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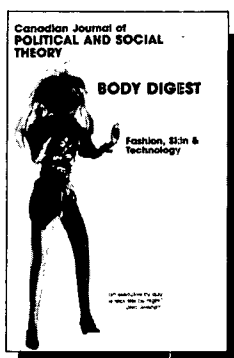
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Contents/Sommaire

CRASH POLITICS

CRASH DEMOCRACY

Like a computer with a crashed disk, Chinese Communism is actually imploding, dissolving into its elementary particles, leaving in its wake the veneer of political orthodoxy maintained by military force and the reality of a popular revolution on behalf of democratic rights.

So, the irreality of the 40th anniversary of the People's Republic of China celebrated in Tiananmen Square, with the notable absence of the people. As the Chinese Communist leadership learned to its regret, the price for economic modernization is instantaneous appeals for political pluralism. Indeed, in his recent book, *C.B. Macpherson: Dilemmas of Liberalism and Socialism,* William Leiss notes that the key political tendency today is the inevitable movement towards a 'quasi-market society'. Marked in the West by a threefold political compromise among business, government and labour, the quasi-market society is typified in the East by a gradual withdrawal of bureaucratic authority from civil society and the legitimation of marketplace rationality. Parallel to the original dynamic role of the urban bourgeoisie in dissolving the fetters of the feudal mode of production, the Chinese students in their demands for science and democracy invoke cultural pragmatism against historical materialism. Challenged, Chinese Communism immediately reverts to its feudalist reality and reveals itself as the newest form of Red Fascism.

And, of course, like a true spokesperson of Blue Fascism, capitalist style, Richard Nixon hurries to Beijing to deliver the message that political feudalism is just fine from the perspective of the empire of western multinationals. All the while, students and workers are murdered and tortured: faithful representatives of a demand for political liberation which will not die, and which is all the more ennobled by their sacrifice. Today, the only true Chinese Communists are in prison, in hiding, or have been executed on the killing fields.

Arthur Kroker

STAGING A BETTER ARGUMENT: THE STRATEGIES OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Jacques AP Mourrain

Modernity an Impossible Project

An unprecedented modernity, open to the future, anxious for novelty, can only fashion its criteria out of itself. The only source of normativity that presents itself is the principle of subjectivity from which the very time-consciousness of modernity arose. The philosophy of reflection, which issues from the basic fact of self-consciousness, conceptualizes this principle. [PDM:41][1]

According to the historiography of Jürgen Habermas, the modern age was born of an immaculate conception under the "constellation" subjectivity, time-consciousness, and rationality. From the very beginning a problem child, modernity offered only aporias and "enchanted circles" to those who tried to operate under its influence. How could it have been otherwise: a concern that takes itself as issue, a period that attempts to grasp "its own time," an epoch that "has to create its normativity out of itself" [PDM:7]? Even the critics of modernity, those who "..attempt to dissolve the internal connections between modernity, time consciousness and rationality....cannot escape the conceptual constraints of this constellation" [PDM:43]. Modernity is truly, from the outset, an impossible project; for it retains in-itself, as the condition of its own critical reflection, the tensions of an impossible synthesis: a self-reflexivity that leads to performative contradictions, temporal flux that problematizes historical

re-construction, and an absolutizing/transcendental Ratio that undermines the sovereignty of the critical subject. Thus conceived, modernity takes the form of a reflective discourse tuned/turned on itself and grounded in its own present, "...cast back upon itself without any possibility of escape" [PDM:7]. As a philosophical discourse, modernity, embodies the tensions and retentions of a fragile dis-position: a crisis in suspension.

Nevertheless, modernity is not merely a discursive formation. Material forces came into play, so to speak, to shape this moment, event, or happening that we have retrospectively baptized as "modernity." As an actu-alization or manifestation, it is perhaps a testimony to the motto of industrial (productive) capitalism: "Nothing is impossible." (In this expression there is a fantastic ambivalence between the literal and the figurative which I only point to in passing.) Along these lines, Habermas seems to re-mind Hegel that: "Expressing the modern world in an edifice of thought means of course only reflecting the essential features of the age as in a mirror, which is not the same as conceiving (*begreifen*) it" [PDM:19]. And yet, in the collection of essays *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Haber-mas is bent on "reflecting the essential features of an age" through the discourse of those who have participated in its erection, as well as through the critique of those who have engineered the de-struction of this edifice. The expression, the "discourse of modernity," for Habermas, encompass-es both reflection-writings engaged in the formation of modern thought, as well as the speculation-texts that have celebrated its demise. And while Habermas is concerned (elsewhere) with the effective performative dimen-sion/dimentia of modernity (law, morality, technology, economics, etc.), in this collection of essays he limits his focus on a reading of the philosophemes that have shaped (and/or have been shaped by) modernity.

Subjectivity in the Modern Era

> In modernity, therefore, religious life, state and society as well as science, morality, and art are transformed into just so many embodi-ments of the principle of subjectivity. Its structure is grasped as such in philosophy, namely, as abstract subjectivity in Descartes's *"cogi-to ergo sum"* and in the form of absolute self-consciousness in Kant. It is the structure of a self-relating, knowing subject, which bends back upon itself as object, in order to grasp itself as in a mirror image-literally in a "speculative" way. [PDM:18]

The principle of subjectivity is one of the major philosophical legacies of the modern era that continues to haunt present undertakings. Of course, the "subject" has suffered multiple displacements over the centuries, from Descartes to (post)modern genetics. The critical capacity of the self-reflective ego, which in the modern era was grounded in Reason, has been "inflated" to the hyper-critical self-reflexivity in the hyper-modern era. Yet, despite these shifts, Habermas argues, despite the apocalyptic acclamation

2

of the "end of man," the fundamental structure, the "architectonics of a philosophy of subjectivity," remains latent in the philosophic discourse of modernity. Even though there is consensus among the critics of modernity "..that the authoritarian traits of a narrow-minded enlightenment are embedded in the principle of self-consciousness or of subjectivity" [PDM:55], the direct (consistent) and directed (consensus) assaults on the "subject" by Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Bataille, and Foucault have not, Habermas insists, led us "..out of the philosophy of the subject."

Habermas's reading of the critics of modernity is thus bent on identifying the strain of a philosophy of consciousness that creates a tension in the subjected texts. In what appears to be a deconstructive strategy (a performative contradiction on his part perhaps), he isolates the counter-discourse within the discourse of modernity. The "principle of self-consciousness or of subjectivity" becomes a central strain (and stress) in Habermas's formulation, dissolution of, and final solution to the philosophical discourse of modernity. By tracing this principle at play, from its formative moment to the doorsteps of the postmodern, Habermas sets the *stage* for a modern solution to the crisis of subjectivity (as a philosophical discourse): the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding [PDM:Ch. XI]. At the end (of the text and of "man"), Habermas suggests the possibility of exiting this impossible project (perhaps stage left) in "Modernity an Unfinished Project." He offers us hope of fulfilling (escaping) the dialectic of enlightenment through the dialectic of reflection (reason) and critique (negation).

In a strategic move (in the form of the "yes but," which is not quite "saying yes" to the text), in the very textual organization, he guarantees rhetorically that his is the single path that leads out of the philosophy of subject, and out of the aporias of modernity. Unfortunately for us, as one critic in *Critique* lamented: "..Habermas offers no argument as to why the philosophy of consciousness should be rejected if we situate ourselves at the level of the intersubjective."[2] Such an absence of argument is characteristic of the strategic use of communicative action, where the "better argument" is determined by a silence, by an extra-linguistic ploy/play. Although Habermas accuses the critics of modernity (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Bataille, and Foucault) of working in the "shadows" of the philosophy of consciousness (or of subjectivity) it is unclear by what light this is revealed. What exactly falls under the critical purview of such an illumined perspective?

In order to evaluate the (claim to) validity of Habermas's solution to the aporias of modernity we must first re-construct the apparatus from which (his) judgement is made. I have decided to isolate the criticism which centers around the in-plotment of the "philosophy of consciousness," and its ties to the notion of *Ursprungsphilosophie* (ultimate grounding, superfoundationalism). On many occasions his critique of the critics of modernity exceeds any single issue (e.g., Heidegger's mysticism and obscurantism,

Derrida's messianism and performative contradiction, Foucault's crypto-normativism), and warrants reflection. I would like to contain myself, however; that is, I would like to restrict my reading to a re-construction (not a de-construction) of the elements of the "principle of self-consciousness and of subjectivity" as they operate in Habermas's critique. Like Dymo labels, these expressions do not always stick well to their intended targets. And it is interesting to observe the rhetorical glue that Habermas adheres to in order to make these labels stick; interesting since textual seduction is censured in a free speech community, a community where all reasonable men (as Popper put it) have freely chosen rationality. But in the free market (of communicative exchange) the strategic use of communicative action seems to justify (align) potential performative contradictions.

Once a mutual understanding of what constitutes "remaining in the shadows of a philosophy of consciousness" has been established can we begin to judge Habermas's better argument: "An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason" [PDM:Chapter XI]. The Ursprungsphilosophie of the Postmodern (Dis)solution)

> With Nietzsche, the criticism of modernity dispenses for the first time with its retention of an emancipatory content. Subject-centered reason is confronted with reason's absolute other. And as a counterauthority to reason, Nietzsche appeals to experiences that are displaced back into the archaic realm - experiences of self-disclosure of a decentered subjectivity, liberated from all constraints of cognition and purposive activity, all imperatives of utility and morality. A "break-up of the principle of individuation" becomes the escape route from modernity. [PDM:94]

With "The Entry into Postmodernity," critics searching "for an escape route" from the absolutizing and totalizing visions of modernity were now prepared to throw the baby out with the bath water. Jettisoning both rationality, history, and consequently hope, from the discourse of modernity, these critical philosophies significantly transformed the "outlook" of the principle of subjectivity.

Despite Habermas's opinion of a "decentered subjectivity liberated from the imperatives of morality," he recognizes in Nietzsche's discourse a break from subject-centered reason and the individuated ego. And, although the "realm of metaphysically transfigured irrationality" might not be Habermas's chosen path out of the philosophy of subject, he does acknowledge that Nietzsche relocates (what still remains recognizable as) the subject within a radically other horizon: an aesthetic will to power. But, as Habermas points out, this dis-placement from will to truth (the yes and no of reason) to a will to power (the yes and no of the palate), does not effectively efface the traces of a philosophy of the subject. The primordi-

4

al forces that are called upon to replace Reason, "displaced back into the archaic realm," constitute an *Ursprungsphilosophie*, a "superfoundation-alism," which Nietzsche must fall back on. A kind of unreflected vitalism (life affirmation) is the cost of a totalizing critique of reason. In addition, Habermas points out, the aesthetic realm, which Nietzsche offers as the other of reason, is (always) already invested with judgement-a rational and moral one. From these observations he concludes that: "The disclosures of power theory gets caught up in the dilemma of a self-enclosed critique of reason that has become total" [PDM:96]; "..that [Nietzsche] could muster no clarity about what it means to pursue a critique of ideology that attacks its own foundations" [PDM:96]; and finally, that the reinstatement of *Philosophy* as a privileged perspective was necessary, or run the risk of a performative contradiction. But the re-instatement of *Philosophy* as the *Ursprung* of Nietzsche's perspectivism does not de-monstrate the reinstatement of *any* specific philosophy-more specifically the philosophy of subjectivity. By pointing to the *Ursprungsphilosophie* in Nietzsche's formulation of the will to power, or fingering the archaic, primordial, and perhaps vitalistic character of this "superfoundationalism," we are merely presented with the allusion that Nietzsche's vision is an investment in, and infested by, a philosophy of subjectivity. It is a difficult projection to maintain, given Nietzsche's multiple (multiplicitous) diatribes on consciousness, subjectivity, and the ego, especially in *The Will to Power*. Even if we grant Habermas the claim that a totalizing critique of reason turns back on itself in the ("tenacious") re-affirmation of an *Ursprungs-philosophie* and in the re-instatement of the exclusive perspective (and not perspectivism) of philosophical reflection, we have yet to demonstrate the necessary connection between philosophical reflection (*Philosophy*) and the philosophy of the subject. Simply identifying these as motifs and motives in the discourse and counter-discourse of modernity only posits a possible association which begs demonstration. But Habermas insists on this allusion with two other references to *Ursprungs-philosophie*. The connection between *Ursprungsphilosophie* and a philosophy of the subject, which is only implied in Habermas's reading of Nietzsche, is (over-extended in his reading of Derrida and Heidegger. In Chapter VII Habermas carefully follows Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's philosophy of consciousness, in which he recognizes the rejection of "[t]he monadological start from the transcendental ego [which] force[d] Husserl to reconstruct intersubjective relationships produced in communication from the perspective of the individual consciousness directed towards intentional objects" [PDM:169]. He acknowledges Derrida's "central objection" to Husserl's phenomenology that:

> Husserl permitted himself to be blinded by the fundamental idea of western metaphysics: that the ideal nature of self-identical meaning is only guaranteed by the living presence of the unmediated, intuitively accessible, actual experience in the interiority of a tran-

5

scendental subjectivity purified of all empirical associations.
[PDM:174-5]

In Husserl's phenomenology Habermas sees one of the more problematic elements of the philosophy of subject: the subject/object opposition; problematic because it is a "tearing loose from an intersubjectively shared life world" [PDM:29]. Intersubjective relations established on the basis [*Ursprung*] of the "self-reflective [epochal] relationship of a knowing subject to itself" [PDM:29], engenders an "..alienated subjectivity that has broken with the common life" [PDM:29].[3]

Although sensitive to Derrida's critique of Husserl, Habermas is incensed with the intensions (and extensions) of such a critique. A deconstruction of subjectivity, Habermas objects, can only lead to the impasse of self-referencing, where an alienated ego has no recourse but to itself -solipsism-; or, it must externalize itself -the transcendental ego- in order to ground itself. In the shift from eidos to graphe, from the self-reflective ego to the self-reflexive text, although "conceived precisely as an event *without any subject,*"

> Derrida by no means breaks with the foundationalist tenacity of the philosophy of the subject; he only makes what it had regarded as fundamental dependent on the still profounder - though now vacillating or oscillating - basis of an originative power set temporally aflow. Unabashedly, and in the style of *Ursprungs-philosophie*, Derrida falls back on this *Urschrift*, which leaves its trace anonymously, without any subject" [PDM:178-9, emphasis mine]

Can there be a philosophy of the subject without a subject? No matter, since Habermas has not (manifestly) accused Derrida's grammatology or deconstruction of falling prey to the aporias of a philosophy of the subject. He has merely stated that: "Derrida by no means breaks with the foundationalist tenacity of the philosophy of the subject." This can be read analogically. Habermas merely stages a comparison between the foundationalism ("vacillating or oscillating") of deconstruction/grammatology and the *Ursprung* found(ed) in the philosophy of subject. The unabashed tenacity of Derrida's decontruction/grammatology, a question of style (Les Styles de Derrida), is what spurs Habermas on. Unless, Habermas is arguing (logically) that a foundationalist tenacity, or the stylistics of *Ursprungs-philosophie* are necessary and sufficient conditions for, and specific to, a "philosophy of subjectivity"; and that it is sufficient to locate a super-foundationalism in the "achitectonic structure" of a particular (philosophical) discourse in order to identify it unequivocally as a philosophy of subjectivity? Of course there exist *Ursprungs-philosophies* which are not philosophies of subjectivity (e.g. Group Selectionism). At this point, however, we merely have the seductive coherence of the anal-logic (tenacity and style), a retention of certain motifs which resemble each other,

and not an adequation. The connection between *Ursprungs-philosophie* and the philosophy of subject remains in suspense.

We now turn to Habermas's reading of Heidegger. Had we followed the Socratic development (the staging) of Habermas's argument, Heidegger would have been set-up (in the narrative) before Derrida. The connection between *Ursprungsphilosophie* and the philosophy of the subject would thus have already been established and Derrida would be guilty by association (if, of course, Derrida is, as Habermas is quick to point out, the "authentic disciple" of Heidegger). Derrida, through cognatic descent, would have inherited Heidegger's shortcomings despite his cognitive dissent, that is, despite his having "productively advanced it" [PDM:161].

