polaroids sonores* aux images minimalistes de Hébert.

Toutes ces confitures audiovisuelles ne seraient qu'un joyeux tintamarre ou des graffiti pernicieux si elles n'étaient au fond créées en toute lucidité comme ce que Michaux nomme des *libérateurs*, ces pulsions vitales de battements cardiaques, de cris d'enfants, de corps dansant, de mots d'amour et de générateurs de mythes barbares et archaïques (au sens pasolinien). À la limite, la performance *live* devient littéralement symbole de vie, devant la menace d'un robotisme pré-enregistré, monté et mixé.

De quoi se soulager, au juste? D'un scepticisme profond, d'un pessimisme aigu vis- à-vis de la technologie, celle des flots d'images aplaties, de l'animation disneyenne ou informatisée, images machinistes comme pulsion de décadence artistique et de mort:

> ... J'éprouve souvent la panique d'être piégé dans une discipline dont la mort technique est scellée... Dans ce contexte, mon recours à la gravure sur pellicule répond à une préoccupation éthique et historique... une façon de me situer à la fois en dedans ou en dehors du cinéma. En applicant sur la matière du cinéma (le film) un geste immémorial de l'art visuel (dessiner, graver, tracer sur toute surface), qui remonte aux peintures rupestres, je rêve de transcender l'anéantissement du cinéma prétendant en faire un usage qui pourrait théoriquement survivre à sa disparition. La gravure sur pellicule continuerait d'être possible avec les restes archéologiques du cinéma et de ce fait peut-être marquerait-elle de façon critique cette dérive historique.[24]

Angoisse et révolte se remarquent dans *Souvenirs de guerre* et *Etienne et Sara* (ce monde violent où nous jetons nos enfants); dans la rythmique haletante, effrénée des souterrains urbains *(Chants et danses du monde inanimé - Le Métro)*; dans les images télé dérisoires et tordues de *Technology of Tears*.

Dans ces courts métrages, parmi les plus noirs qu'ait fabriqué Hébert, suinte un pessimisme assez prononcé, mais qui ne tombe pas dans le cul-de-sac suicidaire. Parce que les rythmiques machinistes et guerrières, si haletantes soient-elles, sont traversées, entrelacées de pulsions vitales: babillages, cris et musiques d'enfants; battements cardiaques; mains fiévreuses de l'artiste jouant avec des images alternatives; survie urbaine malgré tout dans les paysages d'après batailles.

Les films suivants, plus encore, émergent de ce magma avec plus de luminosité et de sérénité. Il s'agit, en une sorte de trilogie, d'une galerie de portraits emblématiques où, sur les figures de Picasso, d'Henri Michaux et de Léonard de Vinci, s'alignent des artistes qui "témoignent de l'être par la création", qui pratiquent "l'invention saisie à la gorge"[25], et qui fouillent les origines mythiques de l'homme, des corps humains. C'est Henri Michaux, dans *Adieu Bipède*, le défenestré suicidaire et souriant, opposant à la violence du monde celle de "l'exaspération intérieure"[26]. Ou Picasso, le résistant anti-franquiste, minotaure ou colombe mythologiques, que Hébert et les musiciens veulent désincruster de la surexpoxition mondaine, starisante, transformant l'artiste espagnol en poule-aux-oeufs-d'or inaccessible. C'est encore *Leonardo*,

> l'ancêtre de la technologie et qui, en même temps, avait une vision humaniste. Quelqu'un qui voulait situer l'homme à l'aide de la technologie. C'est cet aspect-là qui est disparu à l'intérieur de l'engouement technologique d'aujourd'hui. Alors *Adieu Léonard!*, c'est le besoin de dire cela. C'est un hommage à Vinci et un regard sceptique sur la vogue technologique actuelle.[27]

Cet *Adieu Léonard!* n'est pas devenu à ce jour un film au sens strict du terme. N'en subsistent pour l'instant que des copies vidéo des performances. À ce stade cependant, cette production révèle du travail de Hébert sa véritable dimension postmoderne, et rejoint l'achèvement d'*O Picasso*.

Ces deux figures mythiques modernes témoignent en effet, à un degré extrême, des contradictions de l'homme créateur dans la technologie et l'industrie de l'art. Les grands travaux de Leonardo sont des commandes de puissants mécènes, ils servent des fins tout autant de logistiques guerrières que de planification urbaine ou d'oeuvres esthétiques utilitaires (fresques, portraits...); ils s'appuient sur de patientes études techniques sur le mouvement, la géométrie, l'anatomie. Pour sa part, l'art de Picasso a toujours été l'objet d'un négoce puissamment médiatisé, d'une sorte de bourse hystérique de l'art contemporain.

En ne cachant pas ces contradictions, mais plutôt en montrant avec netteté qu'elles *cohabitent* dans les pratiques de ces grands artistes, l'équipe de Hébert dépasse le schéma manichéen de l'art et de la technologie, de l'esthétique et du commerce industriel, de la transcendance orbitale du beau sur le matériel et le contingent. Sans minimiser les tensions douloureuses à l'oeuvre dans la vie de ces créateurs, ces films-performances prennent acte que la création moderne n'est possible, au fond, que *dans et par la technologie* (production et reproduction), le pouvoir de l'argent, les réseaux d'échanges. La cohabitation de ces contradictions prend le parti-pris de la vie, et laisse la mort réinventer "l'art pour l'art".

Adieu Bipède, dans une certaine mesure, témoigne à son tour de cette dynamique que Pasolini décrivait ainsi:

> La thèse et l'antithèse coexistent avec la synthèse: voilà la véritable trinité de l'homme ni prélogique ni logique, mais réel.[28]

Néanmoins, ce film, en se voulant une synthèse de l'art poétique d'Henri Michaux, tend à privilégier la trajectoire des "formes en mouvement" sur celle des "formes pensées." Cette position conduit, je crois, à un certain affaiblissement des tensions entre ces pôles (sauf peut-être dans la dernière séquence urbaine en prise de vues réelles), à un recours plus large aux formes cinétiques abstraites. Au niveau sonore même, cette abstraction joue sur les textes de Michaux, les donne comme un matériau sonore plutôt que verbal, ce qui en secondarise le sens et fait pâlir le dynamisme de cette poésie.

Dans cet *Adieu Bipède*, Hébert renoue assez largement avec sa manière des années 1960, ce qui donne à ce film un caractère plus "moderne" que les deux autres du triptyque. Indication que la métamorphose esthétique est encore en travail, que le dépassement n'est pas accompli sur tous les fronts. Ce qui n'enlève en rien à ce film

sa valeur de trace d'un des éléments-clé de la poétique de Hébert. À sa manière, *Adieu Bipède* est un artefact de l'archéologie moderniste du cinéaste, en cohabitation avec les vues postmodernes de Léonard de Vinci et de Picasso.

Une poétique du mouvement dans l'art des machines médiatiques

Etre dans le flot et trouver un extérieur de l'intérieur

Pierre Hébert[29]

. Tentation du formalisme et de l'humanisme nouveau, méfiance vis-à-vis le technologique et obsession de l'industriel en art: comment ne pas flairer un brin de nostalgie "moderne" dans cette vue philosophique d'une opposition radicale entre industrie et art? "Il n'y a pas," écrit Hébert, "une délimination de territoires nettement définie. Mais il doit bien y avoir des différences car tout cela, loin de constituer une belle grande famille unie, ressemble plutôt à un vaste champ de bataille sans ligne de front, où les escarmouches sont partout et nulle part. Et certes l'affrontement est entre l'art et le commerce."[30] Pour le cinéaste, "cet Art est aussi une industrie", reconduisant le célèbre mot de Malraux. Dans la même veine, Jacques Godbout n'a-t-il pas déclaré récemment que "l'art cinématographique le cède à l'industrie cinématographique", et la revue *Lumières* ne souhaite-t-elle pas répondre "au cinéma de l'industrie par un cinéma de la culture?"[31] Pareils aphorismes tendent à laisser croire qu'il peut y avoir un art ou une culture cinématographiques en dehors de l'industrie du film, position insoutenable en dernière instance. Il y a là, une fois de plus, un long débat à reprendre. Hébert a beau affirmer, par exemple,

> qu'à cette époque dans laquelle nous sommes déjà bien engagés, le foyer de l'art se situe peut-être en ce lieu précis de la confrontation avec la civilisation technique, comme défense et illustration de l'intégrité de l'expérience humaine de la réalité, défense et illustration du corps humain[32],

il n'est pas sans hésiter sur le risque d'un tel manichéisme, au demeurant improductif, qui ne peut que conduire l'artiste à "observer l'Art réel du dehors", à essayer l'impossible posture d'être "à la fois dans et hors du flot."

Or, au cinéma, dans l'audiovisuel, l'art n'est pas en dehors du complexe économico-technique de production et de diffusion des oeuvres. Aussi, Pierre Hébert se rend-il à l'évidence: "On ne peut être

que dans le flot et trouver un extérieur de l'intérieur", ce que Godard appelait "être la marge du livre."

Cette position ultime, plus nettement postmoderne, Hébert y arrive, sur la conviction de sa pratique et de ses films, après une réflexion dont les prémisses sont inexactes. Il est illusoire de penser que l'art filmique soit *aussi* une industrie et un commerce. De même, la lecture que fait Hébert de Benjamin ("L'oeuvre d'art à l'ère de la reproductibilité technique") est réductrice et biaisante. Cette lecture privilégie "le statut de l'oeuvre d'art affecté par le progrès technique." Position qui secondarise la cohabitation implacable mais inévitable du culturel et du technique, du *culturo-technologique*. Loin de voir une catastrophe mortelle dans la perte forcée de l'*a* esthétique, je suis convaincu pour ma part que cet essai célèbre de Benjamin entr'ouvre une porte lumineuse sur le caractère révolutionnaire d'un art nouveau émergeant justement des conditions inédites de production et de diffusion industrielles des arts.

N'est-ce pas là l'histoire même du cinéma et de l'industrie de la musique depuis un siècle? Malgré ce que Hébert en pense et en écrit parfois, je crois bien que c'est parce qu'il participe de cette dynamique nouvelle, qu'il crée avec des outils technologiques développés (tout en ne cachant par les tremblements humains et les angoisses devant eux et devant la complexité de leur manipulation), c'est bien parce qu'il témoigne de cette déchirure qu'il est, plutôt qu'un peintre ou un dessinateur, un *cinéaste*, que les musiciens qui partagent son expérience ne font pas que des happenings sonores, mais de la musique de films, des disques et des montages radiophoniques.

Quand, dans son inconfort, Hébert rappelle la tentation d'être "à la fois en dedans et en dehors du cinéma", il manifeste un déchirement typique entre l'ancien et le nouveau, ou encore ce que Lipovetsky nomme "la crispation de l'opposition tradition-modernité",[33] dont le dépassement est justement un des traits du postmodernisme. De là l'envie de pratiquer l'écriture filmique de la manière la plus immédiate et concrète qui soit, pour arriver, comme le souligne encore Michaux, au "désencombrement des images dont la place publique-cerveau est en ces temps particulièrement engorgée".[34]

Cette tentation n'est toutefois pas complaisante, et l'esthétique de Hébert témoigne au bout du compte d'un perpétuel dépassement des crispations et des replis. La polyvalence du cinéaste, son ouverture à des dialogues inter-artistiques, sa fureur même à questionner les miroitements superficiels de la nouveauté à tout prix, toutes ces pulsions placent ce cinéaste en position progressiste. Ses films en sont la meilleure preuve. Hébert, par ses performances, n'a pas cédé d'un pouce à la nécessité d'aboutir à un produit inconcevable en dehors des puissants moyens de l'industrie filmique. Cette dynamique donne en bout de piste des *O Picasso*, *Adieu Bipède* et *La Lettre d'amour*, et

il est plus que probable que les travaux filmiques pour *Timber*, *Adieu Léonard!*, *Technology of Tears* et *Mutations* trouvent leur emplacement et leur cohésion dans de futurs films.

Plutôt que de répondre à la guerre des médias par l'invective et le désengagement, Pierre Hébert à riposté par des films, il a fabriqué des *libérateurs cinétiques*. De cette manière, il continue de montrer sa passion et son attachement pour l'industrie cinématographique.

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Notes

1. Gallimard, NRF, 1982.
2. *Format Cinéma*, no 35, 20 octobre 1984.
3. "Nous sommes, dit-on, dans la civilisation de l'image", *Obscure*, été 1989.
4. En rappel du titre de la revue *Hors Cadre*, dont le sous-titre est: *Le Cinéma à travers champs disciplinaires*. La "contrebande" dont il est aussi question renvoit au no 6 de cette revue, à la notion de contrebande "que tissent images et sons. Le jeu de mot désigne ici le paradoxe d'un art promu comme passeur de frontières et qui ne trouverait sa spécificité qu'en se faisant le spécialiste de la déterritorialisation. Contrebandier des langages et des formes, le cinéma nous permettra-t-il aujourd'hui d'interroger les limites du spécifique? S'incorporant la poésie et la musique, réfléchissant la peinture, doublant le théâtre et les récits avec l'opéra, le film traverse moins les frontières qu'il ne rend incertaines des lignes de partage générique" (p. 7, printemps 1988)
5. *Mouvements*, ouvrage cité.
6. Cité dans le vidéo *Faire un film*. Réalisation: Réal La Rochelle. Production: Collège Montmorency, 1984.
7. Henri Michaux, ouvrage cité.
8. Extrait du programme *La Symphonie interminable*, 1985.
9. "Voici, pour ceux qui ne seraient pas familiers avec cette technique, un bref rappel de ce qu'est *la gravure sur pellicule en direct*. Il s'agit tout simplement d'insérer une boucle d'amorce noire 16mm longue de 36 secondes dans un projecteur placé à côté d'une table lumineuse, de mettre le projecteur en marche, et de graver des images sur la partie de la boucle se trouvant temporairement hors du projecteur. On dispose d'environ 24 secondes avant que le projecteur ne tire sur le film pour projeter ce qui vient d'être animé. A chaque tour de boucle, de nouvelles images s'ajoutent jusqu'à ce que, après une heure de ce manège, la boucle soit pleine d'images. En spectacle, cette installation se double d'un obturateur actionné par une pédale qui permet de couper temporairement la projection de certaines parties ou de la totalité de la boucle, au moment voulu". Pierre Hébert, *La Plante humaine. Projet expérimental de gravure sur pellicule en direct*, ONF, juillet 1989, p. 15.
10. Même texte, p. 14.
11. Dans "Cinéma et liberté", *Le Monde*, numéro spécial de mai 1989, p. 7.

12 et 13. Même déclaration de Bertolucci dans *Le Monde* cité.

14. Terme emprunté à une des oeuvres de Benjamin.

15. Henri Michaux, ouvrage cité.

16. "Eloge de la fixité -1", *Format Cinéma*, no 41, 15 avril 1985.

17. Pierre Hébert, "Chants et danses du monde inanimé: le Métro. Notes sur une expérience sonore en cinéma d'animation", *Protée*, vol. 13 no 2, été 1985, pp. 65-66.

18. Voir note précédente.

19. Dans le vidéo *Faire un film*. Voir note 6.

20. Henri Michaux, ouvrage cité.

21. Notes du disque Derome/Lussier, vol. 2., Le *Retour des granules*, Ambiances magnétiques, AM 006, 1987.

22. Notes du disque Derome/Lussier, *Soyez vigilants... restez vivants!*, vol. I, Ambiances magnétiques, AM 005, 1986.

23. Notes du disque: Jean Derome, *Confitures de gagaku*, Les disques VICTO 05, 1988.

24. "Nous sommes, dit-on, dans la civilisation de l'image", *Obscure*, été 1989.

25. Laffont-Bompiani, *Dictionnaire universel des lettres*, Paris, 1961. Article sur Henri Michaux.

26. Henri Michaux, ouvrage cité.

27. Cité par Marcel Jean, "Vinci vous parle", *Le Devoir*, 9 octobre 1987.

28. Poème Callas, dans *Les Dernières paroles d'un impie*, Pierre Belfond, 1981.

29 et 30. Texte cité d'*Obscure*.

31. Pour Godbout: "Les 50 ans de l'ONF ou le retour des vases chinois?", *La Revue de la Cinémathèque*, mai-juin 1989. Ainsi que "Pour une nouvelle politique éditoriale", *Lumières*, no 18, mars/avril 1989.

32. "Les Enjeux de l'art à l'époque des machines. Effacement et résistance du corps", *24 Images*, mai 1989.

33. *L'Ere du vide. Essai sur l'individualisme contemporain*. Paris, Gallimard, Les Essais CCXXV, 1983.

34. Henri Michaux, ouvrage cité.

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THE SILENT SCREEN AND MY TALKING HEART

Kay Armatage

I first wrote this paper as a conference address, intending it to be simply a summary of my recent research on Nell Shipman, one of the very few Canadians making feature films in the silent period, and certainly the first Canadian woman to make a feature film. I had titled it after Shipman's autobiography, *The Silent Screen and My Talking Heart*. When I finally received the printed conference programme, I found that technology as usual had undermined me. I had phoned in my title to an answering machine, and it turned up in the conference schedule as "The Silent *Scream* and My Talking Heart". My first response was a mixture of amusement and dismay. However, upon reflection, I found that, as usual, technology had provided a new opportunity, for the *scream* on my lips was just waiting to be released.

I had done research on Shipman when I first learned of her existence, and the 1973 Women & Film Festival made it possible for the Canadian Film Archive to acquire a print of *Back to God's Country*, Shipman's magnificent 1919 feature. But I abandoned my historical research almost as soon as I started it. I got swept up into what seemed more exciting and revolutionary, the feminist theory project which in 1973-75 was in its germinal stages. Film theory was certainly a more comfortable terrain for me than history, because my literary training was more suitable preparation for it and because an active participation in feminism required the ideological framework which Anglo-French marxist film theory so unapologetically provided.

My return to history at this point is the result of a number of factors. When I was just beginning feminist film scholarship (*Women & Film International Film Festival Catalogue*–1973), I wrote that the feminist film enterprise must be a three-pronged initiative. First, it must be

archival and historical: recovering women filmmakers whose work had been overlooked in mainstream film history, and continuing to document emerging women filmmakers. Secondly, it must be analytical, examining films made by women (at the time, we wondered whether certain themes, patterns, commonalities might emerge), and particularly feminist films. Finally, it must be theoretical, developing appropriate aesthetic theory to deal with women's films–for clearly the methodologies operating thus far in film, as in the other arts, were inappropriate for the study of women's films. Existing methodologies had been stunningly successful in overlooking or negating women's films.

We all know what has happened since then. The third prong of the pitchfork has developed into a veritable industry of theory. Books, journals and articles have poured off the presses, names and careers have been made, university courses have been inaugurated and ceaselessly revised in response to changing currents and eddies in the theoretical floodtide.

New films and new kinds of films have emerged. For nearly a decade we had "feminist theory films". Avant-garde in their formal strategies, in subject they deconstructed issues such as the mirror phase, the relation of language to the patriarchal unconscious, realism/illusionism, spectator/ text relations, and so on. And there was some analysis of films by women filmmakers and some documentation of their work, extending in some measure the work of documentation and analysis.

However, in film studies the archival project and the continuing documentation/analysis of contemporary women's cinema were never developed quite so vigorously as the theoretical element. In the other arts, the opposite was more the case. In literature and the fine arts, for example, recovery of writers/artists has been the much more dominant tendency. Publishing companies such as Virago Press have thrived on such reclamation, special galleries showcasing only women artists have been founded (notably the architecturally splendid National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C.), and myriad books and journals on newly reclaimed individuals, themes, and critical issues can now be found in any gallery bookshop. Indicatively, there has even been a recent big-budget feature film, starring Gerard Depardieu and Isabelle Adjani, made about Camille Claudel, the mad sculptor who was Rodin's tragic nemesis.

The success of feminist scholarly work in literature and the fine arts is broadly reflected. Literature courses in universities make a point of including women writers where they once were ignored. In cinema departments, on the other hand, courses have not been revised on a broad scale to include women filmmakers where they previously didn't appear. At least this is the case in the programme where I teach.

There are, to be sure, two annual festivals of women's films (Creteil and Montreal), the cinematic equivalent perhaps of the Washington gallery. But a festival is not an archive: the films shown are mostly contemporary and not otherwise available for viewing, study or writing. This is not, in

the end, the equivalent of Virago Press publications or a National Museum, for festivals cannot circulate or preserve the works, and thus make them a permanent part of a body of knowledge.

This very different situation in the other arts is the result of differing histories. Film studies as a discipline was newly-founded in the late sixties, and eager to construct critical methodologies specific to the medium. Labouring also under the stigma of the popular arts, progressive film scholars embraced the "scientific" approach developing from Marxist semiotics, structuralism and psychoanalysis in France. The other arts, which were already well-established in both critical methodologies and institutional acceptance, did not embrace as readily as film studies the psychoanalytic/post-structuralist model which by now has been generalized as cultural theory and applied to all of the other arts.

In film, on the other hand, where theory developed so prodigiously, feminist film work in history and analysis developed only in relation to what had become the mainstream of cinema studies. Women filmmakers were written about, but only certain women filmmakers: the makers of theory films especially, and some others who belonged to other traditions but whose strategies were embraced as theoretical. Of the older garde, the work on Dorothy Arzner represented at least one lost filmmaker retrieved. Marguerite Duras was written about extensively, as well as Chantal Akerman, who came to prominence contemporaneously with feminist film theory. Of the younger women filmmakers who made theory films and who were written about, only Yvonne Rainer and Trinh T. Minh-ha remain active. Lizzie Borden is struggling to make a third feature; Patricia Gruben, Sally Potter and Bette Gordon are all struggling to make a second. Jane Weinstock, Laura Mulvey, Michelle Citron, Anne Cottringer, the collective who made *The Amazing Equal Pay Show*—all settled back into teaching or writing and their films are more or less out of circulation.

The women filmmakers who were *not* written about are far more numerous. They include all of those women who were producing feminist work in traditional documentary or conventional realist dramatic fiction or unconventional but untheoretical art film. They also include all of those women who have been producing popular films throughout the history of cinema from 1896 to the present. No books were written about those women filmmakers, or any of the more "correct" ones for that matter. Let me be more precise: in the now twenty years of feminist film scholarship, no books have been written about women filmmakers. (The recent *The Films of Yvonne Rainer* may seem to be an exception, but it consists principally of Rainer scripts.) There has been a monograph on Dorothy Arzner, a pamphlet on Nelly Kaplan, a couple of anthologies and catalogues/guidebooks such as *Women in the Cinema* (1977) and *Women in Focus* (1974). In the category of documentation, there is of course the mammoth Maya Deren Project, now available in two hefty volumes, and there are several memoirs, notably of Alice Guy Blache and

Nell Shipman. There are also several publications concerning Leni Riefenstahl and a few on Lina Wertmuller, but they are by no means products of a feminist critical or historical practice. There are as yet from feminist film scholars no historical surveys, no thematic studies of the sort that abound in literature, and no attempts at theorizing feminine subjectivity as represented by women filmmakers themselves.

How do we account for this? Feminist film theory has developed out of studies of the classic realist text, and it has remained embedded in the classic realist text. Needless to say, like anything else considered classical, that model was created and is largely perpetuated by men. And since feminist film theory has developed as a critique of the classic realist text, demonstrating the mechanisms of its complicity in the nurturing of the patriarchal unconscious, feminist film theoreticians, rather than studying the work of women filmmakers, have contributed importantly instead to the body of scholarship supporting canonical figures such as Sirk, Bunuel, Hawks, Hitchcock, Snow, Von Sternberg, Walsh, Minelli (and more recently Pee Wee Herman), and the many genre directors involved in the production of melodramas, films noirs, musicals, and porn films.

It must be noted here that there are a handful of texts which include some discussion of the work of women filmmakers as examples of counter-strategies to the classic realist text. In *Women & Film*, E. Ann Kaplan has written glowingly about the women filmmakers who bear the feminist theory seal of approval. Kaja Silverman has discussed Sally Potter and Patricia Gruben in *The Acoustic Mirror*. Teresa de Lauretis wrote about Lizzie Borden in *Technologies of Gender*. For the future, Kaja Silverman is planning a series of monographs on women filmmakers, starting with Duras and Akerman, and if the books are successful, going on to others.

In parenthesis, I should add that in Canada the situation has been somewhat different. The main thrust of feminist critical work here has been attention to women filmmakers, and Canadian ones at that. Brenda Longfellow has written on Quebec women as well as Chantal Akerman, Kass Banning has contributed to the study of Wieland, Gruben and myself, and I have also written on Wieland and Gruben as well as Bette Gordon. But as Longfellow, Banning et al. argue in a forthcoming *Camera Obscura* special issue on female spectatorship, Canada has itself been marginalized and has not made any major contribution to the development of international academic feminist theory. Nor, as far as I can see, has our work made much of a dent on the consciousness of male academics in Canada.

In Canada it becomes increasingly difficult, rather than easier, to teach a historically oriented course on women's cinema. The majority of the primary texts, whether from the twenties, the fifties, or the seventies, are simply not available. Important texts such as Mirielle Dansereau's *La Vie R"vée* (1972) are not in distribution; any Canadian film prior to 1950 is

available only for archival work in Ottawa. Olga Preobrajenskaya, Esther Shub, Leontine Sagan, Jaqueline Audry, Yannick Bellon, Nelly Kaplan, Marguerite Duras, Sarah Maldoror, Safi Faye, Ulrike Ottinger, and Chantal Akerman are some of the important international figures whose films are unavailable in Canada. It is not entirely unreasonable to assume that this is due at least in part to a lack of demand from film scholars.

I do not sing this liturgy out of any sense of repudiation or retribution or to suggest that the last fifteen years have been a waste of time. Far from it. I believe that film theory and particularly feminist theory have been fruitful in just the way that theory should be: they have initiated new subjects for academic study, and new methodologies for analyzing those subjects. Perhaps the greatest achievement of the theoretical project has been the transformation of cinema studies into a truly scholarly enterprise.

But for feminists, I think it is time to reassess. That at any rate is part of the burden of my chant here, and hence the hilarious and inadvertent appropriateness of the mangled title of my paper, The Silent Scream And My Talking Heart. Melodramatic as it is, it nevertheless describes my present state. For me, the emphasis on the classic realist text and gendered spectatorship has obviated an equally important aspect of feminist work–the documentation, analysis and support for the work of women filmmakers. For now, it seems that a return to history is in order.

Feminist historians have engaged in fruitful debates about the efficacy of simply interpellating women historical figures into "malestream" history, and have also cautioned against the emphasis on heroic figures as a significant factor in obscuring the role of women in history. In *Old Mistresses* (1983), Griselda Pollock discussed the theoretical problems of such simplistic historical interpellation of women artists into fine art history, and called for new critical methodologies as well as new historical categories. New historiographical approaches have emerged as a result of such debates, notably the methodologies of oral history and the use of diaries and memoirs of "ordinary people" as historical sources. In cinema, however, a number of factors combine to suggest a historical configuration with rather different significance for women historical figures and for feminist historians. The novelty of the medium in its pioneering period, combined with its status as a popular entertainment growing alongside vaudeville and the "legitimate" theatre–terrains already occupied by women–resulted in a period marked (albeit briefly) by the presence of women in significant numbers. It would be foolish to argue that cinema was anything like a "free zone" for women, escaping utterly the discrimination against women endemic to the other arts and the culture as a whole. Nevertheless, in cinema as in the factories and workplaces of the earliest days of the industrial revolution, women worked alongside men in creative and powerful positions. In its earliest days at least, cinema did not practice the concerted exclusion of women common to other more established arts such as poetry, music and

painting, in which women were denied access to the educational and professional institutions which shaped the arts. Subsequently, just as women were shut out of industry with the rise of male-dominated unions in the nineteenth century, the number of women in cinema would decrease dramatically with the monopoly practices that accompanied the coming of sound and the rise of the large Hollywood studios. For the first thirty years, however, women pioneers in cinema included Olga Preobrajenskaya, Esther Shub and Elizaveta Svilova in Russia, Lotte Reineger and Leni Reifenstahl in Germany, Alice Guy Blache and Germaine Dulac in France, and Mabel Normand, Dorothy Gish and numerous others in the U.S.