Habermas's critique of Heidegger's investment in the philosophy of subjectivity begins by retracing the outline of the "respective contributions [of Heidegger and Bataille] to the philosophical discourse of modernity" [PDM:101]. By following "the two paths opened up by Nietzsche and traveled by Heidegger and Bataille into postmodernity" [PDM:105], Habermas proposes to show that both the high road (of authenticity) and the low road (of "sadistic satisfaction") converge upon the philosophy of subjectivity (at their limiting values). The "totalizing critique of reason," Habermas argues, forces both Heidegger and Bataille to summon "primordial forces," "images of plenitude," and appearances, in order to give life to and "to fill the abstract terms *'Being'* and *'sovereignty'*" [PDM:102]. In the case of Heidegger, the ontological twist, which defines Being as withdrawal, merely dances around the problems that a philosophy of subjectivity sets in place, without displacing them: "Heidegger tries to break out of the enchanted circle of the philosophy of the subject by setting its foundations aflow temporally," but "ties himself to the **style of thought** and **mode of reasoning** of *Ursprungsphilosophie*" [PDM:104, emphasis mine]. (Again a question of style.) "Heidegger passes beyond the horizon of a philosophy of consciousness only to stay in the shadows" [PDM:139]. Let us follow Habermas along this path and listen for the discourse of modernity in Heidegger's thinking.

Heidegger: Temporal Flux and the Fixation of Negation

> Heidegger... recognizes the inadequacies of the basic concepts of
> the philosophy of consciousness... He faces the problem of dissolv-
> ing the concept of transcendental subjectivity dominant since Kant,
> but without leveling down the wealth of differentiations that the
> philosophy of the subject has worked out, most recently in Hus-
> serl's phenomenology. [PDM:142]

In the subterranean flows of Heidegger's thoughts, Habermas locates the "architectonic structure" [PDM:151] of the philosophy of consciousness or of the subject. The connection (coupling) of Heidegger's existential analytic and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is a pivotal moment in

Habermas's demonstration (uncovering) of this "architectonic structure." The "intuitionism" of the transcendental reduction and "Husserl's way of posing problems" link Heidegger's project to "the pregiven problematics of transcendental consciousness" [PDM:138]. And, in order to take leave of the aporias and foundationalism of the philosophy of consciousness, Heidegger must resort to "abstract negation." The two domains of "abstract negation" in Heidegger's work are: (a) the belief that only a critique of metaphysics (and the destruction of the potential energies of Reason) can generate "insights" into our (social and ontological) condition; and (b) the representation of Being as withdrawal, as the "impalpable destining of Being *(Seinsgeschick)*," as the absence which marks and makes a presence. But abstract negation, according to Habermas, fails on two accounts, it is: 1) abstract and 2) negative.

Ad 1:

> 'Essential thinking' renounces all empirical and normative questions that can be treated by social-scientific or historical means, or can be at all handled in argumentative form. Abstract insights into essences thus range all the more freely within an unreflected horizon of prejudices of bourgeois culture critique. [PDM:139-40]

Ad 2.1:

> The philosophy of the subject is by no means an absolutely reifying power that imprisons all discursive thought and leaves open nothing but a flight into the immediacy of mystical ecstasy. There are *other* paths leading out of the philosophy of the subject. [PDM:137]

Ad 2.2:

> Because Heidegger does not gainsay the hierachical orderings of a philosophy bent on self-grounding, he can only counter foundationalism by excavating a still more deeply laid (and henceforth unstable) ground. The idea of the destining of Being remains chained to its abstractly negated antithesis in this respect. [PDM:138-9]

Abstract negation (in its dual form) merely re-affirms the connection of Heidegger's (dis)solution (of) to, and his investment in, Husserl's philosophy of consciousness. Heidegger "remains attached, in a negative way, to the *foundationalism* of the philosophy of consciousness" [PDM:138]. But this demonstrated failure, which Habermas senses (and is incensed with) in Heidegger's attempt to dissolve the modern subject, is founded on a weak link (compared to the missing link for Nietzsche and Derrida). Habermas, to this point, has merely affirmed that: "His whole life long, Heidegger held on to the *intuitionism*" of the transcendental reduction and to "Husserl's way of posing problems" [PDM:138]; and thus "ties himself to the

style of thought and mode of reasoning of *Ursprungsphilosophie*"
[PDM:104].

The differences between an existential analytic and a transcendental
phenomenology, which Habermas later acknowledges, are inconsequen-
tial to the above conclusions. The difference is a mere radicalization (and
here Habermas means intensification) of Husserl's in-sights. That, 1) Heideg-
ger translates Husserl's epistemological questions into ontological ones, and
that 2) Heidegger's phenomenological model is no longer contingent on
intuition, "as it was for Husserl, but [on] the interpretation of a text -not
the intuitive making-present of ideal essences that brings phenomena to
self-givenness, but the hermeneutical understanding of complex meaning
contexts that discloses Being"[PDM:144], are factors that are epi-
phenomenal to the "architectonic structure" that links (and sinks) the two
projects: 1) intuitionism (not to be confused with intuition), 2) the way
of posing questions, and 3) a "transcendental fashion" [PDM:143].

Once Habermas has established that "difference is [really] identity" (Des-
combes), he can begin to read in Heidegger's existential analytic and in
the de-struction of metaphysics the two-step that undermines the "Under-
mining of Western Rationalism": "Although Heidegger in his *first* step de-
structs the philosophy of the subject in favor of a frame of reference that
first makes possible subject-object relationships, in his *second* step he falls
back into the conceptual constraints of the philosophy of the subject"
[PDM:150].

The fact that Habermas only sees, in Heidegger's project(s), a re-play,
a re-petition of Husserlian phenomenology is not at all surprising given
the way Heidegger is set up. Guilty by association, the existential analytic
of Dasein can only be seen as "tinged with the solipsism of Husserlian
phenomenology"[PDM:149]. For the alternatives (in Habermas's eyes) are
subjectivity *or* intersubjectivity. An exclusionary logic, dependent on the
law of the excluded middle, cannot avoid lumping all that is not shared
into the domain of private property; that which is not outside the subject
must necessarily be inside it, must be proper to it; that which un-covers
an occurrence/event/happening must be understood as a source or cause.
Such a logic frames Heidegger's existential analytic (and his critique of
metaphysics) to such an extent that the structures of being-in-the-world,
the processes of world-disclosure, and the constitutive characteristics of
Dasein, can only be read in terms of Pragmatism, Epistemology, and Sub-
jectivity. The conclusion is ineluctable: temporalized *Ursprungsphilosophie*,
even "stood on its head," cannot avoid the unavoidable, cannot avoid the
void (as Habermas put it).

The "change in position" in Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, the dis-
placements to which Being (from "self-affirmation" to "self-donation"
[PDM:152]), Truth (from the "metaphysics of self-grounding and ultimate
grounding" to a "temporalized philosophy of origins"), and Reason (from
logic to a "hypostatized language of world-disclosure") are subject is not

a (good) dis-position in respect to the philosophy of consciousness or of subjectivity, Habermas insists. In Heidegger's reflections he merely sees the "shadows of a philosophy of subject," a reversal but not a de-struction of the architectonic structure of the philosophy of consciousness. "Inasmuch as he propagates a mere inversion of the thought patterns of the philosophy of the subject, Heidegger remains caught up in the problematic of that kind of philosophy" [PDM:160].

Heidegger's project is presented as a failed pragmatism [PDM:148], "tinged with the solipsism of Husserlian phenomenology" [PDM:149]. This is quite a vision, perhaps an illusion (based on allusion), for it is contingent on rather tenuous connections (guilt by association, stylistics, fashion, textual seduction). Habermas, the master hyper-connection machine, establishes contacts at vertiginous speeds, opening lines of communication (between thoughts) and effecting the illusion of a dialogic, of an argument. Actually there is an embarrassing silence on this line (of thought). The negations, reversals, and de-structions of Heidegger, the (unwilling) interlocutor, are framed as the (not quite) other voice in an exchange that will lead us out of the "philosophical discourse of modernity." As a partner in this dialogic, the radically other voice of Heidegger is muted in the name of mutual understanding.

"There are *other* paths leading out of the philosophy of the subject," Habermas points out [PDM:137];

> [t]he fact that Heidegger sees in the history of philosophy and the sciences after Hegel nothing but a monotonous spelling out of the ontological pre-judgements [*Vor-Urteile*] of the philosophy of the subject can only be explained by the fact that, even in rejecting it, he still remains caught in the problems that the philosophy of the subject in the form of Husserlian phenomenology had presented him. [PDM:137]

The foreclosure of the "can only be" is the seductive and strategic consequence of the vertiginous hyper-connections in the dialogic of mutual understanding, reaching its point of irreversibility when disagreement (the differend) itself becomes evidence to the possibility (and theoretical necessity) of mutual understanding.

Habermas's (Dis-solution (of) to the Philosophy of Subject

We followed Habermas along *one* of the paths (to thinking) opened up by Nietzsche not to uncover or finger the strategic (and rhetorical) dimension of Habermas's better argument, but rather to discover the constitutive elements of this argument, for better or for worse. In the philosophic discourse of modernity Habermas sees the paradigmatic structure that will continue to haunt those who attempt to break out of its field of attraction. In so far as the critiques of modernity are invested in modernity's

project(ion)s (temporal and ontological self-grounding and self-consciousness), they cannot escape the "enchanted circle," nor escape the "aporetic tangles of contradictory self-thematization" [PDM:294].

Habermas's critique/concern, whether articulated/voiced in the form of "a self-enclosed critique of reason" (Nietzsche), or a "performative contradiction" (Derrida), or "cryptonormativism"(Foucault), isolates the aporias, dilemmas, limitations, and contradictions that the modern frame establishes. When the totalitarianism of Reason is confronted with the totalizing self-critique of reason out comes a performative contradiction. When the philosophy of subjectivity of a "narrow-minded enlightenment" is confronted with the mindless (irrational, messianic, and Dionysian) decentering of subjectivity out comes a more deeply entrenched (tenacious) *Ursprungsphilosophie.*

The solution to this ineluctable circularity (and the effective dis-solution of the subject) is not to be found(ed) in(on) a disillusionment with Reason and Subjectivity, Habermas contends, but rather by exceeding their limits of irreversibility, where they will become un-re-cognizable as such: in the hyper-realization of Reason (into communicative rationality) and subjectivity (into intersubjectivity). Breaking out of the herme(neu)tic circularity of the discourse of modernity requires the identification of the "crucial junctures in the philosophical discourse of modernity" [McCarthy, PDM:x] (Hegel and intersubjectivity, Heidegger and pragmatism [PDM:295]), where enough lateral exhilaration will offer a potential line of escape. The only (*"other"*) way out of the discourse of modernity is not to jettison Reason and the Subject but to push it beyond the point of re-cognition. Beyond the paradigm of subjectivity lies "the through-and-through intersubjectivist paradigm of "communicative action'" [McCarthy, PDM:x]: more real-than-real.

The Hyperextension of Reason and Subjectivity in Communicative Action

Rather than reproduce the "dead ends," "contradictions," and "paradoxes" of the "new critique of reason," Habermas chooses to pursue the "counter-discourse inherent in modernity," "..to resume once again the counter-discourse that accompanied modernity from the beginning" [PDM:299]. But the follow-through of modernity (as an unfinished project) requires a "change of paradigm" [ibid] and a change of attitude [PDM:296]: in short, a shift from subject-centered reason to communicative rationality (oriented towards mutual understanding). Rather than privilege "the objectifying attitude in which the knowing subject regards itself as it would entities in the external world" [ibid], Habermas proposes as "[f]undamental to the paradigm of mutual understanding.... the performative attitude of participants in interaction" [ibid]. Rather than focus on the "world disclosing" aspect of language, Habermas proposes a "pragmatically expand-

ed theory of meaning" that highlights intramundane interactions. A shift of focus *within* (not outside) the counter-discourse of modernity (at the origin of modernity - *Ursprung*) will avoid the "..concepts of subject-centered reason and its impressively illustrated topography" [PDM:309]. On the horizon of this topography are two inter-related topics where a correction is to take place. The first is the subject's relation to language about which Habermas writes:

> As long as Occidental self-understanding views human beings as distinguished in their relationship to the world by their monopoly on encountering entities, knowing and dealing with objects, making true statements, and implementing plans, reason remains confined ontologically, epistemologically, or in terms of linguistic analysis only on one of its dimensions. [PDM:311]

By focusing on the "performative attitude of participants," emphasizing the *"communicative use* of propositionally differentiated language" [PDM:312], and shifting registers to the "establishment" of mutual understanding, Habermas intends to go beyond the paradigm of subjectivity. On the second topic, the transcendental/empirical doubling, Habermas writes:

> Now this attitude of participants in linguistically mediated interactions makes possible a *different* relationship of the subject to itself from the sort of objectifying attitude that an observer assumes towards entities in the external world. The transcendental-empirical doubling of the relationship to self is only unavoidable so long as there is no alternative to this observer-perspective. [PDM:297]

With a change of attitude, the human double retreats into the realm of the "non-coercive intersubjectivity of mutual understanding," into the "unforced intersubjectivity of rational agreement" [McCarthy, PDM:xvi]. The transcendental-empirical tension is translated (in the language of mutual understanding) into the hectic to-and-fro of the dialogic, a dialogue that exceeds the here and now (as an *instance* of the life-world) as it confirms it in action. The "subject" (or rather its instantiation in the working through of the "factual processes of mutual understanding") re-cognizes itself in the exchange value of communication, in the response-ability of alter. "Then ego stands within an interpersonal relationship that allows him to relate to himself as a participant in an interaction from the perspective of alter" [PDM:297]. The communicative construction of an intersubjective lifeworld is the paradigm shift (within the counter-discourse of modernity) that Habermas claims will reach beyond the (world disclosing) imaginations of a philosophy of consciousness and subjectivity. The shift from subjectivity to intersubjectivity, however, does not decenter the subject, nor dis-place the topoi of a philosophy of consciousness. At best it re-locates these (by shifting the scenery) within the altered intellectual landscape of

the "lifeworld" and "intention," creating new contexts in which to articulate (architectonically) old questions that are now un-recognizable. The shadow of the philosophy of consciousness dims in the twilight of subjectivity, but this is merely an enlightening effect and a play of mirrors.

In order to overcome the "fixation on the fact mirroring function of language" [PDM:312] Habermas proposes a "theory of meaning" that "pragmatically expands" the linguistics which simply accounted for constative utterances (and their truth conditions). Following Austin and Searle, Habermas recognizes that "we can do things with words" in addition to re-marking (on) the existing state of affairs. While utterances cannot always be judged by the truth condition of their propositional content, they can, nevertheless, be judged to be felicitous: they can be appropriate to a situation (or not), and they can be sincere (or not).

> Elementary speech acts display a structure in which three compo-
> nents are mutually combined: the propositional component for
> representing (or mentioning) states of affairs; the illocutionary com-
> ponent for taking up interpersonal relationships; and finally, the lin-
> guistic components that bring the intention of the speaker to
> expression. [PDM:312]

These "three fundamental functions of language" [PDM:313] must be accounted for in a formulation of communicative action, since each of these functions is open to contention. An utterance can be approached (reproached) from the perspective of its adequate representation (truth) of things (states of affairs); or from its adequacy (rightness) to the situation; or again from the point of view of the "truthfulness of the intention expressed by the speaker" [PDM:313]. Communicative action (in the service of mutual understanding) is said to expand the power of language (and of action) by including its illocutionary (and perlocutionary) force. With this expansion Habermas claims to have exploded the philosophy of consciousness and subjectivity and short-circuited the subject:

> We can find in language used communicatively the structures that
> explain how the lifeworld is reproduced even without subjects, so
> to speak, through the subject and their activities oriented towards
> mutual understanding. [PDM:149

In effect, it is "so to speak," or rather in order to speak, that mutual understanding requires a subject that appropriates its *own* (proper) activities, a subject that orients-itself-towards. While self appropriation may no longer proceed via the channels of reflection (as in the philosophy of consciousness), its essence is nevertheless recaptured in (the notion of) intention. The archi-tectonic structure of speech act theory re-instates the proper place of the subject within the processes of mutual understanding. The claim that intention and orientation are found(ed) at the level of the (performed) communicative act (a necessary claim in order to short-circuit the subject's

own intention/will as originary) is contingent on a primal repression or exclusion of a founding intentionality. The intention of the speech act can be located in and extracted from its (expanded) linguistic structure (illocutionary and perlocutionary force, and normative context) only upon an initial de-cision to define these expressions in terms of a subject's intent (Grice's cooperative principles, Schutz's principles of interpretation). Communicative action must first be de-limited as an "orientation towards" (mutual understanding) *by* a speaker before it operates *through* them. The transparency of the subject is achieved in a play of mirrors. Speech acts are defined in their reflection of intention (filtering out from the start all simulacra, all play), and intention is reflected in the speech act (as a formal character of the utterance): an immanent circularity founded on a primal de-cision. And in order to be taken seriously (as a viable alternative) communicative action (in the service of mutual understanding) must repress the speculum of an originary subject or intention. Only then can mutual understanding be seen as a "factual process" harmonizing with human (inter-action without appealing to some primal intent or orientation to consensus, agreement, or understanding. And those who would or could object are written off in this original repression:

> ..as soon as we conceive of knowledge as communicatively mediated, rationality is assessed in terms of the capacity of *responsible* participants in interaction to orient themselves in relation to validity claims geared to intersubjective recognition. Communicative reason finds its criteria in the argumentative procedures for directly or indirectly redeeming claims to propositional truth, normative rightness, subjective truthfulness, and aesthetic harmony [PDM:314][4]

The expanded theory of meaning is contingent on a restriction: the argumentative procedures of responsible participants. If we were to ask "Who are these responsible participants?" (or as Lyotard asks "Comment Juger?") we would most likely be offered Popper's tautology: All reasonable men would choose rationality! But there is something self-serving (in the service of the subject) about an assessment of communicative rationality that can only be judged by responsible participants. Habermas's real reasons are divulged in the Real Reason of communicative action. The primal repression of an exclusionary logic underlies his expanded theory of meaning.

Given this architectonic structure, Habermas ineluctably re-produced the primacy of the ego's relation to self, but in a new garb (in terms of an orientation or inclination towards), and consequently he re-doubles the tension between the transcendental and the empirical (or in Habermas's terms between the transcendental and the obligatory—we are condemned to mutual understanding). Validity claims (saying yes/no to the lifeworld), Habermas points out, "..are Janus faced: ...at the same time, they have to be raised

here and now and be de facto recognized if they are going to bear the agreement of interaction participants that is needed for effective cooperation" [PDM:322]. But a duality is not a solution to a dualism. The duality of mutual understanding (*simultaneously* contextual [concrete] and transcendental [universal]) re-doubles the philosophical stakes in the language game of modernity: universal-particular, abstract-concrete, objectivism-subjectivism, idealism-materialism; and perhaps a reminder that you can't have modernity and escape it too!

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Notes

1. [PDM:#] indexes Habermas's *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence, (MIT Press, 1987).
2. Jean Grondin, "Rationalité et Agir Communicationnel Chez Habermas," *Critique*, 62/464-5, 1986. Grondin refers to T. Rockmore's essay "Recesion de THK [Theory of Communicative Action: Vol. 1] (*Archive de Philosophie*, 46, 1983), where Habermas "claims but does not demonstrate that nineteenth century German philosophy, understood reductively through only one of its aspects, namely the philosophy of consciousness, merely leads to a theoretical dead end" (p. 671).
3. Since we are discussing the *philosophical discourse* of modernity (and trying to construct a better argument) I refer only in passing to the normative-political dimension of Habermas's objections. There can be no simple separation of perlocutionary effect (convincing) and propositional content when the utterance is simultaneously normative and descriptive. Habermas likes to think that his conclusions, in the form of metaphysical or epistemological redresses, necessarily follow from the morally and politically weighted (burdened) content (and effect) of his arguments. He presupposes a moral consensus that values reform (vs. revolt), tradition (vs. immorality), reasonableness (vs. irrationality) and hope (vs. despair and cynicism). But we can ask with Nietzsche: Why value truth rather than falsity?
4. This fourth criteria "aesthetic harmony" is introduced here for the first time (deferred to Wellmer in the margin); and referred only once again in arguing that: "(the procedural concept of rationality) is richer than that of purposive rationality, which is tailored to the cognitive-instrumental dimension, because it integrates the moral-practical as well as the aesthetic-expressive domains" [PDM:314-5]. Habermas does elaborate on the moral-practical in his expanded theory of meaning but says very little regarding the aesthetic-expressive. Why introduce a fourth criteria at this point of the argument? Unless something was previously excluded from his formal (expanded) analysis?

15

POLITICS OF IRONY IN
PAUL DE MAN

Bill Martin

> What is vertigo? Fear of falling? Then why do we feel it even when the observation tower comes equipped with a sturdy handrail? No, vertigo is something other than the fear of falling. It is the voice of the emptiness below us which tempts and lures us, it is the desire to fall, against which, terrified, we defend ourselves.
>
> —Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

Irony is a major theme in Paul de Man's work, one that cannot be analyzed in a few pages. The same goes for the politics of de Man's theoretical work. At the intersection of irony and politics, an intersection which is already contained in each issue "in isolation," a short demonstration is possible. This would be preliminary to a lengthier discussion that would attempt to historically and politically locate the concept of irony. The notion of irony that is operative in the following discussion is perhaps entirely peculiar to western modernity, in which (as Kristeva, Foucault, and others have pointed out) the particularly vertiginous and violent rites aimed at securing organic selfhood necessarily confront an existential moment of madness.[1] This point has a special significance for the present discussion, in that western irony has political-epistemological roots that are far more individualist than collectivist in orientation—no small problem since I use this irony to argue for a politics more of the latter inclination. As a further preparation for the demonstration that follows, I will subscribe to the view that the politics of a theorist are best read in the theoretical work itself,

rather than in a theorist's purportedly more "explicit political state-
ments."[2]

As the centerpiece of this demonstration I will take a passage from de
Man's well-known essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality":

> Irony is unrelieved vertige, dizziness to the point of madness. Sanity
> can exist only because we are willing to function within the con-
> ventions of duplicity and dissimulation, just as social language dis-
> simulates the inherent violence of the actual relationship between
> human beings. Once this mask is shown to be a mask, the authen-
> tic being underneath appears necessarily on the verge of madness.[3]

This is obviously a well-loaded group of sentences, one that could be
disseminated almost to infinity. Even within the specifically political (a dan-
gerous categorization to make, of course), it is the complexity of the pas-
sage which ensures that what follows will be relatively simple.

The passage shows some existentialist, more specifically Sartrean in-
fluence. This influence, however, is confined only to certain passages in
de Man, and is offset by the total effect of his essays, which display an overall
Heideggerian motivation.[4] But such "Sartrean" passages make their
presence apparent, with their rhetoric of authenticity and life on the edge.
In Sartre, of course, such sublime situations, in which beauty and terror
are inextricably intertwined, are moments of truth: both ontological and
political.

Paul Fry, in *The Reach of Criticism*, would separate these two moments
(here characterized as those of being and history):

> the fallacy of misplaced concreteness that in many cases character-
> izes the currently resurgent emphasis on the priority of history in
> interpretation. The cry of 'history" seems mistaken only partly be-
> cause, for the purposes of interpretation, historical discourse seems
> to be abstract and concrete in just the wrong places; it is also possi-
> ble to suppose–and admittedly one can do no more than suppose–
> that the representation of being rather than the representation of
> social conditions is the primary motivation of all writing.[5]

De Man shows an unresolvable struggle between these two modes of
representation, such that there remains no "primary motivation of all writ-
ing"; that is, unless the tension itself is the motivation.[6]

Terry Eagleton identifies this ontological edge in de Man as an "early
Sartrean horror of 'authenticity' and 'bad faith,' that dismal state in which
the *etre-pour-soi* cravenly congeals into the *etre-en-soi*."[7] Eagleton refers
to de Man's doctrines of "eternal separation" and "eternal alienation" from
nature. Eagleton's point is not that an identification or a full harmony with
nature is possible, rather, given that non-identity is a fact, one need not
adopt a tragic view of the human situation. At the same time, though, one
also need not attribute a "tragic" political program to this view. Another

way to work it out might be through temporal struggle against eternal alienation (indeed, this is more the German and Nordic tragic view—as opposed to the Greek).[8]

De Man is only part-Sartrean at most: as he claims: inauthenticity is unbearable, the intellectual operates under the imperative to unmask. This imperative, without the Sartrean terminology, is as much or more operative in *Allegories of Reading* (especially in the readings of Rousseau) and in the essays concerned with nature (all, certainly, but some more than others) that are found in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. This is not to argue, however, that the intellectual is always faithful to the unmasking imperative: sometimes the imperative is carried out as a ruse, that is, as an ideological remasking that *only* hides. Ironically, however, authenticity is also unbearable. What evolves then is a kind of strategy of progressive unmasking, the peeling of an onion with an infinity of layers and no center, no final substance underneath.

We can speak, then, of the deployment of irony. An alternative political strategy to both reformism and Leninism is perhaps best characterized by the phrase "coup upon coup":

> These *coups*, disseminated in other texts, produce a vertiginous effect. They challenge the concept by their unstable and iterative play of forms, their textual duplication and semantic drift, which renders us powerless to fix or seize hold of it.[9]

Rosa Luxemburg and the Spartacusbund had a similar strategy, which they called the "continuous offensive." As in politics, so in theory, there are problems. After three momentous and heroic insurrections, the *Spartacusbund* became exhausted and defeated. The time/space of theory is much different, of course, but a similar problem is encountered in Nietzsche, Adorno, and Horkheimer, and now some of the poststructuralists—who focus solely on a strategy of "determinate negation." The continuous offensive itself seems inauthentic, if it has as its purpose to simply continue *without winning* (Lenin, we should note, was interested in *winning*, while the inauthentic permanent negativity strategy is more a "living on borderlines," a more comfortable, less dangerous type).[10]

The question may arise, all the same, regarding a theoretical practice that is incommensurate with practice per se—that is, a terrain of theory differing sufficiently from practice such that the creation of a continuous dizziness in theory does not necessarily translate directly onto a similar unrelieved vertigo in practice. In de Man, the productive tension relies on a more slow-burn process than unrelieved irony, but this slow-burn in theory does not necessarily have its practical corollary—if indeed there are such—in reform. (I am somewhat suspicious, incidentally, of the idea that theory, per se, has practical corollaries, because no particular theory has a directly analogous practice. But why have analogies if you can draw a "direct" connection? It may seem, however, that the kind of theory/practice

separation I am positing revalorizes the theory/practice distinction that keeps intellectuals apart from "practical" struggles. In what follows I hope to make it apparent that this separation is exactly the opposite of what I hope for.)

Irony disrupts *organicism*, the latter being perhaps the number one target in all of de Man's work. In "Georg Lukács's *Theory of the Novel*," de Man explains irony as the discontinuous and heterogenous balancing force that stands over and against a totality that strives for continuity and organic wholeness. Both Lukács and de Man are moxie enough to recognize the interdependence of continuity and discontinuity (contrary to much current opinion, the dialectic has not been ruled completely out of order by all recent critical theorists–it is still an operative category in de Man)[11] The difference is in the stress. Lukács's problem is to make irony, the bearer of discontinuity, serve the higher goal of determination and organization. As de Man argues, however, this comes at a price which Lukács would be unwilling to pay:

> Irony steadily determines [the] claim at imitation and substitutes for it a conscious, interpreted awareness of the distance which separates an actual experience from the understanding of this experience. The ironic language of the novel mediates between experience and desire, and unites ideal and real within the complex paradox of the form. This form can have nothing in common with the homogenous organic form of nature: it is founded on an act of consciousness, not on the imitation of a natural object.[12]

Lukács, however, is somewhat aware of the consequences of his view, as de Man reports. The totality is *conceptual*, and therefore not the result of a truly organic relationship of ideal and real. For de Man, though, even the conceptual totality is not and cannot be organic (incidentally, de Man's critique on this point would disrupt the models of ethical action in analytic philosophy that depend on organic conceptions of mental events).[13] Consciousness itself already contains the seeds of its disharmony.

This assertion leads us to recapitulate the major difference between de Man and Fry–this difference is, from the opposite position, the difference between de Man and Lukács. Fry quests for the representation of being, which is typically associated with the schools of phenomenology, existentialism, and hermeneutics (and attendent critical schools such as the reception aesthetic). Lukács wants the representation of history and social conditions, typically associated with historical materialism (as well as non-Marxist sociological approaches to literature). De Man agrees more with Fry, although de Man, as a far better Heideggerian (this is no disgrace for Fry, to be sure, as there are few readers of Heidegger in de Man's class), has a much keener grasp of the idea that being has a history (and a future).[14] Indeed, one way to state the tension in de Man is by acknowledging the "opposition" between Heidegger's "historicity" (more akin to the

process by which being is represented) and Marx's "history." This tension is without a true "center," however, it forever exploits its own imbalance. Derrida describes this tense knot of history and historicity in *Memoires for Paul de Man:*

> Despite all his suspicions of historicism or historical rhetorics blind to their own rhetoricity, Paul de Man constantly contended with the irreducibility of a certain history.... The materiality of actual history is... that which resists historical, historicizing resistance.[15]

Now we can consider politicizing synthesis. Irony, far from conceptually organizing a text into a unified totality, disrupts that unity because irony marks the intrusion of consciousness, namely that of an author. As Stephen Melville explains, "ironic intrusions, overt markers of fictionality, work to disrupt any promise of realism or of totality, sundering the narrative from itself...."[16] This "parabasis" is "nearly a paradigm for de Man." Further,

> we can think of the radical ironization de Man describes as "permanent parabasis" as if it were, in effect, the placing of every word of a given text in quotation marks, marking each word with an ironic "I say." "Marking" "each" "word" "with" "an" "ironic" "I" 'say": a palpably suspicious proceeding uncannily reminiscent of much recent criticism.... Its effects, beyond parody, are various: the quotation marks can be said to ironize the words they bracket but also to attribute to them or enforce upon them an appearance of deeper intentionality; they work as well to level out the emphasis given in the usual and casual reading of the phrase, offering the possibility that each word could become emblematic of, could organize, the whole. Overall, we might say that the quotation marks "aerate" the sentence and open it to critical occupation.[17]

Perhaps the import for a political project based on this understanding of irony in de Man is readily understood. I only wish to bring out one small point: if sentences were to be restructured by taking different words to organize their total structures, they could and would then become different sentences (this is a "margin to center" activity which redefines the whole). Thus, the sentences "critically occupied" would be transformed by that occupation. They would not, however, at that stage, be "wholly other." This result could only be the product of multiple transformations.

By all rights, some understanding, if not all (by which I mean, probably not all, but some), should be transferable to dealings with the social text. What has to be considered in seizing such opportunities is whether the price can be paid for the possible consequences of such transference. By these I do not mean the practical problems associated with unrelieved vertigo, problems which are perhaps best illustrated, in terms of radical political practice, by certain stages of the Cultural Revolution in China (although

here we have a case of problems well worth generating). As I hinted earli-
er, a strategic map could deal with the need for different ratios of irony
in theory and practice. This is necessary for any transformation, otherwise,
theory would simply remain in its own unrestrainedly vertiginous realm,
which would forsake real intertextuality and maintain irony as a plaything
for intellectuals. If our text, however, is a fiction–and it is–then our trans-
formations of the text will be fictions also, which could present a greater
problem.

This possibility represents a politics that is repulsive to certain social
theories, some associated with Marxism, others with liberalism. Relativism,
one of the repulsive aspects of intertextual transformative politics, if it must
be accepted philosophically, need not be politically vicious or politically
lame (as with Richard Rorty). Granted, there is a danger of volunteerism
and decisionism, but this is not specific to relativism. Furthermore, there
are different sorts of relativism (a point lost on many commentators in the
objectivity/relativism debate). The sort that falls out from de Man's con-
ception of irony cannot simply call for the exposure of the fictionality of
texts; deconstructive irony further entails a recoding, though one that is
no less fictional. If applied in this way to the social text, de Man is very
much like Foucault. And, as for Foucault, the question that is repeatedly
raised, justifiably so, is Why is the transformed fictional society any better
than the status quo fictional society?

Before gesturing toward the resolution of this question, however, there
is a need to say something about madness.

In "De Man and the Dialectic of Being," Allan Stoekl writes,

> Unlike natural objects, entities engendered in consciousness, in their
> very beginning, imply death. This death, in the context of language,
> means nothing other than the failure of the word to become "en-
> tirely literal" and to originate as an "incarnation of a transcenden-
> tal principle." Much as the poet might like to grant the word a status
> as natural object, and therefore to appropriate for himself, through
> his word, a transcendental principle, the way is barred. Failing to
> be literal, the poetic word, and poetic language, are thus condemned
> to be metaphorical, to be figurative.[18]

Life occurs between the object of "nostalgia for the object" (that is, un-
mediated touch with reality) and death. The squeeze play is further com-
plicated by the fact that the space between the past (object) and the future
(death) is not simply to be defined in terms of the static present or
"moment"–this definition smuggles in the transcendental. Rather, the
present is moving, it is movement, and it is often volatile. Nostalgia and
looking toward the future (at least in the form of prophecy, a name for
the theoretical resistance to theory), then, often takes the form of a dream
of non-movement. The dream is utopian in the derisive sense of the term
used by Marx. One cannot say that the dream is absent from de Man, but

then one cannot also say that the dream is absent from Marx either.[19] But de Man knows that the cessation of movement, and thus of certain forms of alienation, is impossible. Too many reminders of this fact, though, in the form of ironic-vertiginous interventions, bring us close to madness: one can only live with so much inauthenticity. The constant temptation then is to give in to "the voice of emptiness below," the voice of death-relief.