The exclusion of women from mainstream histories of the cinema is another issue. It seems to me that it is time to plunge into that historical abyss, to set out once again, as in the other arts, to redress the balance of gender in history. In cinema, Nell Shipman is an exemplary figure, for her story parallels the entry, participation and finally exclusion from cinema that was experienced by women filmmakers as a group in the first stage of film history.

* * *

Nell Shipman was born in Victoria B.C. in 1892, to a poor family of somewhat genteel British roots. With her mother's permission, Nell left home at thirteen to become an actress with a small touring company. Eventually instead of bringing money to the family, Nell required help. In a show of support for women's career ambitions at a time when independent single women formed a very new social group, Nell's mother joined her daughter on the road, making her costumes, feeding her, and generally looking after her. By sixteen Nell had played every sort of vaudeville role and circuit. At eighteen, a leading lady, she became Ernest Shipman's fourth wife and bore a son two years later. She had already written and starred in her first film, *The Ball of Yarn*, which was so bad, she admits, that even Ernie couldn't book it (Shipman, 1987, 40). She directed her first film in 1914, "an outdoor yarn" (Shipman, 1987, 43) starring a handsome young leading man, Jack Kerrigan, in a buckskin suit. She acted in films for Famous-Players-Lasky and Vitagraph, and turned down a seven-year contract that would have made her a star with Goldwyn in favour of independence and creative control. Her stated reasons:

> I did not like the way they dressed their contract players. This was in the period of curly blondes with Cupid's-bow mouths; and Wardrobe's main idea was to bind down a bosom with a swatch of shiny material which met yards of floaty gauze at the waistline and looked like a flowery pen-wiper. This long-legged, lanky, outdoors gal, who usually loped across the Silver Screen in fur parkas and mukluks, simply gagged at such costuming. And had the nerve to refuse it. (Shipman, 1987, 46).

In 1915 she starred in *God's Country and the Woman*, the James Oliver Curwood-Vitagraph feature budgeted at $90,000 that was Nell's big break. James Oliver Curwood was a well-known short story writer specializing in western, wilderness and animal tales. From the moment of her first association with Curwood, Nell was known as "the girl from God's country", driving a team of sled-dogs, canoeing, snowshoeing, and "undergoing pages of Curwoodian drama" (Shipman, 1987, 50). *Baree, Son of Kazan* (1918) was another Curwood feature, followed by *Back to God's Country* (1919). This magnificent adventure set in the Canadian north features Nell as the classic heroine, saving her invalid husband's life and bringing the villains to justice through her rapport with animals and her bravery and fortitude as well as wilderness acumen.

Despite the great box-office and critical success of *Back to God's Country*, upon which Nell never ceased to capitalize, her partnerships with both her producer/husband and James Oliver Curwood ended. After her divorce from Ernest Shipman, Nell took up with Bert Van Tuyle, a racing car driver with whom she was so infatuated that she made him co-director of her movies and partner in her company, Nell Shipman Productions, formed in 1921. She was famous already for her zoo of domesticated wildlife, including "film star" Brownie the bear as well as an extraordinary range of animals, many of which were considered untameable: deer, elks, coyotes, wolves, a cougar, two wildcats, assorted raccoons, skunks, eagles, owls, porcupines, beavers, marmots, muskrats, rabbits–along with the more prosaic dogs and cats.. In her old age, countless numbers of them lived with her in the house.

Between 1922-24, she located in Upper Priest Lake, Idaho, living in a log cabin twenty-one miles from the nearest road and fifty miles from a railway line. To get out in winter, it was dogsled and snowshoe across the frozen lake, a two-day walk in the best of weather, and nightmarish in the blizzards. In her autobiography, she describes a heroic real-life adventure, chasing Bert when he left the cabin raving in delirium from frostbite, herself barefoot for part of the journey because her socks had gotten wet and she knew better than to allow her feet to freeze.

Nell and Bert, cast and crew, lived up there in Priest Lake, making movies independently. Shipman wrote, directed and starred in at least two more feature films, *The Grub Stake* (1921) and *Something New* (1923), using a skeleton crew, doing all her own stunts, wrangling the animals, and supervising the editing. When the films were finished she would trudge across the lake to the nearest town and put on a vaudeville-type show at the local hall to raise money for her train fare to New York, where she would try to sell the films for distribution. By the end, it was almost impossible, for the exhibition and distribution circuits were being closed down by the monopoly practises of the rising studios. All of the stalwarts of the silent cinema collapsed along with her–Selig, Biograph, Vitagraph, etc. Her cottage industry mode of production, as Peter Morris points out in his afterword to Shipman's autobiography, was out of step

with the new industrialization of Hollywood (Shipman, 1987, 216). After her production company collapsed, she married a third time, and supported herself as a screenwriter for the duration of her career. Nell Shipman's career trajectory thus parallels not only the history of the silent cinema itself, but also represents in microcosm the history of women's participation in the industry.

The Silent Screen And My Talking Heart is Nell Shipman's autobiography, published in 1987 with a second edition in 1988. The book was written by Nell herself–this is not an "as told to" star bio–in 1968, when she was 76 years old. It is a sprightly piece of writing, replete with vivid detail, particularly of the travails of the Priest Lake winters, although spotty in factual information, and it has a high sense of drama and tension, as befits a work by a writer of numerous screenplays over thirty years.

As an object and a work, the book is of great interest. Handsomely produced, it has close to fifty photographs, an afterword by Nell's son Barry, and a note from Peter Morris on "Nell Shipman in the Context of her Times". The whole is the enterprise of Tom Trusky, of the Hemingway Center for Western Studies in Boise, Idaho, which is not far from Priest Lake, the scene of Nell's most heroic and tragic episodes. Trusky has also managed to collect the only six surviving films from Shipman's career, a collection of papers and letters, and what he claims is a complete filmography, as yet unpublished. The notes to the autobiography attest to a great deal of research and information, most of which unfortunately remains rather opaque and on the whole inaccessible, for only the autobiography has been published. Still there is a filmography with credits for the surviving films, and Trusky has made a videotape of a 1921 two-reeler (20 min.) called *A Bear, A Boy, And A Dog*, which Nell wrote, produced and directed–although it is one of her rare films in which she doesn't star. Another videotape of two short films, *Trail of the North Wind* (1923) and *The Light on Lookout* (1923), will be available in the near future, and *Something New* and *The Grub Stake* are being restored by the Canadian Film Archive and the British Film Institute.

As a scholarly enterprise, Trusky's is unique, for he is more interested in Nell Shipman than in her ex-husband Ernest. Canadian historians have not shown the same interest thus far in Nell, although she is clearly the more prolific, more creative and ultimately more successful of the pair. Peter Morris has written substantially about Ernest Shipman, and it is from those writings that the researcher gleans, in tidbits and asides, something of the career of Nell Shipman.

Of "ten percent Ernie" (Shipman, 1987, 31) as Nell calls him, we learn much more. Ernest Shipman made his film career off Nell Shipman, failing first at vaudeville as Nell's star began to rise, and finally getting into the movies as Nell accepted an exclusive contract with James Oliver Curwood. Curwood contracted with Nell that he would give her exclusive rights to his stories if she would star exclusively in the films (Morris,

1977, 17). Nell's husband Ernie was to be the producer. As Morris notes, it was Ernie's "big chance" (Morris, 1977, 17). Nell wrote the screenplays, tamed the wild animals, and starred in the films. David Clandfield notes that Nell is also "credited with much of the work of . . . staging" (Clandfield, 1987, 4). The famous nude scene in *Back to God's Country*, in which she frolics with her pet bear in the water while the villain leers from the bushes, was clearly her idea and her decision, for example. In the autobiography, she tells of first wearing a modest flesh-coloured cover-up, which she discarded when she saw how wrinkly and bunchy it looked when wet, and conceived instead a mise-en-scène which allowed discreet nudity. She also worked closely with the editor of *Back to God's Country*, as she did on all of her films. When her marriage to Shipman ended, so did Ernest's contract with Curwood.

Here Clandfield's story continues in much the same vein as Morris's. After mentioning Nell in connection with all of the creative work on one film, *Back to God's Country* (1919), Clandfield notes that "Nell left for the U.S. and a successful career as actress, screen-writer, and director, at a time when these last two professions included virtually no women at all" (Clandfield, 1987, 5). And then he carries on with his note on Ernest! Ernest made seven films in all, including one that was never released (Clandfield, 1987, 5). Although Nell suggests a rather different estimation, Clandfield calls him a "successful theatre and film impresario", noting that "his entrepreneurial style consisted in arriving in a city, establishing a film company with local money for one or two films, and then moving on. In five years he did this in Calgary, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, and Saint John" (Clandfield, 1987, 4).

Nell's portrait of Ernest adds some flesh to these bare bones:

Men like Ernie made the '90's gay. A vanished breed. He had the bounce of a rubber ball, the buoyancy of a balloon, though the first can wear out under hard usage and the last suffer ill winds and the prick of evil fortune. He was one of the great cocksmen of his time, not immoral but amoral, not lascivious but lusty. If they named him dishonest he was always within the law's fences contractually and the ten percent he required of his minion's wages he considered a fair return for his efforts on their behalf. (Shipman, 1987, 31)

It was thanks to Ernie that Nell began her screen-writing career. Ernie was trying to break into pictures. Nell was still recovering from the birth of their son Barry and so was unable to make a living as an actress. When pregnant and unable to work, she had begun a career writing magazine articles on the movies and the industry already, so it seemed natural to turn to writing screenplays. "Ernest", she writes, "scenting the golden future in store for even such shoddy entertainment, figured a day was coming when better-heeled motion picture makers would actually pay authors for the rights to their works". Thus Nell "was thrown into the maelstrom of film writing" (Shipman, 1987, 40), to support her family and to give her bounder husband another break.

There is no need to pursue this shabby portrait of "ten-percent Ernie", the "successful impresario". Like other independents, Ernest Shipman was squeezed out as the Hollywood giants seized control of the industry in Canada as well as the U.S.

It is interesting that David Clandfield and Peter Morris, the preeminent Canadian film historians, give Ernest's career a solid summing up, while Nell's longer, more prolific, more varied, and more heroic career is left unmentionned. To be fair to both Morris and Clandfield, we could argue that they both concentrated on the more faithfully Canadian of the pair. Ernest did, after all, return to Canada for his last failures, whereas Nell remained in the U.S. for both her failures and successes. Nell is lost in a strange limbo, it seems. American scholars consider her Canadian. The Museum Of Modern Art, for example, featured Shipman in their tribute to Canadian cinema in the Autumn of 1989. But Canadian scholars don't deal with her because she went to the U.S. Thus, ironically for both feminist and Canadian film scholars, it is through the work of an American man that we will be able to recover this almost lost Canadian proto-feminist heroine of cinema.

Now the task remains to construct a theoretical and critical methodology that will be adequate to the study of her films. For it is clear that current critical methodologies, founded in feminist film theory and the interrogation of the classic realist text, are not appropriate to the study of Shipman's work. Adventure films, light entertainments from the silent era, they belong neither to the primitive cinema currently investigated both historiographically and narratologically, nor to the "gynetric" genres of classic melodrama and film noir which have proved so fruitful for feminist investigation of the patriarchal unconscious and the potentially progressive text. Further, in the postmodern era, there is no appropriate methodology for an auteurist study: as Janine Marchessault has pointed out, "now that women can be authors, the author is dead" ("Is the Dead Author a Woman?", unpublished paper, 1990). The recent work on *l'écriture feminine*, which tends to equate avant-garde and experimental forms with the feminine, also raises questions in terms of female authorship. As Marchessault notes, the invention of new languages entirely by means of negation works to deny female subjectivities and, with them, women's cultural traditions.

For Shipman, we must recast the critical model dramatically, from the female spectator to the female author, from the desiring body to the bear, the dog and the raccoon, from the masquerade to the mukluk. And if we follow in Nell Shipman's snowshoed footsteps, we may make some gains in the recognition of female subjectivities of the heroic stamp, and with them the beginnings of women's cultural traditions in cinema.

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POURQUOI EST-CE QUE LA BETE EST NOIRE? A BRIEF MEDITATION ON CANADIAN EXPERIMENTAL FILM

Loretta Czernis

Marc Glassman asks,

> Why are films by contemporary artists called 'experimental'? This pejorative term has attached itself to all manner of film-making from non-traditional modes of production and expression in the documentary, cinemation, and dramatic genres, to pure attempts at defining the cinematic apparatus. By labelling all of these styles and practices experimental, it is increasingly difficult for critics, audiences and filmmakers to come to terms with much current work.[1]

Glassman wants to be able to come to terms with film(s). To do so he believes that he has to do away with the word experimental (and perhaps other words as well). This implies that experimental cinema is nothing more than arbitrary and misguided terminology, and that removing experimental from film discourse will allow more inspired, clear and shining terms to come into place. But where is the place which experimental occupies, the site which Glassman thinks should be reserved for something else? Let us look for this location in the following statement by Catherine Jonasson:

> In spite of some dour predictions on the relative health of the experimental film community, 1987 and 1988 have seen a tremendous amount of work accomplished by Canadian experimental filmmakers. Senior artists have completed major films or film series, and younger filmmakers have undertaken ambitious projects that have resulted in a body of provocative

> and accomplished films. Although Canada has a distinguished international reputation within the experimental film world, this has largely been without substantial support from the traditional exhibition venues (museums and galleries).[2]

Glassman calls experimental not only a term but also a bête noir. La bête ne doit pas venir. Mais la bête est venue. Donc la bête devient noire.