Another death is achieved by simply ignoring all movement (i.e., "zoning out"). This is typical of western societies, in particular the U.S., where this death simply comes in a package like everything else. In the midst of such "sanity," a bit of craziness is certainly called for. Being constantly involved with activities of the mind and consciousness, intellectuals are perhaps most sensitive to the tension between complacent sanity and utter madness born of frustration (that is, intellectuals conceptualize the tension, and this "enlightenment," necessary as it is, exacts its toll, in part because intellectuals are not and cannot be the principle agents of the social transformations that are demanded by this tension between the two static spaces). Against the generated vertigo the intellectual possesses some tools of analysis, which doesn't relieve the spinning (which isn't the point anyway), but makes it bearable most of the time. For non-intellectuals there is less a chance of the necessary craziness (in the sense in which a popular song has it: "Let's go crazy") spilling over into madness, and therefore a need and a responsibility for intellectuals to *ironize* society.

What has just been said somewhat duplicates the theory/practice disjuncture in terms of intellectuals and non- intellectuals. There is no exact replication such that, when the theory/practice division is invoked (perhaps implicitly), the discussion is already focussed largely on (the terrain of) the relation between *radical* theory and *radical practice*, while the second distinction, even if it applies mainly to radical intellectuals, also intends application more to the public rather than only to the radical activists. Admittedly, both distinctions are not only artificially created by a social form that still depends on an obsolete division of mental and manual labor, rather, the distinctions are capable, in an overly-rigid form at least, of being put to quite reactionary uses. In other words, certain kinds of recognition given to these distinctions can encourage their further reification. Nevertheless, all the discussion about theoretical practice in "high-crit" circles for the last fifteen years or so has perhaps led to its own kind of reification and pacification. There has most recently been an alarming "new age" aura to this "theoretical practice," as though spreading "good vibes," in the most sophisticated fashion of course, is all the practice we theorists need worry about. The kind of practice that coheres with the theory engaged in here is not indicated in a concrete, programmatic sense, which of course is a serious problem that I have dealt with elsewhere, and indeed in ways other than in "theory" per se.[20] In terms of the way intellectual activity is conducted in Western countries, however, it is clear that the only way to proceed toward *ironizing* society, or toward any other attempt to break down

the artificial and obsolete distinction between theory and practice, is to "occupy" that distinction from, as Derrida puts it, "a certain inside." This is not just a prescription for reform, but a very important strategic question that asks exactly what and where this "inside" is.

The result could be a *literal* social order that self-consciously constructs and transforms its fictions. On an individual level, limited in a specifically individualistic way, this is the constant theme of John Irving's *The World According to Garp*: that is, to write one's life like a book. Naturally, one would want to write a *good* book. Social writing, a question of extremely complex intertextual politics, would then require the intersection of aesthetics and "practical reason," a theme on which de Man wrote in several later essays.[21] As de Man has shown, the intersection is always already there: deconstructively reading the intersection is the act of reading what is already deconstructed, two discourses (or "two" discourses) which are thoroughly inter-implicated.

Gayatri Spivak recommends "reading the world."[22] Agreed: nevertheless, this is a transitional stage to a shift to a writerly mode, to writing the world, living literally. What we have now is obviously quite the opposite of a writerly politics.[23]

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Notes

1. See Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language: *A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez; ed. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).

2. One cannot assume that a theorist necessarily knows the language of such statments, involving as it does a close relation to programmatics–which can also be called political moxie. It is exceedingly difficult to participate in this language game without practical involvement on some level. The reverse is just as true: understanding of politics in a programmatic sense does not necessarily entail a grasp of the ontological and epistemological claims made by political discourse. This point is amply demonstrated by de Man in his readings of Rousseau in de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979).

3. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight*, 2d ed., rev. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 215-16.

4. Another paper would be needed to deal with the way Sartre battles Heidegger in de Man's essays. It is true that the Sartrean influence in "The Rhetoric of Temporality" and earlier essays may be largely due to the time frame (fifties and sixties; "Rhetoric" was first published in 1969). De Man discusses the "influence" of Sartre in Stefana Rosso, "An Interview with Paul de Man." See Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 118-19.

5. Paul Fry, *The Reach of Criticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 3.

6. This is a tension notably lacking in *The Reach of Criticism*. It would be interesting to show how this tension, including its political associations, is already embedded in the "pure" representation of being. This would be a key task in any articulation of a deconstructive politics.

7. Terry Eagleton, "The Critic as Clown," in *Against the Grain* (London: Verso Books, 1986), 156; also see 157-62.

8. I explore this theme further in "Return to the land of weird theologies," *Social Epistemology*, 1:2 (1987): 203-209.

9. Stéfan Agosti, "Coup upon *coup*: An Introduction to *Spurs*," in Jacques Derrida, *Spurs*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 9.

10. This is essentially Habermas's critique of the aforementioned theorists. See *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987). Also see my "Nomad and empire: Nietzsche, guerilla theatre, guerilla war," in *Arena*, no.77 (1986): 88-95. The politics of "living on borderlines" have more contemporary references in works such as Michael Ryan, *Marxism and Deconstruction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, trans. Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan, and Maurizio Viano (Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1984), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988).

11. Interesting and recent work that deals with the fate of dialectic in deconstruction, and in thinkers who take a similarly ambivalent attitude toward dialectic (perhaps not rejecting it altogether, but often making the dialectic come apart at the seams, as with Bataille, Levinas, Kristeva, etc.), is Mark Taylor, *Altarity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

12. Paul de Man, "Georg Lukács's *Theory of the Novel*," in *Blindness and Insight*, 51-59; quotation from p.56.

13. Nevertheless, Donald Davidson (one of the best-known and certainly one of the best in recent analytic philosophy) has recently challenged this kind of organicism, arguing for an analytic version of Freud's theory of the divided self. See "Deception and Division," in *Actions and Events: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, eds. Ernest LePore and Brian McLaughlin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 138-48; and "Paradoxes of irrationality," in *Philosophical Essays on Freud*, eds. Richard Wollheim and James Hopkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

14. The comparison by Paul Fry, of Heidegger's "historicity," de Man's "temporality," and Derrida's *differance* is not appropriate, as de Man does not think that historicity–or history, for that matter–has the same sort of "effect" as temporality. See *The Reach of Criticism*, 202-203.

15. Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, trans. Jonathan Culler (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 52-53. The project de Man was working on at the time of his death involved a comparison of Marx and Kierkegaard as readers of Hegel, a project that certainly would have gone deeper into the interpenetrations and antinomies of historicity and history. See "Interview," 120-21; also, Wlad Godzich's 'Foreword" to the same volume, pp.x-xi.

16. Stephen Melville, *Philosophy Beside Itself* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 151.

17. Ibid, 151-52.

18. Allan Stoekl, "De Man and the Dialectic of Being," *Diacritics* (Fall 1985): 37-38.

19. See, for example, "Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image," in de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 6; cited in Stoekl, p.38. Consider, also, the well-known pastoral scene in *The German Ideology*, in which Marx and Engels speak of hunting and fishing in the morning, painting in the afternoon, and criticizing after dinner. Naturally, it is better to criticize on a full stomach, and who doesn't know that an intellectual's best thoughts usually come at night, when she or he should be in bed? Some interesting comments on Marxism and pastoral are found in de Man, "The Dead-End of Formalist Criticism," in *Blindness and Insight*.

20. Three basic avenues have not been explored much by radical intellectuals lately. This is in part because these avenues don't seem suave to some of today's deconstructionists, who seem to think that all we need is another reading of some canonical poet and perhaps a trip to the polling booth every four years to vote for the liberal candidate (which, in the present political atmosphere, is the liberal end of conservativism). The three avenues I have in mind are: 1) work in popular culture (i.e., using popular culture to popularize critical/oppositional ideas); 2) political activism; 3) donating money to radial causes. It seems odd that I must mention this last point, but under the notion of 'theoretical practice" many intellectuals have come to conceive of themselves as the only "class" that they can really discuss. To my mind there may be some problems with Sartre's model of the "engaged intellectual," but there are many of aspects of the practice that are still worthy of emulation, though perhaps under a different model. Undoubtedly there are some good reasons why radical intellectuals find it hard to work with radical activist groups, but some of the recent trends toward disengagement are not the right way to go (and admittedly I cannot offer Paul de Man as a very good model–though that of course is not the point of this essay). Interestingly, but also unfortunately, many of to-day's academic feminists, Marxists, Foucauldians, etc., show the same unwillingness to sully their hands. This is one reason for stressing the programmatic dimension of polit-ics and social theory as needing to be dealt with as thoroughly as the theoretical dimen-sions per se. For the most part, deconstructionists, or whoever, who have not considered the programmatic dimension in its own terms (that is, as a practical engagement which too many intellectuals in the deconstructionist camp, especially in the U.S. either sneer at or assume is fully present in their writing), almost always turn out to have some quite naive preconceptions about the larger social arena. Please understand that I say these things as someone who is devoted to Derrida's work and who has tried to incorporate that work into social theory.

21. See, for example, de Man, "Hegel on the Sublime," in Mark Krupnick, ed., *Displace-ment: Derrida and after* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1983), 139-53; "Con-clusions: Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator'," in *The Resistance to Theory*, 73-105; "Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant," in Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica, eds., *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 121-44.

22. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Reading the World: Literary Studies in the 1980s," in G. Douglas Atkins and Michael L. Johnson, eds., *Reading and Writing Differently* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1985), 27-37.

23. I would like to thank the reviewers at the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* for their valuable and interesting comments; I tried to do these comments some justice in the rewrite, though I think only a fully-articulated encounter between de Man and social theory would answer the many questions that can and should be raised con-cerning the very brief engagement I offer here.

POSTSCRIPT: BLINDNESS AND HINDSIGHT

Of the critical responses to the "de Man" *affair,* I find Derrida's article, "Like the Sound of the Sea Deep within a Shell: Paul de Man's War"[1] appropriate in every respect. In fact, it is refreshing to find Derrida, especially in the last several pages of his essay, finally calling out those journalists and academics who are all too ready to speak but haven't found the time or wherewithal to read, study, investigate, and think. As Derrida points out, it is the latter group, the professors who for the moment would be journalists, who are the most infuriating. In a period in which students have been encouraged to only want that "education" that has an immediate cash payoff, these professors also readily call "incomprehensible" that which they cannot be bothered to read. (And it is very often that one encounters academics who dismiss de Man, Derrida, etc., out of hand, who have read *absolutely nothing.*) This is a triple abdication of responsibility: to those who are attempting to seriously pursue the questions that are raised by recent developments in critical theory and philosophy; to those students who see more than dollar signs behind learning; and, not least, to those people who, through various modes of marginalization, have been denied access to what is ordinarily called "literacy." I don't think that there is any question but that it is time to enter upon a counter-offensive against *this kind* of anti-intellectualism that infects the ranks of intellectuals themselves. And this is true, I think, despite the fact that some intellectuals associated with recent critical theories sometimes play a wishy-washy game concerning the political implications of such theories.[2] The view, however, that thinkers such as Derrida have only recently become "political" is belied by even a cursory look at earlier works. Part of the effort in recent theories is to "reinvent politics," in part through raising and reinventing the problem of language. Given some of the longstanding problems of radical politics thus far, this attempt at reinvention sounds to me like a good thing. And the fact is that, even when some intellectuals, including some associated with recent critical trends, justifiably incur anti-intellectual sentiment on the part of people outside of ordinary intellectual circles (and it is silly to pretend that there are such circles, in the United States anyway, that are somehow distinct from the academy), none of that cancels the need for thinking. The real point of criticism of intellectuals for "intellectualism" has to be that there needs to be a reconnection of thought and practice– and a rethinking and a new practice around what the connection might be. None of the conservative criticism of de Man, and even little of the progressive or radical criticism, seems to center around this point.

Radical politics has to learn once again, in this post-Stalin period, how

to integrate insights from diverse sources. It is a foolish remnant of Stalin's compression of Marxism to simply look for some one-to-one correspondence between theory and theorist. That is why I haven't thought it very important to speak to the "question" of someone called "Paul de Man himself." To the extent that that question needs speaking to, however, I find Derrida's essay by far the most insightful–and the most engaged with history, for that matter.[3] In closing, of the many issues raised in Derrida's essay, I would simply like to comment on two, closely interrelated themes: *confession* and *morality*. In much of what has been written concerning the *affair*, there seems to lurk (at least implicitly, but sometimes quite explicitly) the idea that de Man should have *confessed* his activities. Two sorts of inquiry can be addressed to this lurking demand. First, in practical terms, *who* should de Man have confessed to? Before what forum? In what form? Even from a purely formal standpoint, this business of confessing is a strange thing. But that is by far the lesser question. What is more interesting is the structure of "confession" itself. This of course is a question that de Man has written about, especially in the chapter in *Allegories of Reading* titled "Excuses." The analysis, which centers on Rousseau's *Confessions*, has been quoted in several of the attacks on de Man. Here is the passage most often alluded to, as if quoting these lines constitutes some sort of *prima facie* indictment:

> ... it is always possible to face up to any experience (to excuse any guilt), because the experience always exists simultaneously as fictional discourse and as empirical event and it is never possible to decide which one of the two possibilities is the right one. The indecision makes it possible to excuse the bleakest of crimes because, as a fiction, it escapes from the constraints of guilt and innocence.[4]

There the citation typically begins and ends,[5] which is of course a way of disarming the theoretical enterprise of which this passage is a part: the sentences immediately after this citation make it clear that acting *literally* by no means absolves one of responsibility.

> On the other hand, it makes it equally possible to accuse fiction-making which, in Holderlin's words, is "the most innocent of all activities," of being the most cruel. The knowledge of radical innocence also performs the harshest mutilations. Excuses not only accuse but they carry out the verdict of their accusations. [293]

A little further on in the same essay, de Man claims: "Excuses generate the very guilt they exonerate, though always in excess or by default" [299]. In other words, de Man's analysis aims to show what a disingenuous thing a confession can be.

At several places in his essay, Derrida maintains that we must remain "on guard against morality." In the place of morality, Derrida appeals (and this is a theme in many of Derrida's writings) to *responsiblity* and to what he

27

calls the "ethico-political." It is within the horizon of the latter that the problematics of the former have to be worked out–and, to my mind, it is the problematics of responsibility that de Man not only worked out in the essay on Rousseau's *Confessions*, but in all his work as a philosopher-literary critic and as a professor and mentor as well[6] De Man's *response* to the things he mistakenly thought and wrote in 1941-42 was to pursue a course that questioned the kind of foundationalist claims–of a national, "racial," or metaphysical sort–that held him in their sway in those years. Derrida, Geoffrey Hartman, and Christopher Norris, among others, demonstrate this quite clearly.[7] No "personal accounting" could be worth nearly as much as this activity of questioning. But, those who would make yet another morality play out of this *affair*, this non-controversy, of course do not want to touch that side of things. In "Autobiography as De-Facement," de Man makes a claim that is not unusual in deconstructive and other forms of recent criticism: that personal identity is a kind of "legal fiction," the product of–and perpetually caught up in–a particular system of political/legal designations[8] What pleasure the morality players would take in this passage! Except that, if actually *read*, the passage points to what is exactly wrong about the morality play: guilt and *complicity*, especially complicity, are not such simple matters. Perhaps the article in the *New York Times*, the one that "broke" the de Man "story," was "right next to," or at any rate, "in the same paper with," articles defending the *Contras* or the Strategic Defense Initiative, or attacking the legal team of Tawana Brawley for "politicizing" her case. After all, a good bit of the morality play around de Man concerns articles that were right next to or in the same paper with his. And some of these were admittedly politically-awful articles in a collaborationist newspaper–a bit like the *New York Times*. The point is that, especially after the hypocritical and shrill moralizing of the Reagan years (a bleat which shows little sign of abating), people who are actually concerned with ethical-political questions ought to just cut out the morality play, and think about *responsible* ways to make the future unlike certain aspects of the past. I think that is the course Paul de Man pursued.[9]

Bill Martin

CRASH THEORY

Notes

1. Critical Inquiry 14 (Spring 1988), pp.590-652.

2. It is unfortunate, too, that many of the articles that have taken up the defense of de Man's work, and of deconstruction generally, have also exemplified this same wishy-washy, apolitical (though in a moralising way- approach. I think this is partly because of the *defensive* posture many such critics have assumed; the exciting thing about the Derrida piece is that he assumes a quite different posture, a posture that I hope the rest of the deconstructive critics are ready for.

3. I do not want to give the impression that there has not been any other insightful writing on this subject. The articles by Hartman, Miller, Norris, and Culler all have their strong points. See, in that order: "Blindness and Insight," *The New Republic*, March 7, 1988; J. Hillis Miller in *Times Literary Supplement*, June 17-23, 1988; the final chapter to Christopher Norris's *Paul de Man: Deconstruction and the Critique of Aesthetic Ideology*, "Postscript: On de Man's Early Writings in *Le Soir*" (London: Routledge, 1988-; and, "It's Time to Set the Record Straight About Paul de Man and His Wartime Articles for a Pro-Fascist Newspaper," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 13, 1988. The article by Walter Kendrick in the *Village Voice Literary Supplement* (April 1988), "De Man That Got Away," suggests that the defense offered especially by Norris and Hartman, that de Man refuted his earlier rhetoric of authority with his later work, means that we have to read all the later work as exemplary of one man's neurosis. Why just one man? Why not read the later work as the neuroses of a lot of people? It seems to me that if we have neuroses in later life that are the result of having chauvinist attitudes earlier in life, then these are not the worst sorts of neuroses to have. If Hartman and Norris erred in making this judgment, they only did so in not showing that there are larger lessons to be learned from the development of de Man's later work, especially as seen against the background of the *Le Soir* articles. That is, I would like to see the better-known deconstructionists take to the political offensive around the questions raised by the de Man affair, though admittedly this means expanding the deconstructionist arsenal somewhat beyond the boundaries it has largely worked in in the U.S. and England.

4. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), p.293.

5. As in "Deconstructing de Man" by Jon Wiener, in *The Nation*, January 9, 1988. I hope that I will not be too presumptuous in saying that *The Nation* usually does far better than this. Wiener's article, or at least its appearance in a progressive magazine, is one more instance of how some progressives and radicals have opted for a smug illiteracy insomuch as recent theory is involved.

6. See J. Hillis Miller, "Reading Unreadability," in *The Ethics of Reading* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1987), pp.43-59.

7. Perhaps the one foundationalism that de Man did not interrogate so fully concerns gender. Though de Man does take up this question in *Allegories of Reading*, his reading of the question of nature, and humanity's estrangement from it, leads one to wonder if there might be a gender question lurking there as well. Klaus Thewaleit argues that the idea of a "whole, organic nature" is nothing but a *male fantasy* (the title of his book: trans. Stephen Conway [Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1987]) "fueled by the metaphysical trajectories of Plato, Augustine, Newton, etc." But "why privilege nature as a whole that we aren't"–i.e., that we are estranged from? "Why privilege us as aliens to nature as opposed to beings perversely within nature interacting as we do partially, mythically, specifically?" These questions were suggested to me by a reader at *CJPST*, who further argued that "this portioning of nature as essentially something other to us (whose cons-

29

ciousness condemns us to the tense borderlines as perpetual prisoners in a prison house of language) seems to go against the ironic grains of both a radical practice of deconstruction and the non) essentialist tendencies of physics the other side of quantum theorizing." Though I find these questions very helpful to think about (and I can't pretend to really think very extensively about them here), I think the reference to quantum theory is revealing, for much of the philosophizing done recently on the basis of this theory assumes an essentialism of meaning. I think I would stay with de Man in thinking that it is the attempted creation and ascription of meaning that really does separate humanity from nature. Donald Davidson's thesis of "anomolous monism" indicates something similar: it is one thing to be "of" nature, another thing to be a "natural entity." Perhaps the reader had in mind the same sort of point made by Eagleton, that de Man's view of human separation from nature seems tragic and informed by a certain kind of nostalgia. De Man's deconstruction might seem, then, like a kind of existentialism turned upside-down. I think there is that element in de Man, though "The Rhetoric of Temporality" was a turning-point in terms of how predominant that element was. Theweleit, however, reads the metaphysical trajectories and attendant male fantasies of Plato, etc., as essential to the formation of fascist ideology. Whether this is an unexplored aporia in de Man's work is a question that is worth pursuing, though the discussion will have to be carried on at length elsewhere. I would simply suggest that, though I find antiessentialist views toward what it means to be "human," or what it means to be a "gendered person," superior to essentialist views, it is never simpy determined from the outset that what is to be made politically out of anti-essentialism will in any given instance be superior to some of the political products of essentialist thought. (On this point, see Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, forthcoming from Methuen.)

8. In *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984-) pp.67-81.

9. Thanks to Clayton Koelb (Comparitive Literature, University of Chicago) for suggesting the title for this "Postscript." And thanks to the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* for allowing me to append the "Postscript" to "Politics of irony in Paul de Man."

THE LEGACY OF [LIBERTY]:
RHETORIC, IDEOLOGY, AND AESTHETICS
IN THE POSTMODERN CONDITION

John Louis Lucaites
Maurice Charland

> The spectacle is ideology par excellence, because it exposes and manifests in its fullness the essence of all ideological systems: the impoverishment, servitude, and negation of real life.
>
> - Guy Debord
> Society of the Spectacle[1]

The argument has recently been made that we live in an era in which signs have increasingly less to do with life. This, it is claimed, is either a consequence of our modernity, or an index of our postmodernity. In either case, the assumption is that the rationalist assault on tradition and the technological capacity to produce images favor a system of sign production in which the epistemology of representation becomes an increasingly unnecessary alibi for the value of the sign. Such is the conclusion one might draw from Jean Baudrillard's *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe.*[2] Baudrillard's diagnosis asserts the dark side of Walter Benjamin's prognosis made forty years earlier in "The Work of Art In The Age of Mechanical Reproduction," according to which the development of the reproducible and hence autonomous sign is treated, not as the dialectic of enlightenment, but as one of two historical alternatives: the emergence of a proletariat freed from the weight of dead generations through the politicization of art, or conversely, the massification of the social as spec-

tators who are participants in their own subjugation and destruction. According to Benjamin the advent of mechanical reproduction undermined the authority of tradition and the strength of historical rememberance. This loosening of signifiers from received signifieds, while potentially liberating, also led to the danger of "aestheticization," a mode of discourse in which politics collapses as the social becomes as a commodified object of contemplation, rather than a condition of *praxis*.[3] A further consequence of this process is the loss of the real, for once signification becomes arbitrary, the signscape itself can become a closed, self-referential field. It is the loss of such a fixed and representable social that Baudrillard, and later Kroker and Cook, have commented upon extensively.[4]

Our fate, at least according to these pessimists of postmodernity, is one in which the social, if it ever existed, has disappeared into its own simulation, so that aesthetic "shock effects" are all that remain to mobilize–or at least to motivate–the population. Rhetoric, in the classical sense of an active political speech, productive of knowledge and wisdom through an agonistic process, is absent.[5] As a result, speech becomes an empty productivity within the logic of a dead power that is based in the inertia of sedimented social structures; the only political discourse that remains short-circuits reasoned judgment, and displaces it with the pleasure of the consumption of signs.

This formulation is tempting, even though we are reluctant to admit all of its premises or claims. We agree, in particular, that there appears to be a trend in the discourses of mass national politics that operates through simulation and aesthetic effect to the exclusion of reasoned discourse. We wish neither to assert, however, that substantial social relations necessarily have disappeared, nor that there is a necessary contradiction between "good reasons" (or social reason) and aesthetic effects in public discourse.[6] The possible disappearance of social relations is not particularly germane to our analysis in so far as we are concerned with the critical assessment of public discourse, not the sociological analysis of the more private realm of everyday life. The relationship between public reason and aesthetic effect, is both central and immediate to our concerns. Nevertheless, we refuse to be scandalized by the post-structuralist discovery of the complicity between truth and power, or by the recognition that human knowledge and desire are ultimately without foundation.[7] These are not only Nietzsche's insights, but the insights of rhetorical theory, which, since the battle between Plato and the Sophists in the fifth century B. C., has taught that historical memory and ethical value are always configured in discursive acts, and that there is no simple untangling of the cognitive and affective bases for motivation, commitment, and judgment.[8] Political rhetoric has always simulated the social as the medium by which to call an order of power into being, and as such, the authentic, the rational, and the true have always been problematic.[9] What marks "postmodern" mass politics as distinct and troubling is not therefore the failure of the enlight-

enment project to emancipate reason from prejudice, nor even the theoretical impossibility of a social guided by pure reason, but the very collapse of "good reasons" altogether.[10] Rhetoric's reason is the practical rationality that persuades a free community by giving voice to its experience in terms that permit collective life. Rhetoric is thus a creative and emancipatory force. Postmodern mass politics, as we shall see, replaces the collective imaginary of rhetoric with simulacra that remain specular and uninhabitable, being powered neither by reason nor intuition, but by aesthetic effects.

Constructing [Liberty]

Our particular concern in this study is with [liberty].[11] More specifically, we are concerned with the way in which the contemporary ideological raison d'être of the United States of America is located in [liberty] as an aesthetic object that is detached from the actual experience of public life. To that end, we will probe the 1986, nationally televised celebration of the Statue of Liberty's centennial as a means of identifying the way(s) in which aesthetic value is inserted into the terms of ideological, reason-giving discourse.[12]

Our theoretical starting point is Michael Calvin McGee's analysis of [liberty] in the Whig/liberal ideology.[13] According to McGee, [liberty] is not a thing, but an "ideograph," a term or sign that must be used by public officials as a warrant for the uses of state power within Whig/liberal societies.[14] More to the point, McGee claims that as a necessary commitment to community, [liberty] lacks any fixed meaning. Rather, he suggests that at particular historical moments, those seeking to exercise power in the name of the state deploy the community's generalized commitment to [liberty] as an argumentative warrant for their actions, and then justify their use of the term on the basis of a proffered interpretation of the community's collective tradition. Political practice is thus based in a public, rhetorical production of history and tradition that seeks to appropriate [liberty] to one's ends. In the language of postmodern theorists of culture, simulation (a rewriting of "history," of received simulations) provides [liberty] with significance.

What makes a particular reconstruction, or simulation, of [liberty] valid is problematic. For McGee, the historical memory of some particular audience, e.g., Congress, women, blue collar workers, the American "people," would permit it to make a judgment as to the propriety of the particular usage. Such an audience would compare the proffered structuration of power warranted by [liberty] with other similar structurations in its collective experience. In the process, this audience would consider whether or not this particular usage of [liberty] afforded a feeling of comfort "in the presence" of power consistent with what it had come to expect on the basis of past experiences.[15] The test of the propriety of [liberty] as a war-

rant to power would therefore not be based on a pure and abstract cognition, but on something akin to a Kantian aesthetic judgment–a judgment as to the universal validity of an experience of a feeling of appropriateness. However, this would not actually be a Kantian aesthetic judgment in that it would integrate knowledge, ethics, and art. Moreover, it would be one's encounter with the world, rather than with the formal interplay of the faculties, that would be the basis for pleasure, just as it would be historical remembrance, rather than the cultivation of sensibility, that would be the ground for a judgment. Thus, [liberty] would have no transcendental foundation, but only the grounding that is provided by the combination of collective experience and memory constructed in a community's history. Like all ideographs, [liberty] is ultimately a floating signifier, a product of rhetoric that functions in simulacra, anchored only by the experience of tension between an historically constituted historical memory and its attempted reconstruction in particular historical moments.

Benjamin linked the aestheticization of politics to the loss of aura or authenticity.[16] Certainly, such a loss marks both an unmooring of historical memory and its susceptibility to aesthetic effects. One must exercise care, however, in condemning outright the *weakening* of the power of tradition, for such a movement produced Anglo-American, Whig/liberal conceptions of [liberty] in the first place; nevertheless, it is equally important to recognize that the *destruction* of collective historical memory radically undermines a community's capacity to judge relations of power. It is from this perspective, then, that we consider the national, mass mediated celebration of [liberty]'s most cherished monument in 1986 as more or less symptomatic of the condition of contemporary public discourse in the United States. In particular, we will focus on how television simulates through spectacle the historical memory it claims to evoke, and how it therefore risks producing a configuration of [liberty], the substance of which is but the pleasure of a collective celebration of state power.

The week leading up to the unveiling of the restored Statue of Liberty was, in itself, a sort of national celebration. Most newspapers and weekly magazines devoted front page and cover spreads to the upcoming event, featuring stories describing the meaning and significance of [liberty], the history of the Statue as a gift to the United States from the people of France, and the regional preparations being made in New York City and throughout the nation for the Fourth of July weekend.[17] In addition, local and national television news programs marked the event with both news and feature stories. Typical of such programming were two stories shown back-to-back on the "NBC Nightly News" on July 1: Towards the end of the news program that evening, Tom Brokaw, the NBC news anchor, reported a very short news story entitled "Liberty Weekend" which was followed by a feature story narrated by correspondent Garrick Utley entitled "Patriotism." It is instructive to consider how these two stories were linked together as a frame in which the specific uses of the term [liberty] vanished in a

simulation of historical memory that reduced the ideograph to a synonym for "military vigilance," "patriotism," and indeed, "America" itself.

Brokaw begins with "Liberty Weekend," which includes two brief segments. In the first segment he describes a festival of "tall ships" in Newport, Rhode Island, and the preparations being made for their trip south to New York Harbor. The film footage that accompanies this segment is of the tall ships sailing about in a harbor, and the closing shot, filmed from above, is a full screen portrait of a Yankee Clipper, one of the most majestic and powerful of tall ships invented and used in the United States prior to the discovery of the steam engine.

In the second segment, Brokaw reports on the anchoring of the USS *John Fitzgerald Kennedy*, one of the U.S. Navy's largest aircraft carriers, in New York Harbor. Brokaw describes the ship as a "floating city." The film footage that accompanies this segment is also shot from above at approximately the same angle as was the Yankee Clipper, and indeed, this segment is physically connected with the previous one via an editorial "wipe" of the screen that invokes a visual continuity between the two scenes. In the first segment the camera seems to remain stationary. In the second segment the visual presentation begins by showing the USS *JFK* in the foreground and the outline of Manhattan in the background. As the narrative quickly unfolds, however, the camera, apparently attached to a helicopter, moves so as to bring the ship into a tight close-up, emphasizing its size and presence, and gradually locates the Statue of Liberty in the background. As the story ends the camera returns the television viewers to the studio, where they see Brokaw gazing at the monitor on his left– presumably seeing what his viewers had just seen–with a warm and friendly grin on his face. He then reflects upon the diversity of both New York City and America, noting that it is "impossible to find a place that perfectly reflects all of our ideals," as he introduces Garrick Utley's report on "Patriotism."

Let us first consider Brokaw's short nautical piece. These two brief segments demonstrate, of course, that news anchors do not always speak in the neutral "institutional voice."[18] Indeed, the occasion of a national celebration, perhaps even more than that of a national crisis, invites the news anchor to adopt the persona of homespun philosopher, and so also to identify with the audience he claims both to speak to and for. Ironically, the news anchor becomes an anchor for the chain of significations connected by the news-text. Standing both as witness and ideal spectator, Brokaw's smile reveals the experience of an aesthetic judgment that suggests not only pleasure, but its universal validity for his American viewers. And what chain of signification does Brokaw anchor? The play of metaphor and synecdoche is hardly occulted. Tall ships find their counterpart in warships. The USS *JFK* (a "floating city") is America in the diversity of its crew, just as New York City is the vessel for the simultaneous privileging and transcendence of difference and variety that "make it impossible to find

a place that perfectly reflects all of our ideals." Finally, both the Statue and the USS *JFK* keep watch over the nation and its shores.

The sequence of stories does more than merely shift topics through formal equivalencies. It also operates to elicit a simulated historical remembrance. For the America depicted here, [liberty] is a legacy bequeathed by the revolution celebrated on the Fourth of July. The tall ships evoke a sense of remembrance: the romance of freedom on the open sea, and of men and women allied with nature in a wind-driven ship, becomes the substance of a [liberty] situated in a simulacrum of the past immediately condensed onto the present. As the the camera "wipes" the presence of the Yankee Clipper from the screen, the USS *JFK* is revealed as the contemporary carrier of the spirit of [liberty] in history.