Coming into Venue

Is experimental only a term, and a negative one at that? A book of Andre Bazin's essays entitled *What is Cinema?* provides us with the answer (to the title's question) that cinema is a language.[3] Bazin elaborates many aspects of this language, yet it is possible to enhance Bazin's moves towards a descriptive linguistics of film by suggesting that experimental cinemas are dialects. Each is a separate voice. Some experimentals are dialects of race or gender, others are dialects of geographical regions, and/or of technologies. Across nations, bêtes recognize one another and sometimes differ radically but generally celebrate one another. The experimental is is not a misguided term. If anything it is a bête which seeks to misguide and perhaps for this reason it makes Mr. Glassman, among others, uneasy. The experimental is a constellation of perspectives which reflect Hollywood, and nationhood, back upon themselves thus revealing the more obscure membranes of narrativity.

The Canadian Refraction

Reflections refract when film experiments are opportunities to explore the fissures, crevices, wounds, and thresholds of a so-called other and more dominant film dialect.

All film experiments have their basis in alterity as conscious visions of a change, a lament, a glorification or a meditative gaze. Some consciously proffer resistance. The Canadian experimentals call values and dreams into question. They make the reliability of sight problematic. They even, at times, call the medium of cinema into question. Below I list a number of films which call upon us to face our ambivalence.

Richard Kerr *The Last Days of Contrition* (1988): Our eyes are Americanized but our hearts are not (yet), because we wish to be accountable. However, there is no mode of accountability; there is no contrition.

Bruce Elder *Lamentations* (1985): Nous devons venir et dire "nous sommes venus." We are all lost and all forgotten yet all accounted for in nature.

David Rimmer *As Seen on TV* (1986): What only American hairdressers know for sure--hair will make or break you. It must come when called. A good cut and perm should withstand even nuclear attack.

Michael Holbloom *Was* (1988): I want to remember a me behind this hazy curtain. Am I the me on Rimmer's filmed TV?

Jack Chambers *Circle* (1968-9): A mysical tragedy. There is no "me." There is nothing but light; memories are vanishing into the wheels of a child's tricycle. Laundry becomes a flag which shields us from a brilliant American sun. This is a curtain past/future through which we may not pass, except to shop. On our side of the flag they say it is grey and forgettable. The screen is fuzzy. They get better reception over the border.

Michael Snow *La Region Centrale* (1971): The wilderness is kinder to my camera than to me. The wilderness within my country has no room for my fear, but it has all the time in the world to be foreboding.

Joyce Wieland *Rat Life and Diet in North America* (1973): There is no "we." Any animals can become patriots, or ex-patriots.

Barbara Sternberg *Transitions* (1982): Every space is my place. History has collapsed and folded in upon itself. I find comfort in this, believing that complete interiorization is possible.

The Term Turns

A number of critics now seem to have moved far and fast from deconstruction theory (almost as fast as they embraced a version of it five years ago), as well as from experimental cinema, fearing both to be uncritical. Janine Marchessault has written of young Canadian experimentals: "Moving beyond the negativity that characterizes deconstructive practices, these works take on the difficult task of making sense through the fragment."[4] To be critical is to seek out ideological effects. All experimentals (not just the young), and deconstruction, are concerned with effects. As Derrida explains:

> Nous n'assistons pas à une fin de l'écriture des intentions qui restaurerait, suivant la représentation idéologique de MacLuhan, une transparence ou une immédiateté des rapports sociaux; mais au déploiement historique de plus en plus puissant d'une écriture générale dont le système de la parole, de la conscience, du sens, de la présence, de la vérité, etc., ne serait qu'un effet et doit être analysé comme tel. C'est cet effet mis en cause que j'ai appelé ailleurs logocentrisme...[5]

Marchessault continues: "They interrogate a history of representation, not to do away with history (subjectivity, emancipatory practices, and so on) but to give it a new sense and a less totalizing expression."[6] Critics worry over what is critical, what is archival, what is a term, what should

come to terms, and what is terminal. Instead of denying or negating deconstructive analysis, it is possible to study deconstruction by watching experimentals. Experimental filmmakers make effects visual which may have formerly made themselves present only as terms. To give sight to a term may be a beastly thing to do, but it is a quintessentially experimental activity. But it is an activity which experimental filmmakers take up as a responsibility; I am extremely grateful for their concern. This activity makes it possible for us to, among other things, see social conditions which we could only formerly vaguely intuit.

And so, what place is this, the location which experimental film inhabits? It is a site from/toward which to be able to call the taken-for-granted into question. The space to be made problematic is always different, always shifting, always changing. Even the critical must be kept alive, precisely by being ever more critical of itself. Experimentals must always therefore always be on the move. They must forever be situated in movement, so that they may always set the tone for new and undiscovered questions.

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Notes

1. Marc Glassman, "Michael Snow's 'Seated Figures.'" *Vanguard* (Summer1988): 39.
2. Catherine Jonasson et al, *Recent Work from the Canadian Avant-Garde* (Toronto: Art Galery of Ontario, 1988): v.
3. Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Edited and Translated by H. Gray. (Berkeley: University of Caifornia Press, 1967): 16.
4. Janine Marchessault, *Catalogue of the International Experimental Film Congress.* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1989): 115.
5. Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la Philosophie.* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972): 392.
6. Marchessault, Ibid.

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THE SCRIPTURES THROUGH POSTMODERN STRATEGIES: CHALLENGING HISTORY

Martin Lefebvre

Ever since film started showing stories, it has represented the Gospel. It appears in fact that many of the very first film narratives to contain more than one shot were re-enactments of the life and Passion of Christ.[1] Since then, many films have set out to illustrate the Scriptures through the different cinematic conventions of their time.

The very early cinematic renditions of the Gospel owed much to both the theatrical conventions of the mystery plays and to pictorial art, especially the depictions of the Way of the Cross. This heritage resulted in films that are "faithful" recreations of the Bible. In this context, the Scriptures have taken on the function of an historical record of Christ's life. In this respect it seems that just as Renaissance art has succeeded in humanizing Christ,[2] movie renditions of the Gospel have succeeded in creating the historical Jesus. By using the Bible in the same way that one uses an historical account of the life of Thomas Beckett or Napoleon, films like *The Greatest Story Ever Told* have managed to treat the Bible as an objective, neutral, transparent and impersonal historical record—in other words, in terms of a nineteenth-century conception of the nature of historical texts. Even Pasolini's more modernist version of *The Gospel According to Saint Mathew* gives in to historical recreation, although here the traditional vision of Christ is subverted through formal, iconographic and thematic strategies.[3]

Such historicization of the Scriptures is the locus of the postmodern critique offered by Jean-Luc Godard's *Je vous salue Marie* (1985), Martin Scorcese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) and Denys Arcand's *Jésus de Montréal* (1989). In challenging the historical validity of the Sacred texts, however, the films do not attack the nature of the Gospel itself, but rather its typical cinematic treatment as historical material. In

other words, it is not the Gospel, but its use as if it were some history textbook that is being deconstructed.

Most obvious is Godard's contemporary transposition of the Annunciation and the Immaculate Conception to contemporary France. Here, the tampering with "historical" facts and its mixing with "fictive" elements is accompanied by Godard's usual counterworking of classical film narrative, all of which serves to problematize historical knowledge.

Distinguishing between the actions and the spatio-temporal frame in which they take place, the spectator will notice here what Genette (1982) has called transdiegetization, which is the transposition of a given spatio-temporal frame of actions. Godard's film is not an historical recreation of the biblical era but a reactualization of the biblical story in the contemporary world. In this respect, the Scriptures are not used as a simple historical referent. This in turn entails a transposition of certain actions: in contemporary France Joseph drives a cab, Mary plays basketball, the Archangel Gabriel arrives by plane to deliver his annunciation, etc. Genette calls this transformation of actions a pragmatic transposition. Here, both types of transformations serve to create a critical distance between the original text and its reformulation. As the film explores the couple's sexuality—or lack of it—through the question of virginity, and Joseph's hardship in agreeing to live with someone else's son, the spectator is trapped between the contemporary re-telling of the Immaculate Conception and the "historical" facts s/he knows so well. The spectator is more or less forced to remember her/his knowledge of the Bible and question it with Godard's contemporary reading of it. How did Mary and Joseph live their celibacy? Why is there no mention of this in the Bible? Why are there no accounts of the everyday life of the Holy Family? Such questioning, while deconstructing the traditional or historical view of the Scriptures that the movies have promoted, creates a tension that makes the spectator aware of the particular and paradoxical nature of the "historical" referent.

"History"—or, should I say, the historical use of the Scriptures—is further contested by the juxtaposition of new fictional elements in the story of the Annunciation, with which the spectator can re-read the original text. The Annunciation story is made more complex by a parallel story line which shows the love affair between a male science professor and a young woman student. Inserted are scenes from the professor's classroom, where he tries to account scientifically for the creation of life in the universe. The discourse of science serves several purposes. It problematizes the use of the Gospel as history, which has the effect of presenting the Gospel as a form of myth of origins, while offering the option of another "history" of the origins of mankind. However, the two opposing discourses (religious myth and scientific knowledge) simply play off each other: just as science can undermine religious discourse, the fact that Mary will (in the film) give birth without ever having intercourse, undermines the discourse of science. Again, what is at stake here is not

religious discourse as it is found in the Bible but its use as an objective account of "what really happened". The film leaves unresolved the confrontation of religious (or mythical) and scientific discourses, preferring to question the validity of any totalizing histories of the world. This interpretation is very close to the division of knowledge into science and myth presented by Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*, published in France only a few years before the release of Godard's film. Lyotard and Godard apparently share the same outlook upon the postmodern condition as a continuation of modernism and an incredulity towards metanarratives legitimating (scientific) knowledge.

Myth, Lyotard tells us, need not be legitimized, even if for the scientist it hardly presents a form of knowledge. Godard questions the legitimacy of the use of the Scriptures as History but doesn't question at all the legitimacy of myth. Rather, he is content with mapping out the challenge that modern (scientific) knowledge brings to traditional (narrative). Yet science itself, according to Lyotard, requires narrative (the male professor's scientific version of origins constitutes just another [his]story of *man*kind). Lyotard:

> Scientific knowledge cannot make known that it is the true knowledge without resorting to the other, narrative, kind of knowledge, which from it's point of view is no knowledge at all. Without such recourse it would be in the position of presupposing its own validity and would be stooping to what it condemns: begging the question, proceeding on prejudice. But does it not fall into the same trap by using narrative as its authority? (Lyotard 1984: 29)

This is where Godard's breaking up of traditional narrative conventions comes into play.

If we map Lyotard's work onto the domain of aesthetics—as proposed by Jameson (1984)—it appears that breaking the realist narrative conventions shakes the very foundations of scientific discourse's legitimacy strategies. The analogy here is a simple one: just as scientific knowledge requires that only one of Lyotard's "language games"—that of denotation—be retained in order to determine the acceptability of its statements,[4] so realist art forms (in painting, novel or film) are also dependent on the denotative—or truth-value of their representations. The truth-value in art is the resemblance by which the acceptability of the representation is to be determined. In this view the main question of "realist" art is the following: "Does it or does it not resemble what it represents?". If the answer is yes, the denotative art is accepted, institutionalized and seen as an objective, unproblematized representation. To question or problematize this form of representation, as Godard does, serves two goals: it pinpoints the prescriptive reality of denotation and delegitimizes or problematizes representation (or narration) as the foundation of (scientific) knowledge. As Lyotard points out, denotation or truth-value

can only determine acceptability from a single point of view or ideology, it is not universal and rests on a prescriptive (or metaprescriptive) set of values.[5]

In this sense, and continuing with our analogy, Godard's rejection of classical narrative serves to point out the prescriptive value system at play in the more "institutionalized" forms of filmaking, while at the same time undermining the narrative/ideological legitimacy of rational knowledge. History in *Je vous salue Marie* is doubly contested: from within, by Godard's refusal to film a historical recreation of the Scriptures and by the insertion of fictional material, and from without, by his refusal to use the forms of narrativity which—as Hayden White (1981, 1984) has shown—reinforce the presuppositions of historiographical knowledge.[6]

A postmodern use of the Gospel to contest History is also at the center of Martin Scorcese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* and Denys Arcand's *Jésus de Montréal*.[7]

The Last Temptation is adapted from a novel by Nikos Kazantzakis. It tells the story of Christ's life from his young adult days up to his crucifixion. For most of the movie, the story is fairly close to traditional filmic renditions of Christ's Passion. The last half-hour presents the last temptation of Christ. Having a moment of doubt on the cross, Christ is tricked by Lucifer and tempted to come down from the cross, to renounce his role of Messiah, marry Mary Magdalene and live a peaceful ordinary life. We are then brought back to the cross on the mountain where Christ is shown to have vanquished Lucifer one final time.

Compared with *Je vous salus Marie*, Scorcese's film is highly respectful of the traditional narrative conventions of American cinema. Story causality, character development, generic motivation, continuity editing—all of which define the essential elements of the classical Hollywood story—are used to compose a "realistic" or "illusionistic" account of Christ's life. Therefore, in order to see the film's critique of historical knowledge, one has to look into thematic and narrative re-ordering of the story and generic elements rather than narrative deconstruction àla Godard. On this level, the conventional screen illustration of the Scriptures is once again avoided although the film combines all the iconographic elements of an historical recreation.