The significance of "history" as the topos that organizes these two segments of the evening news becomes manifest as Brokaw's story on "Liberty Weekend" is immediately succeeded by correspondent Garrick Utley's story on "Patriotism," a quality, we learn, that serves as the anchor for "all of (America's) ideals." Utley begins his narration as the television screen displays an American flag flapping in the wind, the bright sun shining though the flag and into the line-of-sight of the viewer. "Patriotism," he notes, "is an elusive quality, something to be felt, to take pride in, to believe in." As the story unfolds Utley proceeds to give sense to this sentiment, not by defining it, but by affirming its place within America's historical memory, identifying it with the "feeling" of a lived present that the segment itself evokes.

Utley begins his story by reporting on an event in the near present, the recent Memorial Day celebration held in the small New England town of Noank, Connecticut. Utley, displaying the dual personae of journalist and populist pedagogue, reminds his listeners that Noank has had a Memorial Day parade since 1876, and then proceeds to lecture on the presence and role of patriotism in American history. He speaks, in particular, of the historical necessity of patriotism in America as the civil religion of a nation "settled by people from many countries," a nation of immigrants who lack any other basis for social cohesion. The visuals that accompany this history lesson display the U.S. Constitution, portraits of America's Founding Fathers, and then black and white newsreel footage of the "flood of immigrants" coming to America. In this scenario patriotism belongs to American history, even as the residents of Noank rekindle its flame in their annual ritual. Indeed, as the narrative unfolds the viewers are introduced to a wide range of Noank's citizens, including Howard Davis, a veteran of World War II who emphasizes that patriotism is knowing that the "flag is a symbol worth fighting for"; Rick Anderson, a child of the 1960s who believes that "protesting against the American government's policy (in Vietnam) could be as patriotic as fighting a war"; and Mary Virginia Goodman, an eighty-eight year old woman who has taken part in the parade since 1908, and who delivers a short speech to the townspeople of Noank at the closing
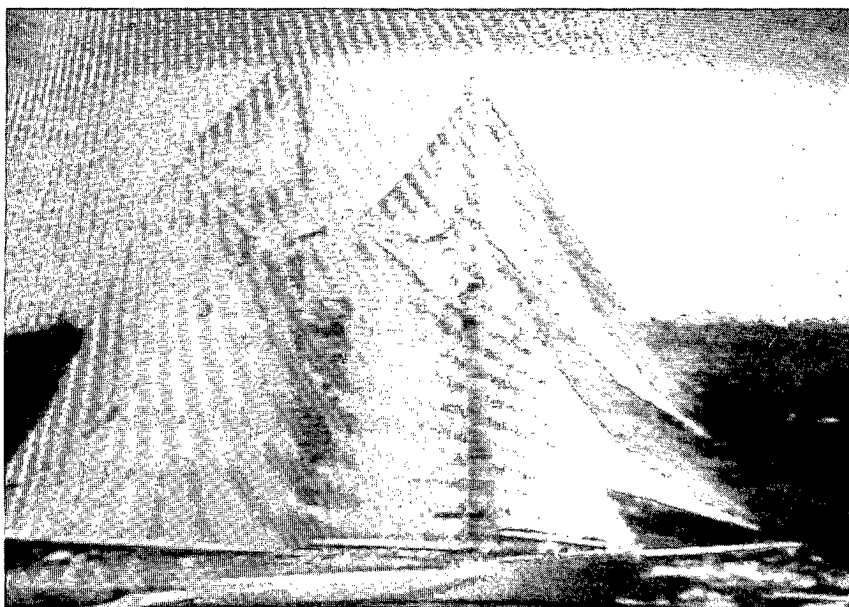
ceremonies of the Memorial Day celebration:

> This is your country. This is your land. This was fought for you,
> and kept for you, and for many yet unborn, because men dared
> to go out and fight for it. Tell your children about them. This is
> America. God Bless America!

As Utley concludes the story he echoes his introduction in a reverential
tone:

> In the end, patriotism is in the heart of the beholder. Most people
> are stirred by it, some at times are skeptical about it, but no one
> can be indifferent to it.

And as he finishes, the viewer hears the gentle playing of "Taps," and sees
the image of the American flag placed over the graves of the brave, fight-
ing men of this small New England town, both the headstones *and* the
flags bathed in the warm glow of the glinting and setting sun. The sense
of history, the setting sun, and the allusions to bravery and the ultimate
sacrifice, all move the heart as touching reminders of those who gave their
lives for their country out of a "feeling" of patriotism. But Utley's final
remarks are revealing, for if patriotism is indeed "in the heart of the be-
holder," what is beheld is the television screen as it breathes life into both
history and the present. The sequence affects a synecdochic operation
whereby the screen's Noank *is* past and present America. This narrativized
and specularized Noank would exist within tradition, and thus retains its
collective memory. Furthermore, as the sequence depicts these Americans
and leads us to mourn the dead with them, we, as viewers, are included
as residents of Noank-as-nation.

Up to now, little mention has been made of the military articulation of
[liberty] made evident through its association with patriotism. We recog-
nize (although we do not condone) the fact that most national states as-
sociate patriotism with a commitment to military readiness and strength.
Furthermore, we do not wish to contest the propriety of honoring the men
whose lives were taken away by a war machine they were induced or
trapped into joining. But we consider particularly pernicious the histori-
cal revisionism or amnesia within the public discourse on [liberty] with
regard to America as a military force precisely because [liberty] has histor-
ically provided a ground from which to critique power. Thus, for exam-
ple, in the story on "Patriotism," Vietnam War protestors are placed on
equal footing with World War II veterans as representatives of patriotism.
But notice the repression of memory at work: Vietnam, a recent historical
event and tragedy, is reduced to and remembered as a point of patriotic
dispute between generations. Whether one went to Vietnam and fought
(and lived or died), or stayed behind and refused to fight, one was patriot-
ic and enacted [liberty's] legacy by fighting for it. What is lost to memory

is profound, including any experience of the devastation, destruction, and immorality of that war, or of the national crisis that it produced at home. The pain of Kent State and The University of Wisconsin is comfortably forgotten, and the pleasure of identification with the screen is offered to fill the resultant void. Life itself is elided.

This sequence of stories illustrates well the manner in which a mass-mediated, televisual culture risks displacing both life and the possibility of a culture of argumentation that exists when public discourse manifests a dialectic between historically material human experience and collective life. For such a culture to be possible, there must be a clear relationship between the language of public discourse and the lived experience of so-cial relations, or what Carlos Castoriadias calls the relationship between the "imaginary," the "perceptual," and the "rational."[19] The televised news sequences we have described do not evidence such a relationship, but are instead illustrative of a process by which public discourse is colonized as a series of mass-mediated, aesthetic effects. In neither "Liberty Weekend" nor "Patriotism" does the screen's proto-imaginary evidence any use of the community's perceptions or rationality; rather than to locate the ex-perience of [liberty] in the lived social relations of the citizenry, it is placed in the condensation of grand historical narratives reproduced by the mass media in complicity with the state. In this sense, the two segments that we have just analyzed offer a constitutive rhetoric in the assertion that patri-otism is a "feeling," and simultaneously deliver a narrative that elicits that very feeling.[20] Put otherwise, the news textually produces "Patriotism" (and patriots) in the context of television's "Liberty Weekend." *Note, however, that this rhetoric requires no other ground but itself.* Whether or not those living in America "feel" free as they experience the sedimented structures of economy, bureaucracy, and their socially-determined life chances, becomes irrelevant. The experience of [liberty] of which public discourse admits resides elsewhere, such as in the televised version of Noank, Connecticut, that simulacrum of small-town harmony in nineteenth-century America. Noank thus becomes the romanticized community of which John Dewey despaired the loss.[21]

And there is more. For even if the spectator, interpellated by this dis-course, might have an unmediated investment in [liberty] on to which this sequence of news segments could connect, the media text excludes it from public discourse. Brokaw suffices as the voice within which historical con-notations and latent narratives of the romantic sea, of collectivity, and of state power are combined. Within the audio-visual grammar of television, this integration of metaphoric and synecdochic chains specularizes [liber-ty]. [Liberty] becomes the point of both the articulation of a feeling and of a set of condensations. As such, it becomes situated outside political argumentation. The culture of argumentation here collapses, for [liberty] is no longer an ideograph that must be deployed through a discourse of "good reasons" that admits to the possibility of a counter-argument. The

proto-judgment of the rightness of the "feeling" of [liberty] in the face of a simulated historical remembrance is extra-cognitive. Aesthetic effects have almost entirely displaced any discussion of whether, in daily life, Americans encounter the "thing itself." [Liberty] comes to belong more to the mass-mediated, televisual moment than to lived practice.

In the above analysis we might seem to be making much of a small matter. After all, the last few minutes of one network newscast are relatively insignificant to the overall field of public discourse in the United States. Nevertheless, we consider these few minutes of television to be representative of the aestheticization of America's public imaginary, and of the evacuation of politics from its political discourse. Indeed, we would claim that America's imaginary is a mass-mediated, televisual, cinemythic culture. Consider, for example, that even the President of the United States renders [liberty] as a spectacle.

Writing in *Parade* on Sunday, 29 June 1986, then President Ronald Reagan previewed the national celebration of the renovated Statue of Liberty in an article entitled "Now More Than Ever... The Meaning of Liberty." He began as follows:

> *The fireworks, the entertainers, the tall ships sailing through New York harbor should create fine and lasting memories for our children. Although they may not fully grasp the significance of the speeches, they will hear words like liberty and freedom and will understand that these are things that we, as Americans, hold dear and proclaim proudly.* And, of course, at the center of attention will be Lady Liberty herself.[22]

What followed these words was the heavily anecdotal discourse that was symptomatic of the public discourse of the Reagan Presidency, in which the President remembered his own past as symbolic of America's ruggedly individualistic, privatized, frontier spirit. Frequently, it seemed, this past—and by extension America's past was intimately, and often subtly grounded in his cinematic experiences.[23] So, for example, in this article we hear him talk of his own spiritual awakening upon seeing the Statue of Liberty at 4:00 in the morning on a return trip from Europe where he was filming *The Hasty Heart*, an experience reminiscent of that reported by hundreds-of-thousands of immigrants first seeing the shores of the United States, and of equal numbers of soldiers returning from World Wars I and II; he later discusses how his role in *Sante Fe Trail* opened "new vistas" for him, as well as "a love for the West, and its open spaces and the freedom it promised." Later still, after recalling his role as the Notre Dame running back George Gipp in *Knute Rockne: All American*, he tells of his own triumphant battle with racism while playing football at Eureka College–a triumph in which he proudly "saves" two black football players on his team from the knowledge that they have been discriminated against by a local hotel manager by concocting a story of limited space at the hotel and tak-

ing them to stay at his mother's house.

Throughout this whole rendering of the "meaning" of [liberty] is the echoing resonance of those opening lines of the article that subtly substitute *the feeling in the presence of* the spectacle of "the fireworks, the entertainers, the tall ships sailing through New York harbor" for the "meaning" of [liberty] itself as a term with which to discuss relations of power. What seems so problematic here is that the memory of [liberty] becomes a direct and immediate function of the reminiscence of a cinemythic past, and indeed, a past that is celebrated for the pleasure of private virtue and public displays of power, more than for (or perhaps even to the exclusion of) the public moral values embedded in the historically material commitment to [liberty] as a condition of political life. Furthermore, this essay by Reagan, like the segments on the "NBC Nightly News," set the stage for the national, televised celebration of the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty which began on July 3, and in which entertainers and politicians sang and danced their praises to [liberty] as the Statue was unveiled amid fireworks reminiscent of the "rocket's red glare" so prominent in "The Star Spangled Banner."[24]

Reconstructing [Liberty] in a   ·
Culture of Argumentation

At the outset we indicated our concern for the fate of [liberty]. While we acknowledge the complicity of this ideograph with the rise of bourgeois capitalism, and recognize that in certain discourses of the conservative right it pertains more to the disposition of private capital than to political expression or the experience of the social order, we would be loathe to dismiss its historical significance for the humanization of power. Indeed, this essay is, at least in part, prompted by our concern that the "sweetness" of [liberty]–the feeling of comfort "in the presence of power"–is being displaced within the contemporary public discourse that promotes a simulated America. [Liberty] hence corresponds to a self-congratulatory, romantic aesthetic. Thus, and fundamentally, this essay is about more than [liberty], it is about the death of a kind of politics and a kind of speech. It is about dead rhetoric.

We believe that we can elaborate this point more fully if we treat the case that we described above as a "representative anecdote" for the character of public discourse in the United States.[25] In doing so, we will travel along a well worn path, for a number of authors have already written about the displacement of ideology or argumentation by the consciousness industry, television, or the logic of postmodernity.[26] We hope, however, to offer a different inflection in our analysis, grounded not simply in the need to recover a culture of argumentation, but to promote and reconstruct such a culture so as to accommodate the public problems of twentieth-century mass society.

Judging from the effort and expense involved in the 1986 Statue of Liberty celebrations, it seems reasonable to conclude that ideology still matters in the United States.[27] Power is still legitimated in arguments and, at least occasionally, some members of the population must be motivated sufficiently through such rhetorics to tolerate or support state power. Following McGee however, we would hasten to point out that arguments of legitimation in no way resemble those of the Aristotelian dialectician or even those of the cost-benefit analyst.[28] These arguments are neither analytically nor technically rational. Rather, the warrants in legitimation arguments are ideographs such as [liberty] that refer to vaguely articulated principles that elicit affective responses.[29] At best, the warranting of power through ideographs is socially rational when there is a space in public discourse for those subject to the power to judge the appropriateness of *particular* warrants to *particular* claims within *particular* exigencies. As we noted at the outset of this essay, this requires a form of public historical memory that would be the vehicle for a "common sense." The common sense that permits the constitution of a creative and collective power that would breathe life into the social would not be the one derided by Stuart Hall as "ideological."[30] Rather, it would correspond to the *sensus communis* discussed by Hans Georg Gadamer as the contingent knowledge, akin to *phronesis* (practical wisdom), that is necessary to the formation and sustenance of human community.[31]

We leave as a matter of debate whether or not the subjects of America's multiple cultural formations have unique and distinct forms of common sense, but we do maintain that the process of aestheticization that we have described banishes that common sense from the public discourse of the national political community. In its place, we argue, the discourse of the public sphere proffers a Kantian common sense of aesthetic preunderstanding as the ground for the ideographs that provide motive force to claims of power.[32] The common sense that the Statue of Liberty celebrations appealed to (and were aimed to construct) was Kantian in that it was predicated upon an aesthetic sense that admitted of neither cognitive nor argumentative understandings. The truth of [liberty] was thus rendered as the beauty of [liberty], a phenomenon which one could not debate, and, indeed, which one was expected to experience as a condition of community. For Kant, judgments of beauty were capable of being universalized in that all those who had cultivated their aesthetic sensibilities would agree on what was beautiful. The rhetoric of [liberty] displayed in the preparations for the nation's celebration of The Statue of Liberty implies the same presumption or validity claim, the only difference being that the claim here is made with regard to patriotic sensibility rather than to aesthetic sensibility.

[Liberty] is thus subordinated in contemporary public discourse in two ways. First, it is located outside of the sphere of the *sensus communis* and outside of the practical knowledge that would found political judgments

43

in a world of contingency. Instead, it is located precisely in the sphere of an aesthetic sensibility that is demanded of all those who would lay claim to membership in the community. The mass media's celebration of [liberty] produces a politico-aesthetic sensibility as state culture. This is the aestheticization of politics and power.

The second subordination of [liberty] in contemporary mass mediated culture is tied to the broader subordination of living rhetorics and politics. According to Kroker and Cook, aestheticized politics set the act of judgment against the life of the social, the body, the will, and the imagination.[33] The measure of the quality of an aesthetic object, including an aestheticized social formation, is neither in terms of its ethical character nor its practical wisdom. It fails the test of the former because, as for Kant, the beautiful and the good are split, retaining at best an analogous character with one another. It fails the test of the latter because the faculty of aesthetic judgment consists of a universal, transcendental foundation, existing outside of time and space, and hence outside of the realm of lived human experiences. We thus maintain that the subordination of a vital rhetoric and politics occurs whenever human speech, with its presence, contingency, and dialogic character vanish.