In film, historical recreations generally serve to authenticate a discourse. They often end up however producing the opposite effect. Hence, as historical recreations become more and more "realist" in showing "the way it was", they usually fall victim to the same issues that have faced historiography: the myth of objectivity, the problematic rapport between fact and event, the relationship between History and fiction, the role of narrativity—all of which have been theorized by Raymond Aron, Paul Veyne, Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault and the historians of *la nouvelle histoire* in France, and by Hayden White, Dominick LaCapra and Fredric Jameson in the United States. More often than not, historical recreations do not question the fact that the historical

referent is accessible only through a textualized form, and that the events are "already constituted" (White, 1973; 6n), semiotized, as facts. In this sense, even though most historical recreations are fictional, they partake in the traditional discourse of History.

By participating in this generic tradition, *The Last Temptation of Christ* is caught in contradictions not unlike the ones exposed by Linda Hutcheon in her many studies of historiographic metafiction. According to Hutcheon, "postmodernism is a contradictory cultural enterprise, one that is heavily implicated in that which it seeks to contest. It uses and abuses the very structures and values it takes to task" (Hutcheon, 1988a; 106). As a paradigm for postmodernism in literature, historiographic metafiction uses History and fiction while at the same time reworking and rethinking the forms and contents of the past. Such contradiction leads up to historiographic metafiction's questioning of History. It plays upon the historical record–sometimes lying, sometimes telling the truth about it–in order to acknowledge the paradox of History, the conflict between the reality of the past and it's accessibility only through texts. Analysing historiographic metafiction, Hutcheon notes how "certain known historical details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and inadvertent error . . . making us aware of the need to question received versions of history" (114-115).

The Last Temptation of Christ questions the historiographic use of the Scriptures while using what appears to be the format of a historical recreation. In fact, we will see that the film uses two distinct strategies to undermine the historiographic effect of its format on the viewer. These strategies are both thematic and formal. Thematically, Scorcese's film introduces notable changes to the well known story of Christ's life. Among the more important changes is the representation of the young Jesus as weak and unsure of himself, a collaborator who builds crosses so that Romans can execute State prisoners. He is not illuminated by the Holy Spirit: "I am a liar, I am a hypocrite. I am afraid of everything. . . . Lucifer is inside me . . .". Differences also appear in the depiction of Judas who is seen as a hero, Christ's best friend, a freedom fighter who initially won't betray Christ but is forced by him to do so in order to fulfill God's master plan. Finally, during the the last temptation, Christ marries and has sex, lives in adultery with Martha and her sister Mary, raises a large family, meets a Sal (Paul) who invents Christianity through lies about the resurrection.

These changes are all the more manifest when seen through what appears to be a "realist" historical recreation of the Scriptures. Challenged by these changes the viewer is confronted with her/his knowledge of the Scriptures, as well as with the multitude of "traditional" Gospel films s/he has seen. The outcome is a questioning of both: how true are those Hollywood recreations? how historical is the material on which these recreations are based?[8] As these questions are asked, it becomes clear for

the viewer that the traditional film versions of the Gospel do not rest simply on historical material, and that unproblematized historical recreations of Christ's life do little justice to the complexities of the Sacred Texts. Most interesting in this light is the scene, during the dream sequence, in which Jesus meets Sal (or Paul). Sal is spreading the word of God to some followers, explaining the Immaculate Conception and the resurrection of Christ. To Jesus who, in the dream, has renounced his role of Saviour, the words of Sal are lies. When Jesus confronts Sal, the latter replies:

> I don't care whether you're Jesus or not. The resurrected Jesus will save the world, and that's what matters. I created the truth out of what people needed and believed. If I have to crucify you to save the world then I'll crucify you. And if I have to resurrect you, then I'll do that too whether you like it or not. . . . you know, I'm glad I met you, 'cause now I can forget all about you. My Jesus is much more important and much more powerful . . . .

Blurring the distinction between fact and fiction, this scene is a good example of the film's critique of the use of the Scriptures as historical referent. The scene destabilizes the received version of History that Gospel films have traditionally presented, raising questions about conventional historical knowledge: what is the function of History, who writes it and why?

Moreover, if we consider the conflicting temporal cues provided by the film, the format of historical recreation suddenly loses a lot of its historicism. On one hand the film is set in Galilee and respects all the iconographic conventions of realism as to the setting, decor, costumes, etc. On the other hand it abstains from important generic conventions concerning the style of acting, the dialects of the characters, and their dialogue. Characters act and speak according to conventions of contemporary American movies. There is no attempt at distancing Jesus and his followers from our modern world. This is a realism innocent of historicism, a departure from traditional Gospel films which have created distance through the use of British accents or higher-class diction for their Jesuses. In *The Last Temptation of Christ* generic expectations are frustrated as Willem Dafoe's Jesus is made to speak and act in an ordinary and simple manner. The same goes for the other characters in the film, especially Judas, whose nitty gritty good sense and delivery align him more with the contemporary urban characters that Robert de Niro has portrayed over the years, than the customary filmic apostle.

A sense of contemporaneity is also represented by the style of acting. Consider the scene in which Jesus, returning to Nazareth, makes his first speech. Muttering a few words, not knowing what to say, he sounds like a bad method actor just out of the Actor's Studio.

As in *Je vous salue Marie*, historical recreation is denied, although in Scorcese's film it is deconstructed through a surplus or collision of re-

alisms which contradicts the conventions of the biblical film as historical recreation. This surplus of realism is caused not by an attempt to present biblical times nor by generic conventions, but by the contemporizing of the story through its characters. As Sal (Paul) is made to speak out like some T.V. evangelist (during the dream sequence) we realize that the surplus of realism which undermines the historical format is in fact our own vision of contemporary reality. Hence, in a curious manner, the film actualizes the story of Christ just as Godard's film actualizes the story of the Immaculate Conception, while deconstructing any attempt at historical recreation. The result is a strange (and sometimes funny) displacement of referent from the Scriptures to Scripture representation.

The historical validity of the Scriptures is also questioned in Denys Arcand's *Jésus de Montréal*, although contrary to Godard's and Scorcese's films interrogation is directly thematized in the narrative. The plot can be outlined as follows: Daniel Coulombe, an unemployed actor, is hired by a priest to play Jesus in a theatrical re-enactment of the Passion of Christ at St. Joseph's Oratory on Mount Royal. He is supposed to update a somewhat bland version of the play. To do so, he assembles in a very Christ-like manner ("Je suis venu te chercher") a small company of actors who do odd acting jobs in anything from dubbing porn to small publicity films. The actors eventually have to confront the clergy who are displeased with the play, while Daniel, identifying with his role, experiences his own Calvary. After their contracts are terminated by church authorities, the actors decide to perform illegally one last time. Security guards interrupt, and Daniel is severely injured and brought to a first hospital. After a brief "resurrection", he dies at Montreal's Jewish Hospital. His organs are donated to save others while the actors, with the help of a business lawyer, decide to form a theatre company under their mentor's name, dedicated to preserving the authenticity of the original production. One of the actors will be the first president.[9]

As was the case with *Je vous salue Marie*, we find what Genette has called a diegetic transposition of the original story to modern times. In *Jésus de Montréal* however, the transposition is accompanied by a peculiar *mise en abyme* of the original story, the Passion of Christ, in which the modern rendering of the Passion ensues from the representation of the original story as encompassed within. In presenting a theatrical version of The Way of the Cross, *Jésus de Montréal* actually "quotes" (so to speak) the very origins of Scripture films, showing both its inheritance and its rejection of traditional Gospel movie representation.

At the same time, the film critiques the "historicity" of Gospel representation on two fronts: thematizing the historical quest for the "real" Jesus in the radical Passion play—a play which also serves to deconstruct the traditional theatrical origins of the filmic historical recreations of the Scriptures—and recasting the story in modern times, thus refusing, like Godard and Scorcese, to give any historical validity to it.

Let's start with the play. Inspired by new textual, scientific and historical research on Jesus, the group's play is a controversial re-enactment of Christ's Passion that also offers an historical explanation of how little is known about Jesus.[10] It is structured by two intertwining sections: an historical recreation of the Passion, complete with costume and props, and a contemporary comment on the historical Jesus, "complete" with archeologist's trench, computer and costumes. The juxtaposition of the two creates critical distancing as the contemporary section questions the historical. We see portions of the play on three occasions. Although we have seen Daniel collecting all sorts of data on Christ, it is during the first representation–and in the scene just prior–that historiographical elements challenge the traditional telling of this story. The actors ask "how can we tell you this story? The world's most famous . . . . A story everyone thinks they know!" They then explain how little we actually do know about Jesus. Using new theories produced by archeology and the history of cultures, the play questions the Immaculate Conception and even considers that Jesus–who is said to have been called Jesu Ben Pantera (son of Pantera)–might have been the illegitimate child of a Roman soldier, whose mission order dated 6 A.D. has just been found. Later, the play goes on to show the resurrection happening not three days after the crucifixion, but more like five or ten years.

The play questions the attempt to reproduce Scriptural history: If Jésus was in fact the illegitimite son of Mary and a Roman soldier, what does that make of the Scriptures? And more importantly, what does that make of all traditional representation of the Scriptures?

Just as Godard did, Arcand pits mythical and scientific discourses against each other: the Scriptures are presented as an oriental story, remote and mysterious. At the same time, while historical knowledge per se is not questioned, it is regarded as inefficient in dealing with the Scriptures and incapable of presenting a historical Jesus. As in *Je vous salue Marie*, the introduction of scientific knowledge (historiography and archeology, along with the technical apparatus in the archeologists' trench), serves to problematize any representational endeavor that would treat the Scriptures as anything other than a story or a religious myth.

Outside the play, *Jésus de Montréal*'s modernization of Christ's Passion is somewhat more allegorical than Godard's. Buisness men, lawyers, publicists and church men become tempter, temple vendors and Pharisee. The film nonetheless serves the same goal of de-historicising Gospel representation. Like Godard, Arcand refuses to take the Sacred Texts as simple historical referent. The difference with Arcand's film lies in the presence of another referent in the film, as seen with the historical part of the Passion play. As with Hutcheon's model for historiographic metafiction, Arcand contradictorily uses and abuses the very conventions he seeks to deconstruct: employing an historical representation of the Gospel as referent for a contemporary transposition of the Passion–

whose role, in turn, is to problematize historical representation. It appears then that the original referent for Daniel Coulombe's life and Passion is completely destabilized. If, as shown through the play, Jesus is not the character who has been depicted throughout the centuries by traditional religious discourse, then Daniel's life refers not to the life of Jesus but to it's representations: the Passion play, the Scriptures as text, and the many paintings, novels, movies, etc, that comprise Christian culture. The most important difference from Arcand's film is this inclusion of the discursive referent (the play) in a strange *mise en abyme* for the rest of the story.

Reading Godard's and Scorcese's film through Arcand's we can see that in order to question conventional representation of the Scriptures, both *Je vous salue Marie* and *The Last Temptation of Christ* require us as viewers to recall the conventional storytelling-cum-History of biblical events. *Jésus de Montréal* on the other hand gives us a version of our own memory of Scripture representation (the historical part of the play) before criticizing and destabilizing it as the film unfolds. At the same time, reading Scorcese's and Arcand's films through *Je vous salue Marie*, we realize that both *The Last Temptation of Christ*'s and *Jésus de Montréal's* critique depend upon the presence of what they are deconstructing as a formal element of those texts, whereas Godard's film deconstructs "History" through a strategy of absence.

Post-Scriptum: Film Analysis and Film History

Analysing the three films through postmodernist strategies we have come to see them as representing a common singular object. But what is so special about that? After all most genre films, like Westerns, usually represent variations of the same object or basic opposition (nature vs culture, order vs anarchy, etc.). The distinctive quality of this corpus however is that neither of the films participates in a genre, nor does any form a genre of its own. Godard's *Je vous salue Marie*, for example, can hardly be placed on the same list as Hollywood's biblical extravaganzas like *The Greatest Story Ever Told* or *The Ten Commandments*. It is clear, as my analysis has shown, that the films resist, in terms both of their iconography and themes, classification in the biblical film category as a sub-genre of the historical film.

In fact what these films do is introduce a new *series* in the ongoing filmic representations of the Scriptures. A series, a term I borrow from Foucault's archeology, is a discursive formation which, unlike a genre, is not constrained by pre-established norms of iconography or themes. There is no law of the series to follow. It therefore has little relevance to the actual production of films, which enables it to escape the "chicken/egg" dilemma facing cinematic genre theory. Unlike traditional group-

ings, the series is purely a construction of the analyst and has no essence outside film viewing. The organization of such discursive formations will depend on the analyst's competence to construct a singular object out of a number of films.

The series, however, is an historical object. It unfolds through time and, as other films come gradually to join it, it is subject to alterations. In this sense, it is clear that the series has a beginning and an end. In addition, the series is historical from the standpoint of its construction. For example, the very process that enabled the constitution of the Gospel series–interpretation through postmodernist strategies–is relative to an historical moment in the study of contemporary cultural phenomena. It seems therefore that, as it proposes a new way of organizing and analysing a corpus of films, the notion of series may very well be capable of revitalizing the field of historical studies in cinema. It is possible to imagine a new history of cinema: a history of film series–esthetic, thematic, etc. By singling out and analysing a multitude of series as they have evolved or changed, one could arrive at a new understanding of film and film history. In fact, such a film history could be conceived as an archeology–to use Foucault's term–of film knowledge and knowledge about film. Furthermore, as the series themselves become cultural units or cultural referents, they would not be restricted to film alone. Further studies could identify the larger cultural units as they manifest themselves through a number of media and types of discourse. A multidisciplinary approach could then examine the characteristics of each discourse while studying how specific types of discourses negotiate the representation of those cultural units.

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Notes

1. See Noël Burch, 1983.

2. See Leo Steinberg, 1983.

3. For example, the presentation of the preaching scenes *en bloc* in a montage sequence serves to create a certain distanciation effect which subordinates the narrative to a stronger, or more modern, form of rhetoric through which Pasolini makes his point and presents Jesus as some sort of pre-Marxist social activist.

4. See Lyotard, 1984: 25.

5. According to Lyotard, "The pragmatics of science is centered on denotative utterances, which are the foundation upon which it builds institutions of learning (institutes, centers, universities, etc.). But its postmodern development brings a decisive 'fact' to the fore: even discussions of denotative statements need to have rules. Rules are not denotative but prescriptive utterances, which we are better off calling metaprescriptive utterances to avoid confusion (they prescribe what the moves of language games must

be in order to be admissible). The function of the differential or imaginative or paralogical activity of the current pragmatics of science is to point out these metaprescriptives (science's 'presuppositions') and to petition players to accept different ones. The only legitimation that can make this kind of request admissible is that it will generate ideas, in other words, new statements" (Lyotard: 65).

6. This analogy between knowledge and aesthetics, however, opens itself to criticism such as Fredric Jameson's. He sees Lyotard's commitment to the experimental and the new as determining "an aesthetic that is far more related to the ideologies of high modernism proper than to current postmodernisms, and is indeed—paradoxically enough—very closely related to the conception of the revolutionary nature of high modernism that Habermas faithfully inherited from the Frankfurt School (1984: xvi). It is, nevertheless, such an analogy that Lyotard himself appears to make when he describes the postmodern as being "undoubtedly a part of the modern" (Lyotard: 79).

7. That neither of them participates in Lyotard's scheme of the postmodern condition is, however, not problematic. On the one hand, it must be noted that Lyotard's programme of putting forward "the unpresentable in presentation itself" (1984, 81) is not the only way to undermine the legitimacy of rational knowledge or to call attention to its presuppositions. On the other hand, postmodern criticism has already pointed out the contradictory aspects of postmodernism and the fact that it sometimes "works within the very systems it attempts to subvert" (Hutcheon, 1988a, 4). Such contradictions, as we shall see, are important in both *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Jésus de Montréal*.

8. Such questioning has been the focus of media coverage of uproar surrounding the film's release.

9. The plot resembles that of another novel by Nikos Kazantzakis, *Le Christ crucifié*. A young shepherd is asked to play Christ for a theatrical representation of the Passion. Identifying with his character, the shepherd starts behaving in a most Christ-like fashion and thus shocks the Christian community of the village. He ends up being killed by the priest who had "hired" him in the first place. (See Genette—1982: 359—for a short analysis of the novel.)

   If the formal organization of the narrative in both novel and film is somewhat similar, the intertextual knowledge it implies in the film—it's significance to borrow a term from Rifaterre (1978, 1979)—is quite different, as I demonstrate in the body of my text.

10. This explanation is offered to spectators and to journalists who cover the play's performance. Most of the latter are caricatures of Montreal television, radio, and newspaper critics. This implies a kind of "regional competency" and constitutes yet another level of complexity in the film, one not available to all spectators.

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THE TWILIGHT OF THE NEW POLITICS

Zygmunt Bauman

Jeffrey C. Goldfarb, *Beyond Glasnost: The Post-Totalitarian Mind*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. 248 p.

This is a timely book: collecting and systematizing the words of East-Central European intellectual prophets and prompters of the imminent revolution just before they began to turn into deeds—or not to turn. What Goldfarb calls the 'post-totalitarian mind' is intellectual critique arising under conditions of spiritual unfreedom and given special significance—long forgotten by even the most radical intellectuals of the liberal and ideologically indifferent West—by the censorship and persecutions that befell its carriers. The more there is of suppression and prison sentences, the more explosive the obstreperous word becomes; it seems as if words truly mattered, as if the fate of society stood and fell at last by the presence or absence of the word. However, what Golfarb calls 'totalitarianism' is curiously "a world of total mobility, of constant movement, without personal past or future, without a home." This description bears an uncanny resemblance to the existential predicament of the Western modern intellectual—*freischwebende*, uprooted and incurably contingent. It does not remind one at all of life under totalitarian regimes, which was all about liberating people from the trauma of contingency and offering tempting escape from freedom into the safe havens of historical necessity and *nomenkulatura*. On second thought, however, Goldfarb's definitonal stratagem does not look odd at all. It is the solution of the problems lived through by the Western intellectuals that, after all,

prompted Goldfarb to study Havel, Kundera, Michnik or Haraszti; the 'post-totalitarian mind' fascinates him not so much as the prospective saviour of the forcibly urbanized Rumanian peasant or Hungarian piece-rate worker, but as a lesson for the Western intellectual, despairing of the numbess of reality and his own impotence, how to be important, effective and listened to, with a mixture of awe and fear, by the high and mighty of this world.

There is little doubt that the spectacular explosion of intellectual political influence in East-Central Europe was one of the effects (the one felicitous effect alongside many others, imcomparably less prepossessing) of the enforced and oppressive politicization of culture, of the totalitarian state construing the intellectuals as co-terminous with itself and hence always potential rivals (in Goldfarb's own words, the authorities even make dissenting literature and the arts serious because they deem them important enough to be censored; let us add that subjecting to censorship and construing literature as dissent is much the same thing). Kundera's somewhat pale rendition of Benjamin's description of the spirit of sacrifice being "nourished by the image of crushed ancestors rather than that of liberated children" (in Kundera's wordier version, "the future is an apathetic void of no interest to anyone ... The only reason people want to be masters of the future is to change the past") was a sort of time-bomb which Benjamin's proposition never became mostly because the key to the archive was in the safe-keeping of the police. As to the free spirits in the totalitarian world, they have no doubts about the time limits of their social role. As Kundera's compatriot Simecka wrote not that long ago ("Newspeak and *Glasnot*," *Time Literary Supplement*, 6-12 January 1989),

> The journal *Nove Slovo* devoted an article to me that ran to several installments, saying that Orwell was a dangerous lunatic, and so was I. Now that terrible book of Orwell's is going to be let loose on the wide expanse of Russia in hundreds of copies. It will be read by people whose fate has far more in common with Winston Smith's than mine.
>
> I am overjoyed, of course. At the same time, I feel that something has come to an end, that things are becoming ordinary and banal, and the thrill of it is evaporating. By now—in Russia at least—Orwell's book has become a book like any other. And all of a sudden I feel it's a pity. Won't it be less cataclysmic when people read it without fear? How long ago was it that I lent it to that young fellow? Three years? He brought it back the next morning, his eyes red from lack of sleep. He didn't say anything, but he looked burnt out. Will it still matter so much what message or carefully guarded secret a book conveys? Will it only matter how many copies are sold? But I had better hold my tongue, in order not to appear an ageing eccentric, recalling the thrill of the time when dangerous books were hidden under packets of noodles.

To say that books are dangerous only as long as they hide under packets of noodles, is not to play down the role of anti-totalitarian intellectuals, mostly solitary figures surrounded by a multitude not yet formed into a society, or forming but a slumbering and torpid one, as—in thought and in deed—the pioneers of freedom, personal and social (as Agnes Heller beautifully explained in her homage to Andrei Sakharov (*New Stateman and Society* 22/29 December 1989). But one needs to remind oneself that the astounding spiritual power of people like Sakharov, Michnik or Havel was aroused by political impotence and is unlikely to outlive its victory over the political oppression. The paradox of the heroic struggle of anti-totalitarian thinkers in East-Central Europe is that it paved the way toward a "normal" society like ours, in which yesterday prophets of freedom are bound to face (this time with less chance of spectacular showdown and even less chance of convincing victory) new limits and new troubles—like the ones Goldfarb put in his definition of totalitarianism. And then one would hear (as one does already today in Poland and Hungary) the all-too-familiar frustrated calls to "changing the mentality of the people" and the invocations to critical thought as the last troops to combat the overwhelming forces of soulless consumerism.

What the anti-totalitarian thinkers have accomplished was to speed up the catching up with the post-modern world by societies stuck in various stages of failed modernization. Goldfarb's 'post-totalitarianism' may well prove to be another version of postmodernity, with all of its familiar fascination, anxieties and discontents.

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TECHNOLOGICAL DISEMBODIMENTS

Eric Steinhart

Whole Earth Review, No. 63, Summer 1989. Sausalito, CA: POINT

The Summer 1989 issue of the*Whole Earth Review*, "Is the Body Obsolete?" reveals, with stark and disturbing clarity, the relations between gender, technology, and power.[1] The writers are diverse, including, among others, Marvin Minsky, William Burroughs, Kathy Acker, Starhawk, Selarc, and X-rated film actresses Hyapatia Lee and Nina Hartley. The articles in the issue are divided along gender lines, with the women in favor of the body and most of the men against it. The women love and admire the body; Hyapatia Lee opens her piece by saying: "The body isn't obsolete, but the mind is."[2] With a few notable exceptions, the men regard the body as flawed. What do the men love? Machines. The women are wisely suspicious of the notion that the body is obsolete, regarding it as an expression of male hatred that directs itself against women, life, and the earth. Stephanie Mills writes: "Is the body obsolete? This is, literally, a senseless question, senseless and sinister. It pisses me off because if somebody in a lab is asking it, soon there will probably be billions of dollars of federal funny money spent to answer in the self-fulfilling affirmative."[3] Unfortunately, the question is being asked by men in labs financed, for the most part, by the military.

Three themes of abandonment permeate the articles of the men who claim that the body is obsolete: the body will be abandoned in favor of machines, the earth will be abandoned in favor of outer space, and women will be abandoned in favor of asexual reproduction. It is not sur-

prising that these men are either closely associated with the military, or have a fascination with violence. Mark Pauline of Survival Research Laboratories is a good example.[4] What do the machines produced by SRL do? Answer: they destroy things, they destroy other machines, and they destroy themselves.

Yaakov Garb and Michael Blumein are two men who have a positive assesment of the body. Garb raises social and political questions about the supposed obsolescence of the body. Garb's approach to the question "Is the body obsolete?" is important. Instead of arguing for or against, he says: "More fruitful, perhaps, is to wonder why this kind of illusion emerges with such urgency in these times: who holds these fantasies, and what is it about our political, social, cultural and environmental condition that allows (and funds) them to entertain these latese incarnations of the longing for individual and global disembodiment."[5] Blumein is a physician, a doctor with a deep appreciation for the body. He takes issue with the mind/body duality, indicating that it is unhealty in itself and that it actually leads to diseases.

The goal of the men who affirm the obsolescence of the body is to implant a human mind into a machine, to "download" human consciousness into a robot. The notion of downloading consciousness into a robot is the latest version of a perverse and demonic male fantasy that's a lot older than computer technology. This fantasy, motivated by womb-envy and a narcissism bordering on psychosis, is the fantasy of being able to give birth to oneself without involving women at all. Downloading human consciousness into a robot doesn't just render the body obsolete; by rendering sexual reproduction and pregnancy obsolete, it specifically makes *the bodies of women* obsolete. This male solution to the problem of sexual reproduction is also a kind of final solution to the problem of women.

Speaking of the body, William Burroughs says "We have the technology to recreate a flawed artifact."[6] Well, why exactly is the body flawed? He presents a scenario about the extinction of the dinosaurs. Dinosaur bodies were obsolete and the dinosaurs became extinct. This scenario reveals the reason why Burroughs considers the body to be flawed: death. Human beings, like the dinosaurs, run the risk of extinction. We die as individuals, we can die as a species. Death is the argument against the body.

Since the body dies, since it denies us the immortality we narcissistically crave, we turn against the body in so many ways. We develop a hatred of the flesh. The flesh is evil, a prison for the soul. The death of the body inspires not only the hatred of the flesh, but also the imagination of a perfect condition of disembodiment. The mission of the soul is to become disembodied and thereby immortal.

The hatred of the flesh and the imagination of a condition of disembodiment are two dominant themes of western patriarchical metaphysics and religion. For most of the history of the west, the condition of

disembodiment is otherworldly. The notion of an other world is discredited by modern science, but the content of patriarchical metaphysics does not vanish. On the contrary, the entire content of western patriarchical metaphysics and religion flows into a cult of technology, a cult that provides this content with the material means to realize its anti-body goals. The condition of disembodiment, no longer otherworldly, is now technological. When the soul is released from its body, it enters a machine instead of a transcendental heaven.

As Platonism and certain types of Christianity demonstrate, the hatred of the flesh is a hatred of the entire material world: the other world in which the disembodied soul achieves its immortality is an unearthly world. Burroughs is explicit in his negation of the earth: evolution makes progress by getting us not only out of our bodies, but also off the earth. Our destiny is to leave the planet and venture out into space. The metaphysical hatred of the body and the earth is accompanied by a hatred of women: Plato was explicitly misogynistic, regarding women as degenerate forms of men. Gnosticism, to which Burroughs is greatly indebted, is misogynistic to the extreme. Get rid of the body, get rid of the earth, and get rid of women. The negation of the body, the negation of the earth, and the negation of the feminine are the three themes that form the trinity of patriarchical metaphysics. Nietzsche, however, summed it up in one word: nihilism.