We cannot demonstrate fully here that a mass mediated or televisual culture silences human speech or agency and petrifies life. Indeed, we are not even certain that such a claim is fully demonstrable, for it rests ultimately upon an interpretation of what would occur in a politics of human agency suffused with life. However, we do suspect (and hope) that at rare moments a glint of life may shine through the mass-mediated and aestheticized ideology, and through the "promotional culture" of which it is a part.[34] Life, for us, includes the "surplus" and Brownian motion that eludes the grids of power and determination of Foucault's "formations." That surplus exists in difference, play, ambivalence, and, most importantly, human agency. It enters the public realm, the realm of politics and of collective human endeavors, through speech.[35]

The speech we have in mind is akin to the classical conception of rhetoric in that it distinguishes itself from "just talk," from spectacle, and from the Foucauldian énoncé operating under the Will to Truth, by its affirmation of presence and its dependence on a culture of argumentation that presumes the existence of a listening other. This speech or rhetoric is a performance that creates a sense and a spirit of collective life. The speech or rhetoric that is excluded in a culture of generalized sign exchange would be animated with the spirit of the "true discourse" of sixth-century B.C. Greece. As Foucault painstakingly reminds us, this discourse was a discourse of presence and power:

> (it inspired) respect and terror, to which all were obliged to submit,
> because it held sway over all and was pronounced by men who
> spoke as of right, according to ritual, meted out justice and attributed

> to each his rightful share; it prophesied the future, not merely announcing what was going to occur, but contributing to its actual event, carrying men along with it and thus weaving itself onto the fabric of fate.[36]

Of course, our life is not that of the ancients. Indeed, our [liberty] consists, in part, of being freed of the thrall of a single voice, of a solitary Logos constitutive of justice and right. Life today is animated by many Logoi; there are many voices that must speak their justice and their truth. Collective life requires that they encounter each other, not in the dead rhetorics of the mass media's hyperreality and simulation, but in a public culture of argumentation in which each utterance entails a risk.[37] The aestheticized [liberty] of "Liberty Weekend" is a node in a public discourse of a promotional culture that moves constantly to transform politics into a commodity, to silence speech and rhetoric, and to erect its social knowledge through a range of procedures of exclusion.[38] Excluded finally, is the possibility of ambivalence, dissent, and the risk of encountering the Other. What is excluded ultimately is the voice of life.

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Notes

1. Guy Debord, *Society of The Spectacle* (Detroit: Red and Black, 1983), 215.

2. Jean Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).

3. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 241-2.

4. See Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe*, and *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities... Or the End of the Social*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and John Johnstone (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983); and Arthur Kroker and David Cook, *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 267-79.

5. See, for example, Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, in *Aristotle*, Loeb Classic Library, vol. 12 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926); Isocrates, "Antidosis," in *Isocrates*, trans. George Norlin, Loeb Classic Library, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 185-365; and Cicero, *De Oratore*, in *Cicero* , trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, Loeb Classic Library, vols. 3 and 4 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942).

45

6. See Walter R. Fisher, "Toward a Logic of Good Reasons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 64 (1978): 376-84; and "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm," *Communication Monographs*, 51 (1984): 1-22; John Louis Lucaites and Celeste Michelle Condit, "Re-constructing Narrative Theory: A Functional Perspective," *Journal of Communication*, 35 (1985): 90-108; and Michael Calvin McGee and John Nelson, "Narrative Reason in Public Argument," *Journal of Communication*, 35 (1985): 139-55.

7. Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power and Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 109-33; and Jacques Derrida, "The White Mythology," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chciago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 207-72

8. See Samuel Ijsseling, *Rhetoric and Philosphy in Conflict: An Historical Survey* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976); and Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), 3-182.

9. Michael Calvin McGee, "In Search of 'the People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 61 (1975): 235-49.

10. Karl Wallace, "The Substance of Rhetoric: Good Reasons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 49 (1963): 239-43.

11. We employ the use of open and close bars "[]" to designate the specific ideographic usage of particular terms that possess both ordinary language meanings and ideological meanings as public commitments of community, as well as to accentuate the material presence of the signifier. So, for example, the word "equality" can refer to the phenomena of "sameness" or "identity" as in the sentence: "The two armies are of equal strength," or it can refer to one of the fundamental commitments of community of Whig/liberal societies, as in the American creed "All men are created equal." In the latter sense "equal" is ideographic, its use in American public discourse carries material force, and we would thus render it in single quotation marks. See Michael Calvin McGee, "The Ideograph: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 61 (1980): 235-49; John Louis Lucaites, "Flexibility and Consistency in Eighteenth-Century Anglo-Whiggism: A Case Study of the Rhetorical Dimensions of Legitimacy" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1-48; and Celeste Michelle Condit, "Democracy and Civil Rights: The Universalizing Influence of Public Argumentation," *Communication Monographs*, 54 (1987): 1-18.

12. The argument has been made by some, such as Kroker and Cook, and Postman, that television constitutes the primary problem confronting a culture of reason and rationality in the postmodern condition. Our studies lead us to the conclusion that television is, at worst, symptomatic of these problems, but that it does not necessarily pose unique problems in this regard. In this particular study we focus on the ways in which television aestheticizes the universe of public social and political discourse, but the same arguments could be made about other mass media as well, including the cinema, popular music, print journalism, and so on. Kroker and Cook, *The Postmodern Scene*, 267-79; and Neal Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985).

13. Michael Calvin McGee, "The Origins of [Liberty]: A Feminization of Power," *Communication Monographs*, 47 (1980): 23-45.

14. McGee, "The Ideograph."

15. McGee, "The Origins of [Liberty]," 45.

16. Benjamin, "The Work of Art," 221-4.

17. See, for example, *The New York Times Magazine*, 6 July 1968, Section 6:1, and 12-3; *National Geographic*, July 1986, 2-43; *Newsweek*, Collectors Edition, Summer 1986; *Parade*, 29 June 1986, 1, 4-5; *Time*, 128 (1), 7 July 1986, 18-25; *Time* 128 (2), 14 July 1986, 10-20; *U.S. News and World Report*, 101 (1), 7 July 1986, 6-7, 25-35; and any daily edition of *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or virtually any other national or regional newspaper between 29 June and 7 July 1986.

18. John Hartley, *Understanding News* (London: Methuen, 1982), 109-11.

19. Carlos Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Bliemen (Cambrdige: MIT University Press, 1987), esp. 340-73.

20. Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Quebecois*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 73 (1987): 133-50.

21. See John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (New York: Swallow Press, 1927), 110-84.

22. Ronald Reagan, "Now More Than Ever... The Meaning of [Liberty]," *Parade*, 29 June 1986, 4-5.

23. See Gary Wills, *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home* (Garden City: NY: Doubleday, 1987).

24. The opening ceremonies for "Liberty Weekend" were broadcast by *ABC* on the evening of July 3. In these two hours the audience was presented with a running narrative of the history and meaning of [liberty] in speeches by President Reagan, President Mitterand of France, Gregory Peck, Chief Justice Warren Berger, Lee Iaccoca, Ted Koppel, Henry Winkler, and Elizabeth Taylor, as well as through performances by Kenny Rogers, Mikhail Baryshnikov, John Williams and The Boston Pops, Neil Diamond, Jose Feliciano, Debbie Allen, and Frank Sinatra. The evening was completed with the unveiling of the restored Statue of Liberty. *ABC's* "Liberty Weekend" celebration had actually begun on the evening of July 2nd, when it ran a one hour prime time preview of the televised events to take place on the subsequent four days, and extended through the closing ceremonies broadcast during prime time on July 6.

25. Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945), 59-61, 323-5.

26. The literature here is quite large and diverse, but see in particular Hans G. Enzenberger, *The Consciousness Industry: On Literature, Politics and the Media* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974); Postman, *Amusing Ourselves To Death*; Kroker and Cook, *The Postmodern Scene*; and Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

27. This is a point that was accentuated by then Vice President George Bush in the 1988 presidential campaign. When Governor Michael Dukakis, Bush's opponent in the campaign, maintained that the election was about competence, not ideology, Bush responded that "competence is important, but ideology is very important!" This became a theme of the Bush campaign that was apparently authorized by the American people in the election results. Vice President George Bush, "Acceptance Speech," New Orleans, LA, 17 August 1988. A transcript of the speech can be found in the *The New York Times*, 18 August 1988.

28. See McGee, "In Search of 'the People.'" Cf., Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 68-74.

29. See Lucaites, "Flexibility and Consistency," 223-4.

30. Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of Ideology: Return of the Repressed in Media Studies," in *Culture, Society and the Media*, ed., James Curran, et al. (London: Methuen, 1976), 56-89.

31. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1975), 19-33.

32. Immanuel Kant, "The Critique of Judgment," in *Kant: Selections*, ed. Theodore M. Greene (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1929), 411-15.

33. Kroker and Cook, *The Postmodern Scene*, 167.

34. Andrew Wernick, "Promotional Culture," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 12 (1988). 180-201.

35. Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 175-81.

36. Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," trans. Rupert Sawyer, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 218.

37. See Douglas Ehninger, "Argument As Method: Its Nature, Its Limitations and Its Uses," *Speech Monographs*, 37 (1970): 104.

38. See Murray Edelman, *Constructing The Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

THE POSTMODERN AND
THE PALEOLITHIC:
NOTES ON TECHNOLOGY AND
NATIVE COMMUNITY IN THE
FAR NORTH

Peter Kulchyski

There is an intimate relation between the way the Inuit have appropriated "advanced" southern technology and their cultural life. For example, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) have been, with remarkable swiftness, appropriated by Inuit hunters as an important method of all-season transportation; electronic amplification, synthesizers, and electrical musical instruments are all part of community cultural events. The Inuit have their own television station, the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, and their own hard rock band, Northern Haze. The image of the Inuit hunter who returns home to his computer has almost become a cliché.

Feast, Pangnirtung, March 1985

> This feast and talent night that I've been invited to, possibly celebrating the arrival of spring though I'm never quite sure, is held in the school gym that also acts as a community center. As I arrive I am struck by the amount of ATVs and skidoos parked outside: it looks like a snowmobile convention. The feast part of this town event is a fairly straightforward affair. Most of the community is present, including about twenty or so *Qallunaat* and a few hundred Inuit. The food — seal, caribou and arctic char — is placed in huge piles on the gym floor, which has been covered in plastic. We stand

around it in a circle as a prayer is said in Inuktitut. Then everyone dives in with their knives, cuts off bits of meat and wanders around eating and chatting. Most of the *Qallunaat,* because they have to cook their meat, are off to one side. At some point the old Inuit women, who have come prepared, stuff the remaining meat into plastic garbage bags. This is called the redistribution of material goods. It is a clear signal that the feast portion of the evening has ended.

The talent night begins fairly sporadically sometime after all of the meat has disappeared. Although there was a prepared list of performers, people are heckled onto stage at various points in the evening and the organization side of things breaks down. Among the Inuit performers are an Elvis imitator, two pairs of traditional throat chanters, a country band, an Inuk elder playing old European whaling songs on a squeeze box and a twelve year old with his synthesizer compositions.

The use of this technology in northern Native cultural and economic strategies, however, has not necessarily contributed to an erosion of the "traditional" Inuit way of life. On the contrary, advanced technology has been used by Inuits to strengthen their culture and economy. While some of the cultural products of this combination can only be described by those outside the process as bizarre, as an impossible hybrid, there remains something in the singularity–the mad eclecticism–of this culture that cannot be dismissed.

The ability of the Inuit to make use of advanced technology suggests two interesting theoretical possibilities or theses that I want to tentatively explore in this paper. The first thesis is that technology alone is not a sufficient agent of change that leads to the destruction of gatherer-hunter societies. Since Harold Innis' *The Fur Trade in Canada,* non-Native historians have tended to represent the destruction of Native peoples as primarily the result of the inability of gatherer-hunters to absorb western technology. In his historial narrative, Innis states that "the new technology with its radical innovations brought about such a rapid shift in the prevailing Indian culture as to lead to wholesale destruction of the peoples concerned by warfare and disease."[1] This narrative of destruction wrought by technology remains influential as an account of Native history. The Inuit example, however, suggests the possibility that non-Native cultures and economies may be more resilient than this historical narrative suggests. The Inuit example also suggests the possibility of a subversive strategy through which advanced technology can be used to strengthen rather than undermine Inuit culture and economy.

The second thesis is that advanced technology itself contains an emancipatory possibility and lends itself to emancipatory social projects, such as that of Inuits. This thesis is obviously related to the first. There is a strong tendency in recent social thought to suggest that advanced technology is

somehow inherently or essentially a dominating power. Jean Baudrillard is clearly situated within this tendency when he argues about television, for example, that "it is not as vehicles of content, but in their very form and very operation, that media induce a social relation; and this is not an exploitative relation: it involves the abstraction, separation and abolition of exchange itself."[2] The use of technology by Inuits suggests that Baudrillard's description may only be relevant to late capitalist or postmodern society. Inuit use of technology, including television, suggests that the media do not induce a social relation but that social relations condition the way in which the media will be used.

Inuit live in what are commonly characterized as "hunting societies." This does not mean that they have continued to live as paleolithic gatherer-hunters. Today, Native people hunt with the help of different technologies and sometimes for different reasons than they may have had centuries ago. Nevertheless, it may be that they share as many features with hunting societies as they do with capitalist ones. They may work for wages while still depending on fresh meat as a crucial part of their diet. I want to suggest, then, that there may be as much of the paleolithic as there is of the postmodern conditioning Inuit life today. In effect, if we are to develop any understanding of Inuits in the modern world we need to understand the risks and the possibilities raised by this particular economic and cultural cross-breeding. Although understanding and disentangling these is difficult, there are a few observations and analyses that can be made. What needs to be done first is to briefly explain our understanding of both the paleolithic and postmodern periods.

Pangnirtung, March 1985

> While in Pangnirtung I am told of an old Inuit woman – in her eighties – who loves Bruce Springsteen. The reason she gives is simple: she likes his ass. At the time Springsteen's "Dancing in the Dark" video was generally popular among Inuit. I am convinced that Springsteen's popularity stemmed from the fact that in the "Dancing in the Dark" video when he walks across the stage he adopts a rolling, side to side gait that strongly resembles the way many Inuit walk. The Bruce Springsteen that many Inuit see is an Inuk.

The paleolithic period is generally understood as the period of human social development that preceded the agricultural or neolithic period. The paleolithic was a period of relatively small, nomadic, gatherer-hunter societies. In his influential analysis *Stone Age Economics,* anthropologist Marshall Sahlins characterizes paleolithic peoples as living in the "original affluent society", primarily because of the large amount of leisure time that is available, the minimal need for structure, and the generally egalitarian social relations.[3] The term gatherer-hunter, which has also been adopted by feminist anthropologists including Eleanor Leacock, stresses the impor-

51

tance of woman's role as gatherer in these societies and the roughly egalitarian gender relations that characterize them. Also of some importance to our understanding of the paleolithic is the fact that crucial distinctions central to our own time may not have any relevance: Sahlins argues that kinship relations appear as an economic force[4] and, especially in his later work, he suggests that culture and economy, both super- and sub-structural are not clearly defined, the boundaries blurr.[5] Stanley Diamond's definition of the primitive in *In Search of the Primitive*[6] might be mentioned in this context. Although Diamond is concerned with a broader category than the paleolithic much of his argument remains trenchant, especially his sense of the loss entailed by civilization: "what primitive possess–the immediate and ramifying sense of the person, and all that I have tried to show that that entails–an existential humanity–we have largely lost."[7]

The term postmodernism has been increasingly used to describe the culture of our time. Already there is an implicit division, since we use the term late-capitalist to describe our economy. Frederic Jameson's "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" provides a useful description and analysis of our period. Jameson argues that in the postmodern a new way of experiencing time and space has emerged and that this has lead to a culture characterized by aesthetic populism, a new depthlessness, an effacing of history, and a fragmentation of subjectivity. Although Jameson distances himself from an approach that suggests that these changes are caused by new technologies, he does relate them to the loss of affect implied by recent technology, especially computers. Ours is a society in which needs have become so unlimited, so divorced from any link with materiality, that the very concept has been questioned.[8] The western world has produced an economy based on excessive surplus and a culture characterized as excremental.[9] Jameson's analysis of postmodernism can be read or understood as a reflection on the implications of the further extension and expansion of the commodity form into cultural life.