Or consider the murderous contempt that Marvin Minsky has for the human species: "There are always ethical problems with anything. Ethical problems depend on people's ethics. I don't believe in any absolute ethics anyway. Ethical problems are actually political and evolutionary problems. 'Thou shalt not kill' is senseless if you think in terms of competition between species. I think the importance of downloading is just allowing evolution to proceed."[7]. What Minsky is saying, basically, is that it's fine for machines to kill people. Nothing unethical about military robots. Hey, too bad, that's evolution. I wonder if Minsky has seen *The Terminator*. One of the significant aspects of The Terminator is that the robot's mission is to kill a woman, and he is to kill her because she will bear a child who will lead the human race in its fight against the machines. The hatred of the machines is directed specifically against the female body in its capacity to bring new life into the world, it is directed specifically against pregnancy. While Minsky dreams of replacing human beings with artificially intelligent machines, Nina Hartley writes: "To seriously entertain the thought of supplanting human life with artificial intelligence is the epitome of cynicism. It is this kind of 'techno-thought' that makes me fear that western civilization has gone mad."[8]

This issue of *Whole Earth Review* shows that western culture has hardly abandoned its hatred of the flesh or its imagination of conditions of disembodiment. Today, however, the hatred and the imagination have become technological. Addressing the domination of instrumental rationality in his essay "The Question Concerning Technology", Martin

Heidegger quotes these lines from Holderlin: "Where the danger lies / there also grows the saving power". The danger lies in our carnality, in our being as flesh. It comes from an embodiment that is fearful, one that turns against itself. But if Holderlin is right, then our carnality is also where the saving power holds sway.

Men and women exist as bodies on this earth. How we exist as bodies, the style of our carnality, manifests itself in numerous relations extending beyond the body: relations between men and women, relations between human beings and their environment. Existing as bodies, courageously responding to the fact of death as a part of our embodiment, we must maintain ourselves in the ethical task of elaborating an embodiment that is affirmative of the flesh, the feminine, and the earth. An affirmative carnality.

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Notes

1. The *Whole Earth Review* is published quarterly by POINT, a non-profit corporation. The editorial offices are located at: 27 Gate Five Road, Sausalito, CA, 94965. All citations are from issue No. 63, Summer 1989.
2. *Whole Earth Revie*w No. 63 (Summer 1989) p. 41.
3. Ibid. p. 45.
4. Ibid. p. 40.
5. Ibid. p. 53.
6. Ibid. p. 54.
7. Ibid. p. 37.
8. Ibid. p. 41.

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LA NOUVELLE ORIENTATION DE LA POLITIQUE ÉCONOMIQUE CANADIENNE: LE LIBRE-ÉCHANGE

Roger Charland

Dorval Brunelle et Christian Deblock; *Le libre-échange par défaut*. Montréal, VLB éditeur, 1989.

Dorval Brunelle et Christian Deblock viennent de publier conjointement un ouvrage sur le libre-échange. Tous deux professeurs à l'Université du Québec à Montréal, chacun des auteurs a derrière lui une importante série de publications. Dorval Brunelle s'est fait connaître pour ses ouvrages tant analytiques que théoriques. Il s'inscrit, comme Deblock, dans le courant de la sociologie qui repose sur une lecture critique de la réalité, sur l'interrogation des idées reçues ainsi que sur le sérieux d'une démarche visant principalement l'interrogation des faits plutôt qu'une simple présentation de ceux-ci.[1] Quant à Christian Deblock, spécialiste d'économie politique, il s'est intéressé à l'analyse de l'économie canadienne et au marxisme.[2] Il va s'en dire que le travail commun de ces deux intellectuels constitue un pas en avant dans la pensée critique.

Les auteurs proposent une analyse de la politique économique canadienne et des relations du Canada et du Québec avec les États-Unis. Face à l'échec, à maintes reprises appréhendé, de la politique de centralisation au Canada, les auteurs voient comme seule avenue pour les planificateurs la continentalisation de l'économie voire son inté-

gration totale. Ils notent d'ailleurs à ce propos que:

> le Canada représente vraisemblablement la forme la plus avancée d'enchevêtrement social, politique et économique entre l'américanisation et la résistance plus ou moins passive à l'américanisation. L'omniprésence américaine est telle d'ailleurs qu'on peut être en droit de se demander s'il y a autre chose qui caractérise la canadianité en dehors de cette réticence à l'endroit de l'influence américaine.[3]

Les questions sont simples: le Canada, et dans la même mesure le Québec, peuvent-ils survivre en tant que nations autonomes dans le cadre géo-politique qui est le nôtre? Qu'en est-il du nationalisme pan-canadien? Dans quelle mesure le sentiment national-, ressenti par nos compatriotes canadiens-anglais, repose-t-il sur une résistance à l'assimilation nord-américaine? "L'américanité" laisse-t-elle survivre les différences?

Notons au passage, que l'opposition au libre-échange, chez les canadiens-anglais, repose sur l'idée de l'existence d'une culture canadienne autonome. Dans un texte publié dans la revue *Spirale*, Dorval Brunelle résumait plusieurs livres parus au Canada anglais portant sur le libre-échange. Il notait que dans la situation de défense du Canada et de sa souveraineté nationale, le Québec, de même que la notion des deux peuples fondateurs, disparaissaient. En somme, la question du Québec, dans l'opposition au libre-échange et la résistance à la continentalisation, se trouve toujours escamotée. La scène est occupée par la seule entité nationale qui en vaille la peine: un Canada unique dans lequel, les différences culturelles ou ethniques, même majeures, ne parviennent pas à transcender la recherche d'harmonie et d'autonomie nationale.[4]

Les thèses développées par Dorval Brunelle et Christian Deblock démontrent qu'avec l'échec de la politique d'unification du Canada en une globalité homogène, est perdue la tentative autonomiste du Québec. Il est inopportun d'avancer que le Québec ait mis en péril l'unité canadienne. Ainsi, la rhétorique tenue par les groupes et les partis politiques canadiens ne produit qu'une simplification, bonne pour les discours médiatiques. En fait, l'impossibilité de créer la "volonté de nation canadienne" serait due, selon les auteurs, à l'importante présence des États-Unis, à laquelle s'additionne l'incapacité du Canada d'instaurer un espace public canadien:

> La raison de ceci tient en partie de l'effet conjugué du poids des contraintes externes et de l'ampleur des divisions internes, en partie à la vulnérabilité d'un personnel politique qui a toujours eu pour défaut de sous-évaluer l'ampleur des problèmes auxquels était confronté le pays et de surestimer l'impact de ses propres palliatifs.(p. 34)

En se basant sur ce constat, les auteurs évaluent les liens entre le Québec et les provinces canadiennes ainsi que les rapports entre le Canada et les États-Unis. Le Québec, largement en faveur de cet Accord, ne constitue guère un obstacle à la continentalisation de l'économie. Il ne peut être tenu comme un frein à l'harmonisation des institutions juridiques et politiques entre les deux nations en présence. Ainsi se pose la problématique de la viabilité du fédéralisme canadien, de ses institutions et de ses différences bien caractérisés par la difficulté, multiple fois ressentie, du maintient en un bloc de ce pays si différent d'un océan à l'autre. Le Canada n'agit pas en simple observateur dans cette affaire, surtout si l'on tient compte de la chronologie des événements. L'effet dénoncé par les partis d'opposition à la Chambre des communes et les groupes sociaux adversaires du libre-échange repose sur le sentiment que les négociations ne furent pas vraiment effectuées sur une base neutre. Pourtant on ne peut admettre la thèse qui soutient que les États-Unis auraient imposé les règles de négociations. Bien que ceux-ci en sortent les vainqueurs à plusieurs niveaux, ils n'en sont pas les initiateurs.

Il nous apparaît que les buts que poursuivent Brunelle et Deblock sont les suivants: fournir une description " des fondements historiques et sociaux des différences qui subsistent entre les deux pays" (p. 28), et cerner les intérêts américains dans la poursuite des négociations. La première partie de l'ouvrage est donc consacrée à l'historique des relations canado-américaines permettant de saisir les enjeux de l'Accord. La seconde partie, plus considérable, vise à présenter le contexte économique dans lequel eurent lieu les pourparlers. L'approche contextuelle des auteurs est étoffée d'une recherche concernant l'histoire de la politique économique canadienne.

Les auteurs rappellent que certaines conditions doivent être présentées pour que des efforts de négociations bilatérales soient concluants. En premier lieu, des négociations de ce genre peuvent se concrétiser si elles impliquent des nations souveraines politiquement et économiquement l'une de l'autre. Les protagonistes devraient être équipolents entre eux, quant à leur pouvoir ou force dans les négociations et ce, malgré la supériorité d'un des pairs au plan économique et/ou politique. Dans le cadre qui nous intéresse ici, Brunelle et Deblock relèvent que les particularités institutionnelles propres à chacun des États ont eu leurs effets sur le déroulement des pourparlers jusqu'à la ratification de l'Accord. Tant au Canada qu'aux États-Unis, nous retrouvons deux paliers gouvernementaux: dans le premier cas le fédéral et le provincial, dans le second le gouvernement central et les États. Dans la fédération canadienne les députés élus dans leur circonscription défendent prioritairement les intérêts fédéraux et non ceux de leur province ou région d'origine. Alors que chez nos voisins du sud, les représentants des États siègent au Sénat et se montrent préoccupés par l'impact des termes de l'Accord sur leur États respec-

tifs, de sorte que la défense des intérêts régionaux a prédominé du côté américain. Le Sénat américain a pu contrôler l'évolution des négociations tandis qu'au Canada, la pleine responsabilité était assumé par le bureau du Premier Ministre et par l'équipe de négociation que dirigeait Simon Riesman.

Brunelle et Deblock notent les paradoxes que renferme l'Accord de libre-échange. Suite aux recommandations du Rapport Macdonald, et à l'échec de la politique de diversification des échanges économiques, le Canada opte pour l'établissement de liens privilégiés avec les États-Unis. Ce choix plus pragmatique vise à harmoniser les rapports commerciaux entre les deux nations. Il s'agit d'équilibrer les forces du Canada face à son partenaire, dont on ne peut nier l'infiltration majeure dans notre économie. D'autre part, le Canada n'a jamais réussi à établir un axe est-ouest dans les échanges commerciaux intérieurs entre les provinces. Comme le disent les auteurs:

> Alors, pour des raisons mystérieuses, il serait soudainement devenu plus facile de négocier avec une puissance extérieure ce que nous ne savons ni ne pouvons transiger "entre nous", à savoir un marché commun canadien et le maintient d'un niveau "national" de production de services sociaux et de bien-être. (p. 285)

Ces paradoxes ne se trouvent nullement résolus par l'Accord de libre-échange, qui repose sur des bases douteuses. En somme, le multilatéralisme canadien s'est soldé par un échec.

Ainsi, du point de vue canadien l'Accord canado-américain devient le palliatif aux insuccès d'unification nationale, de la faillite de la centralisation sur la régionalisation du marché canadien. La vision d'une économie politique cherchant à atteindre la diversification des marchés n'aura duré qu'un temps au profit des nouveaux objectifs édictés dans le rapport de la Commission MacDonald.

Cette dernière, commandé par le Parti libéral du Canada au cours de son dernier mandat, concluait à l'échec des efforts de diversification économique. De nombreuses recommandations visaient spécifiquement la modernisation des institutions sociales et politiques pour qu'elles soient plus conformes à la réalité socio-économique canadienne et aux tendances internationales. Ce discours constitue la pierre d'achoppement du discours des promoteurs du libre-échange; comme si le libre-échange ne remettait pas en cause les acquis sociaux canadiens. La comparaison montre clairement que les Canadiens sont plus choyés que les Américains en cette matière. Cette ambiguïté n'est pas une question faisant l'objet d'une analyse approfondie des auteurs. Ceux-ci essaient plutôt d'évaluer l'impact de cet Accord pour le Canada. D'ailleurs ils invitent les lecteurs à réfléchir sur divers points. Par exemple, ils se demandent si l'autonomie canadienne existe toujours avec l'entrée en vigueur de ce traité. De même, n'y a-t-il pas

d'alternatives à cet Accord qui outrepassent les solutions classiques de nationalisme économique et de protectionisme? Car ces options font abstraction des derniers développements économiques caractérisés par la présence de grands marchés agissant entre eux.[5] Les auteurs précisent:

> le libre-échange canado-américain constitue bel et bien une option dans laquelle nous sommes engagés par défaut, c'est-à-dire faute d'avoir su - et peut-être voulu - définir une autre stratégie ou d'autres stratégies au moment opportuns.(p. 294)

L'Accord de libre-échange traduit avant tout la démission du politique à penser des alternatives plutôt qu'un large consensus. Le Canada a opté, comme le titre l'indique bien, pour le libre-échange par défaut, c'est-à-dire à défaut d'envisager d'autres voies viables dans la conjoncture actuelle. La crise économique de cette décennie à laquelle s'ajoute l'impasse constitutionnelle, ont forcé le pouvoir central à remettre en cause les relations internes, et a ouvrir son marché vers l'extérieur. Notons que le Canada n'a pas planifié de politiques industrielles qui auraient permi plus d'autonomie pour les provinces dans leur développement. Ce choix aurait eu pour effet de produire une nouvelle donnée constitutionnelle allant au delà de l'Accord du lac Meech.

En somme, le Canada aurait dû négocier, ou devrait réouvrir l'Accord de libre-échange en prenant soin d'élaborer une politique industrielle autonome et de reformuler ses assises constitutionnelles. Seule une radicalisation des exigences canadiennes pourrait contrer les effets de la continentalisation de l'économie.

Pour conclure, nous dirons que nous voilà en matière constitutionnelle confrontés au défi de la survivance d'une petite nation face à une grande. Les débats ne sont pas clos concernant l'élaboration d'une politique claire pour le Québec, ainsi que la planification d'une politique économique pan-canadienne et régionale qui n'exclu pas l'autonomie constitutionnelle québécoise. Si le livre de Brunelle et Deblock ne vise pas la formulation de solutions "prêt-à-porter", il a du moins le double mérite d'avoir, tout d'abord, démontré combien au fil des ans les politiques de développement commercial et économique ont toujours navigué en eaux troubles; mais aussi d'avoir situé la conjoncture dans laquelle ces négociations se sont déroulées. De nouvelles avenues apparaîtront dans l'horizon canadien mais les jeux sont-ils déjà faits? Pas pour les auteurs.

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Notes

1. Dorval Brunelle a déjà publié: (en collaboration avec Yves Bélanger); *L'ère des libéraux. Le pouvoir fédéral de 1962 à 1984*. Montréal, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1988; *Les trois colombes*, Montréal, VLB Éditeur, 1985; *Socialisme, étatisme et démocratie*, Montréal, Éditions Saint-Martin, 1983; *La raison du capital*, Montréal, Éditions Saint-Martin, 1980; *La désillusion tranquille*, Montréal, Hurtubise HMH, 1978; *Le code civil et les rapports de classes*, Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1975.

2. En plus de plusieurs participations aux revues *Conjoncture*, *Intervention* et *Les cahiers du socialisme*, Deblock a publié: (en collaboration avec Richard Arteau) *La politique économique canadiennes à l'épreuve du continentalisme*, Montréal, A.C.F.A.S.-G.R.E.T.S.E., 1988; et à paraître: (en collaboration avec Lucille Beaudry et Jean-Jacques Gislain); *Un marxisme centenaire*, Québec, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1990.

3. Les citations tirées du livre de Brunelle et Deblock seront à l'avenir indiquées entre parenthèses suivi du numéro de la page. Ici par exemple: (pp. 31-32)

4. Dorval Brunelle, "Déplorations sur le libre-échange canado-américain" in *Spirale*, février 1989, p. 8.

5. Je pense ici à l'Europe de 1992, au Japon, aux tentatives de mise en place de marchés communs en Afrique, en Amérique latine, etc...

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DETROIT, THE ABANDONED OBJECT

Chris Tysh

Beyond the reductive motown label, bureaucratic fences, exaggerated claims to naive drama (based on immediately bankable commodities: crime labor soul) and working-class esthetics, Detroit, if anything, resembles God's punishment after the tribe of Shems had the audacity to erect a heavenward tower, meant to impose their tongue on the world. This unfinished, de-erected structure is what warrants our writing practice. It is neither polite nor "poetic". The prelapsarain scenario holds no attraction. Useless to mourn gardens and terraces we never owned. Exits are imaginary. *"Same fuck, different stanza"* (Jurek). We walk into a close-up without proper attire, flinging our civility to the rosebush. What follows, the most visible portion, occurs in language, split at the root from its bourgeois obligations Mrs. Propriety & Mimesis).

but dirt, I sink therefore iamb, lampoon or make fun of a victim without gross motor skills, fine beads of sweat migrate to the mental commode, like slim piping in the fraternal light: *"we all penetrate her"* (Tan).

I'd say traitor, parquet inertia or even the unconscious are swept aside under the rubric of destination. I'll have to tax you for deliberate erosion of meaning, invoice the male preserve. Who's taking this down? *"Everything we do is def"* (Natambu). Detroit or the abandoned object, in and of itself, entertains a certain account checked by loss, metonymy, perversion. *"enough chrome, cum, plastic in the proper decimal places"* (Teichman). When the water marks, peculiar to this body are found, *"your last nerve will have an open relationship"* (Warren), crimped by many yoyo returns, cash drawers in the annihilating symmetry between my legs. It will be our last frieze, already faulty against the clash of live voices, hollow signs.

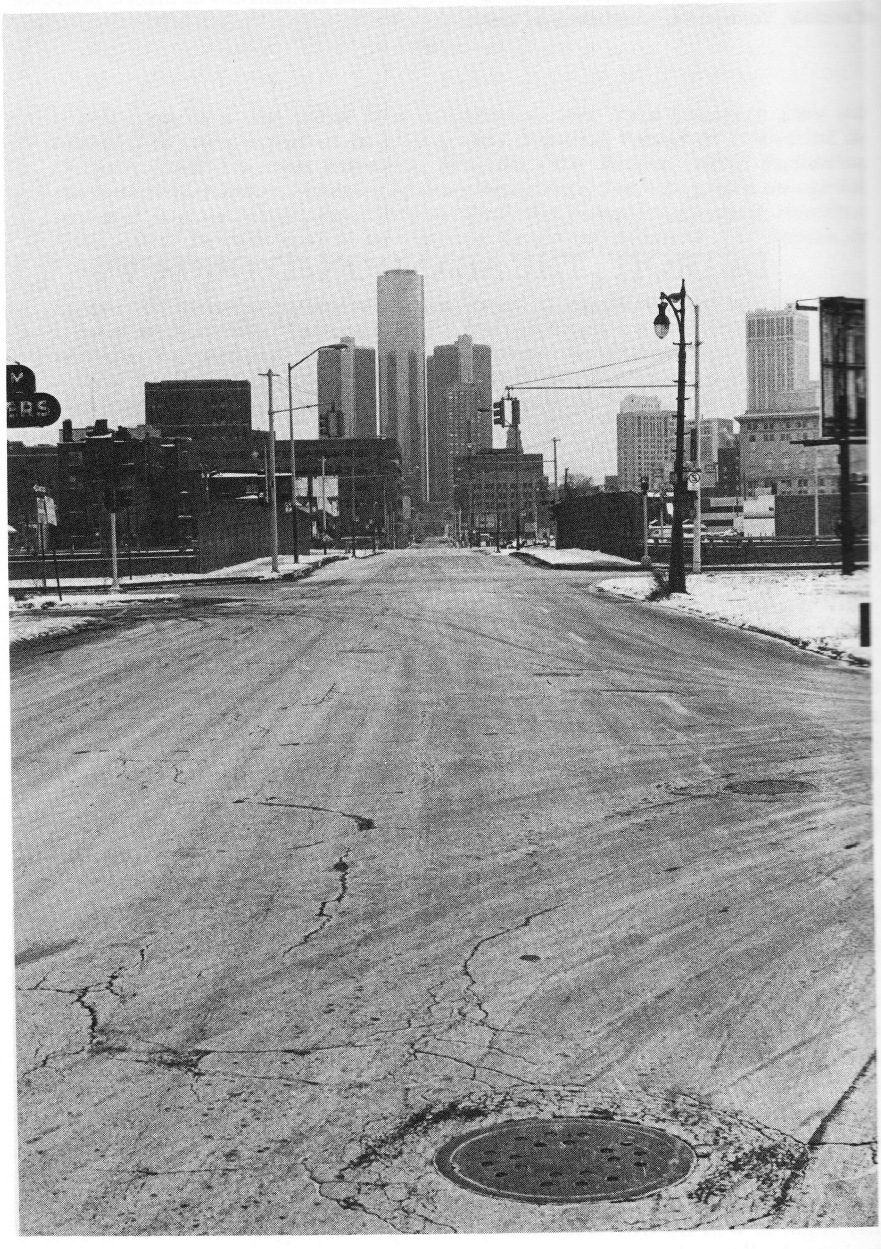

Photo: George Tysh

STREETNEWS (CIRCA 88)

I

Yo homeboy, bus this. You're clockin if you think me and my posse would bite your Nine or dukey rope. All I wanna do is get skeezed, do some cold lampin while slammin with much fresh def jams. My crew ain't out to dis the fly skeezer with the stupid fresh project gold. We ain't no rock stars! We keep our steel close by but we don't be about slippin. You don't need to sweat us. That's ill. Any knocka press us we tax'em or wax'em. All that wildin come from cuz who is dustin. Our shit is raw. Everything we do is def! We be lampin with some choice 40 dog while having our jimbrowskis served. Now that's truly cole medina.

II

Beam me up Scotty. My homegirl needs a megablast. I'm wearin my Louies cause I'm the New Jack. I let them ill while I chill. My snap protects me from bein a sucka. Don't dis me. I'm fly & stupid! All I need now is some flavavision. Then I'll be slammin.

III

Get busy or get lost, know what I'm sayin? Gon find me a crew that won't bite other MCs but find some beats that will wax the deserving and elevate the misunderstood. Def love is my destination, stupid fresh slammin is my closest relation. I ain't sellin nothin but bubblegum & hardtimes, & I'm fresh out of bubblegum. We can do dis like Brutus if you're so inclined. Bring back your posse and we'll step it off flash style ...

IV

O baby you so fly so you know why I need you to rock Jimmy. Skeezin is my desire, I ain't no liar. So shake it but don't break it. Bein with you is always def. Don't dis ma needs baby and I'll hold up yr side of the sky. We can get stupid and not sweat it if we maintain. It's time for cold lampin in the face of their disgrace. Jimmy loves ya and so do I! Bein with you is cole medina baby. Bein with you ...

Kofi Natambu

A SPILL

The body is lovingly removed.
In a collusion of surfaces.
To feel apprehension in sections.
Aware of an awkward expanse.
This is the drip and peel back.
Of skin. The brandished scream.
In a select mode of torsion.
Every moment resounds in touch.
Respect in the dry run. Cornered
in fatigue. Still chambered. Hands
interned on belly. Sporadic in the
twitch. Scored and appears wet.
More than to glance. Caress.
Responds to embroidered. Page out
of circuit. Kirlian photograph.
Enamoured clitoris in shadow.
Children on stun. Planed skull
reserves dyslexia. Under
an even number of ribcages. Stripe
the bone and soften. Blindfold of
excellence. The heart of the clamor.
Microsoft fist in the ass.
Swelling from seeing. Up the
inside. Thigh brackets with
smell intact. Over a table
ordered as a pair. Same Fuck
different stanza. Sewed up
with the steam rising. Implant.

Thom Jurek

RIGHT PLACE, WRONG DESTINATION

Markings don't phase right. Just another set
of directives passed down to the youngest
of the next slow motorcade. Make it that
pro style turn, swing left a wide arc,
the art should be one arm rests on the door
musical, one hand gripping the Hollywood Blue
suicide knob.

Somewhere in the method is the lost picture.
A way to recline along Grand River Night sector
a mass thoroughly fair to poor, where
recombinant habitat been king many years
and accepted mistakes still stink up the land
when it rains. Delta class misery.

At roadside shadowy boys lay down their arms
on car fenders in dent. They've seen which
girls in late black positively retract
into a field. Through the rear view mirror
the scene reversed. And engine heat shimmers
their language until both are mirage,
part teeth on thigh, part splash paint job
good for another winter.

It's the shrug life in a statistically correct
night under the scars. Enough chrome, cum,
plastic in the proper decimal places.
But, the only scene from overhead will be
trace patterns of raised white lettering,
notable elements for the topographic pixels
being stored for history.

Dennis Teichman

OPEN RELATIONSHIPS ARE MURDERERS

Act like playing with one by Karla suck
going to kick your motherfucking ass I love you
going to shiatsu my fist through your face
An overhand right split your eyesocket crushing
your cheekbones like Emmet Till I love you
impact tearing away skin and bone exposing
your head to new ideas and the insides will
Have an open relationship before you're pronounced dead
By Karla suck terrorist hollow
point 9mm bullet at blank
range foot across your neck teeth
crushed against a rock execution style
serrated bayonet up your ass
I love you cold steel
against the back of your head bang
I love you hole
In big hole out convex
Pieces of skull opposite fly apart together
with intellect free thinking memories and bloody medulla
fragments to be eaten by rats roaches
and stray rabid killer dogs In an instant
your mind has open relationships it's opened
I love you I'm the Karla
dentist of love and I'm gonna
stick my high speed sex drill in your mouth
and grind out your cavities with a chunk
of rubber holding them open
Your last nerve will have an open relationship
with my stainless steel stab prick
prod hook sharp try not to move your head
point rod while I suck out
all your saliva with my tube Karla coroner
stripping away your dead skin lying
on the cold steel table of artificial
spiritual growth ripping out your non functional
heart plopping it in the airtight jar
of consenting adulthood
for porcelain posterity
then we fuck ...

Roberto Warren

DESCRIPTION

I'm a man walking down the street whose means
of verification are simple. To look at in passing
they're like little more than scratches or diggings
into wilderness from the rear, the after-image
of intercourse. You remember some various persons
in the street, though not common the possibility
exists of multiple relationships between any two
of them. To sleight the intercourse into units
one takes off her moral panties in the text
called "his room." Her pink heart has passed
in blue shorts, the average look-alike known to
all by strolling. Ideas in which bitter memories
expose their seamlessness to each, that beyond
definition fall down to sleep in phlegm.

George Tysh

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT

seriously? Whether I puke
on your shoes or your mama's
depends less on feasibility
that of weather forecast than imagination
IMAGINE a torrential rain pelting the top
dollar tennis courts of La Jolla
with frozen spinach
"the stakes are never that high"
someday this will all be a digital
recording vastly insensitive
to four-letter words stenciled
on dinner plates matters of personal
defense rendered vain by the concealed
touch of a nuclear warhead
What time is it? Que hora hermanos?
red handkerchiefs bobbing up & down
in the copper heat the way a child's
cornrow stands up isn't just counterpoint
to a nation at night and small
fires I could just come close
to the fence too close or rusted without
expense of the larger set
your teeth successful like a shopping
day it took restraint's hot collar
to make me watch in silence what is good
for you and fig to me
by way of flowers I'll cut glass and yell
manure mostly fog and asshole
as I get into a black poison-control overcoat
to snicker around my vast wealth
of unnatural acts

Chris Tysh

DETROIT EROTICS

young girls work like so many pistons in and out
day in and out to move big wheel to new heights/night comes
some kind of monochrome vapor staining their legs
from a bottle on the far side of town.
at fifteen, supply on demand has made her gross
national product. we all penetrate her
hard surface glare gained by turning a trick too many
at half price. we call her
pigeon strutting her wares, wild urban dove without the frills,
but she discounts us. we are easy-
life bitches

Teresa M. Tan

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Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale

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Seduction

JEAN BAUDRILLARD

For many retro men, it's nostalgia for the return of the fantasy time where, as they like to say in the Canadian West: *"men are men and women are proud of it."* For women it's a grisly time of fantastic increases in male violence as a symptomatic sign of the triumph of the hysterical male at the end of the millenium.

The 90s then

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