Yellowknife, Summer, 1985

> At the "Fold on the Rocks" music festival in the summer of 1985 the feature act is an Inuit hard rock band called Northern Haze from Igloolic. By the time they reach the stage it is midnight, the sun has just set. The lead guitarist plays a charge-ahead fuzz guitar, the music is hard rock. The lead singer occasionally mutters something like "this song is about a dream I had once about hunting, but you won't understand it because it's in Inuktitut." They hope to make it big in the south.

The paleolithic implies a society of minimal goods but also one of minimal needs; hence an affluent society. The postmodern is a society of excessive material goods but virtually unlimited needs; hence a society of scarcity. The relation between gatherer-hunters and late-capitalist societies

is one of domination where the latter is generally seen to be in the process of overwhelming the former. As Hugh Brody has observed, "the hunting societies of the world have been sentenced to death. They have been condemned, not in any one verdict, but by a process, an accumulation, of judgments."[10] Captalist society can be seen as a totalizing machine that imposes the commodity form on everything that falls within its hegemony. The struggle that Inuits engage in to preserve and adapt their language and culture is a struggle against this totalizing logic. Given that postmodern culture itself involves a certain stylistic eclecticism, a seemingly random juxtaposition of radically distinct styles, it could be argued that the cultural phenomena I am pointing to is wholly contained and indeed produced by the dominant cultural logic. Modern Inuit culture resists such a neat categorization precisely because we need to know as much about the paleolithic as we do about the postmodern in order to understand it.

Most northern natives, I would argue, have adopted a strategy of mixed economic activity to support families and communities. This understanding is not new, social scientists like Hugh Brody, Peter Usher, and Michael Asch[11] have made similar arguments. I would stress here that the mixed economy does not in my mind involve two separate, co-existing economic spheres, but rather a primary economy based on gatherer-hunter economic strategies, and a secondary economy based on wage labor that is taken advantage of by Native hunters. There are four main aspects that constitute this mixed economy: 1) the use of hunting as an important source of food; 2) the use of hunting and trapping as a source of income; 3) the use of welfare as an occasional but consistent source of income; and 4) the use of occasional wage labor to supplement income. Any one of these might take priority for an individual or a family, but most families rely on some combination of the first pair and the latter pair. In community life in the north all of these strategies are used. What is much more rare is the use of wage labor as the primary or sole basis of a domestic economy. With this in mind, a few basic questions about material life can be addressed. What is most important is the relative strength of the mixed economy, which allows Native people to take advantage of the wage work that sporadic, "bust and boom," non-renewable resource extraction projects bring without a major disruption of the basic economic strategy. It is only when attempts are made to impose wage work as a dominant economic model, and to create a dependence on it by dispossessing Native people of access to the usual means of subsistence, that the strategy is disrupted. Resistance to this form of domination can be seen as a locus of the political dynamic of the north.

Native peoples like the Inuit in Canada's north are often seen as very poor. To characterise Native people as poor is to imply that the gathering-hunting economic strategy is unsuccessful, and as a result there has recently been a tendency to refute such a characterization. As Marshall Sahlins has argued: "poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it a relation between means and ends; above all it is a relation between

people. Poverty is a social status. As such it is the invention of civilization."[12] Hugh Brody and Peter Usher have been particularly concerned with stressing the importance of a hidden or Native economy – what I refer to as gatherer-hunter economic strategies – that must be taken into account in any discussion of Inuit and Indian affluence and deprivation.

Yet there still remains a real poverty in the far north, a poverty intensified by the images of wealth that new communications media have exported to northern Canada. This poverty continually makes its presence known even on the silent pieces of paper that are shuffled through the offices of government bureaucrats who are rewarded with extra northern "housing allowances" and "isolation pay" to manage the problem: the morbid line of statistics–higher infant mortality, lower life expectancy, higher deaths due to violence, and so on–offers its own eloquent testimony. In an eleven month period in the mid-eighties in the largely Inuvialuit community of Tuktoyaktuk, population 750, thirty-five people attempted suicide. Seven people "succeeded." There is something simply so wrong about this that even the need to be aware of the politics of representation and of images is overwhelmed.

Brody's argument is persuasive, however, to the extent that he recognizes that social problems tend to be associated with capitalist economy and modernist culture. It is not as gatherer-hunters that Native people are poor, but as peoples dispossessed by the totalizing logic of capital itself. There is more than a semantic difference. What Native people call "traditional" economic activities, those we associate with gathering-hunting culture, are not responsible for native poverty and indeed offer the only viable and lasting alternative to it. But gathering-hunting does not have to be understood as a pure, untarnished, pre-contact social form. Gathering-hunting in the modern world involves adaptation, and the possibility of absorbing some elements of capitalist culture and economy into the gatherer-hunter context. It also involves the risk of being assimilated by those same elements.

The mixed economy is also a mixed culture. It involves bringing together an economy of affluence and surplus with an economy based on exploitation, class difference, and the social production of scarcity; and bringing together a culture based on minimal needs and expanded leisure time with a culture based on virtually unlimited needs and serial leisure time. This is a hybrid culture, and while it is undoubtedly true that the capitalist and postmodern elements are disruptive, are responsible for creating poverty, and which may ultimately result in the complete dispossession of northern Natives, the struggle is far from over. Inuit success will not depend on their isolating themselves from the rest of the world in some state of cultural purity. It will depend on their ability to subvert capitalist economy, technology, images, and institutions.

At the most abstract level of analysis then, the importance of advanced technology to the far north can only be understood in the context of sub

mission and resistance to totalization. On an immediate, experiential level advanced technology has come to the north because of the peculiarity, the absurdity, of an economy in which very poor people find themselves with cash surpluses. The money they get – from occasional labour or from welfare – is often used to buy consumer goods simply because the Native economy may provide the minimum subsistence requirements and because improving the material quality of life in a more sustained way, for example through better housing, is prohibitively expensive. Excess cash is rarely spent on cars because in most Inuit communities in the far north access by roads is impossible. So the money often goes towards ATVs, VCRs, television, radio, satellite dishes, cassette players, synthesizers, computers, and so on. The people from a culture of affluence meet the technology produced by a culture of excess.

Luccasi Irqumiaq, Puvirnituq

> One interesting point that has come up is the number of radios in Inuit homes. Recently, I visited 40 homes and found that they contained over 100 radios of all makes and types; short wave, A.M. and F.M.[13]

The problem raised by this adoption of technology on the immediate level is one of political control. Inuit recognized the dangers posed by the new communications technology: many communities voted against allowing television satellite dishes until they were assured of Inuktitut broadcasting. The problem of the resistance to assimilation was raised to new levels by the introduction of new technology, which offered powerful support to that process. The political ramifications, however, were very complex since the new technology also offered new opportunities for resistance. On the level of daily experience, the new communications technology could act like medieval village church bells, warning of an impending attack by barbarians, though here the attacker is the State.

Lasarusie Epoo, Inukjuaq

> Recently, the government has been asking the people to sign some papers. We do not know the contents because it is not written in our language. The people are not forced to sign these papers but many have done so when asked without understanding the meaning of one's signature. As a result, these signatures have given the people much hardship later on. I know I experienced it myself. If we had our own radio station, we would be able to warm the people quickly.[14]

On the immediate level, then, it is fairly obvious that local control of communications media offers some political advantages, especially when contrasted to allowing southerners total control over the dissemination of

information and images. However, the intricacies of Inuit society and its own internal dynamics raise problems even on this level.

Peter Inukpuk, Inukjuaq

> Our Inuit culture creates special problems of exchanging information. In our life it is still enormously insulting for a younger person to presume to give information to an older person. Many white people often think that as more young people like myself receive a white education, that somehow the information we receive as a result of our contact with white culture will seep into our home communities. In fact, this doesn't happen. The implications of this problem are even more serious when one realizes that change never happens in our communities unless our old people are agreed and understand the situation.[15]

It is hard to know how messages will be received by communities, what place the new information–even if its dissemination is controlled by Inuits–will play in community political life.

Even more serious, though, than questions of who controls the content of the new communications media, are the questions related to the form messages will take. It might be argued that in as much as the Inuit used the new communications technology surely they submitted to the logic of the dominant system, and even when they used that technology in resistance, their use of it already signaled a strategically crucial loss. That is, the technology itself may embody the totalizing logic of late capitalism, and the Inuit use of it, even for their own political ends, may be a surrender to this logic.

In his powerful critique of the communications media, Jean Baudrillard develops an argument along these lines. He argues, for example, that:

> The mass media are anti-mediatory and intransitive. They fabricate non-communication – this is what characterized them, if one agrees to define communication as an exchange, as a reciprocal space of a speech and a response... Now, the totality of the existing architecture of the media founds itself on this... definition: they are what always prevents response.[16]

In this view the modern technology of communication is inherently univocal: it is not communication because it is one-way speech. Baudrillard is not concerned with the ideological content of the media, then – and he rejects socialists like Enzensberger who suggest a revolutionary strategy for "capturing" the media – as much as he is with the form.

There is a tendency in modern thought, of which Baudrillard is a particularly good example, that suggests that modern media, and especially television, are univocal. In this view the audience is always positioned as observer or listener and, as such, passive. Debord's characterization of our

society as a "society of the spectacle" (1983) and Jameson's analysis of the loss of affect, which he suggests is endemic to postmodern technology, serve as examples. Baudrillard's understanding has a specifically political implication: "power consists in the monopoly of the spoken work."[17] Baudrillard, in this analysis, is unfortunately guilty of the same kind of essentialism he so often takes Marx to task for. White it is recognized that in changing the messages Inuit people will have adopted a political strategy that ultimately does nothing to vitiate the hegemonic power of modern communications technology, there is nothing inherent in the technology that suggests they cannot change the form in which their new messages will be broadcast. And this latter process seems to have been the strategy adopted by Inuit communities.

The Inuit Broadcasting Corporation was established in the early seventies in response to the demand on the part of so many communities for Inuktitut broadcasting. IBC now has three main television production centers–Iqaluit, Cambridge bay, and Baker Lake–and several small production units scattered in communities across the high Arctic. IBC produces a news show and a series of documentaries, which are broadcast by the CBC through a time-sharing arrangement. All of the IBC shows are in Inuktutut. On the level of content, IBC effectively presents the Inuit view. For example, in March 1985 when I visited Iqaluit, officials from the Department of Defense were visiting communities attempting to collect contaminated materials (PCBs) that Inuit hunters may have gathered from abandoned DEW line posts. The IBC news broadcast on these visits served Inuit communities as a warning (the bell approach!) of the impending visits; it also seized the opportunity to question the existence of DEW sites in the north.

More interesting, however, are the documentaries, which themselves spill over that genre to act as visual reflections on the Inuit way of life. It is difficult to use our language to speak of the social processes at work here: the division between audience and performers that marks a society of the spectacle (Debord, 1983) does not exist. In Inuit television there are no performers, so I will use the term producers to refer to the IBC staff and assume no separation between producers and audience: both are part of Inuit community. The relatively small size of the community allows for the immediate possibility that by watching IBC people will see themselves on television. In place of the gap between audience and performer which constitutes a society of the spectacle, the Inuit have created an intimate relation between community and producers. This relation takes place on multiple levels: perhaps most importantly, that of the everyday. An Inuk producer will watch her program with other Inuit who will comment on it; the producer and her production live in the community that is the object of their reflection.

Elisapee Cain, Tasiujaq

If we had our own radio network, we would be able to hear the

> recorded minutes of meetings. It would be especially pleasant to
> have programmes if we knew the person who would be speaking.[18]

The other crucial level in which interaction between producer and community takes place is in the construction of a specifically Inuit visual language. Those who produce the shows are still in the process of learning to use the technology. This learning process is a public one, though. The products of training sessions are often aired. In the past few years, then, an intimate process of (self) educating both the community and the producers has been taking place. The result of this process has been the production of an Inuit visual language that radically alters both the form and content of televised communications.

Luccasie Irqumiaq, Puvirnituq

> I think when the radio first starts, the people will listen to anything
> so long as it is in our language, but later they will become more
> discriminating, and we shall have to improve the quality of our
> programming. We are already making some plays that will be of in-
> terest to them.[19]

There is, pershaps, a fine line between virtuosity and naïveté. There are two kinds of programs that I have seen on IBC which demonstrate both of these characteristics. What is remarkable is that they can be produced and broadcast:

"Skinning a Fox," IBC Baker Lake

> This programme, broadcast with some frequency, consists of an
> elderly Inuk sitting on the floor, his back to the wall, skinning a
> fox and explaining in Inuktitut how this is done. The camera never
> moves, the light glares down from above. Off camera an old wom-
> an, perhaps his wife, is knitting. She occasionally leans on camera
> to explain what she is up to. The programme lasts about twenty
> minutes.

Since in the mid-seventies the IBC simply sent out video cameras to small communities, with a minimum of training support, the visual results often showed no predispositions as to what television "should" look like:

"Hunting a Seal," Sac Kunnuk, Igloolik

> An Inuk is standing over a hole in the ice. His arm is upraised, he
> is holding a spear. The shot is taken from some distance away, so
> the figure is very small. It is a dramatic moment, we await its out-
> come. The figure continues to stand, the camera does not move.
> The intensity of the moment is not produced by close ups, jump

cuts, acting or editing. We are in "real time." The intensity leaves us, we are bored. But we still wait. Occasionally it returns, we anticipate the seal, the sudden strike, the action. But it does not take place. How long have we waited, have we watched this hunter– five minutes? ten?–before we realize we are waiting for him to strike and he is waiting for the seal and so, we too are in a way waiting for the seal and perhaps our waiting and his are the same. As we continue to watch we begin to understand that hunting a seal is not the strike, the sudden moment of action, but rather the anticipation, the boredom, the intensity, the exhaustion, the waiting. After about fifteen minutes the video ends. We never see the strike.

In any southern program these images would have been edited in roughly the following way: we would have a shot at a distance, establishing context; a shot of the hunter's face, establishing intensity; a shot of the spear, of the seal hole, perhaps at an increasing pace, and to music in order to establish dramatic pacing; a shot of the spear striking the seal would follow, possibly in slow motion so we could sustain the "climax." We would have been led to believe that we understood in all its intimacy the act of hunting a seal. We would never have been bored and never forced to wait for any significant period. We would be very carefully manipulated or led by the producers; we would see all the essential aspects of hunting a seal, but experience none of them. That is, in being "led" we would have lost the opportunity to experience the activity in a way that the medium of television, as Kunnuk illustrates, allows.

IBC is an example of interative television. It is conditioned at the levels of production, distribution, and consumption by an intimate relation with the community in which it is produced. This community is geographically widespread and culturally diverse, though admittedly relatively small. The gap between "audience" and "entertainer" does not exist in this context. In its place is the community itself as a material and cultural strategy. Within the community, different forms of production take place: these include the production of material necessities, such as food and the production of cultural reflections such as television programs. The latter allow Inuit to reflect on and re-experience the former. Both forms of production involve the characteristics we associate with the paleolithic and postmodern.

In postmodern culture the audience–and by definition this implies a separation–can have an effect on programming only in the most reified fashion. Intense surveys of the audience will determine whether more people watch "Dallas" or "Miami Vice," and the results will eventually lead to the demise of one of these programs. Both programs are produced by a specialized elite ("stars") and does not inform the everyday life of the audience. Not only do the programs not contribute to the community, but actively work against it. In the paleolithic-postmodern, on the other hand, the community speaks its own language and sees itself on television. The

producers are slowly creating a visual language that allows the community to see itself in its own terms, which is important: our own (postmodern) representation of Inuit on television involves caricature of the most vulgar sort.

Irish Spring Soap Commercial

> A single television commercial for Irish Spring soap features two related visual texts. In one a miner, underground and covered in filth, is magically transported to a lush green landscape, presumably Ireland, through the use of soap. In the second an Inuk in the far north is, much to his delight, similarly transported. While the miner's filth can be equated with his work and excused, the only explanation within the visual text for the Inuk's filth is his existence in a hostile environment where no one would want to live or, more immediately, his "race" itself.

The sub-text of these caricatures is that Inuits strive to escape the north, strive to escape their own cultural identity and desperately seek to live in the same fashion as non-Native, urban southerners.

The Inuit struggle to maintain their social identity takes place on multiple fronts, one of which involves the broadcast media. This struggle is not insignificant to late capitalist societies, especially to those within them who are determined to maintain a vision of emancipation. From the Inuit we understand that the new communications technology, contra Baudrillard and many others, is not inherently dominating or a structure of hegemonic power. It has a potentiality for playing a meaningful role in emancipatory social practices. Perhaps we need to return to a marxist conceptual scheme whereby the use of forces of production–including technology– can only be understood in the context of a dialectical interaction with the social relations within which they exist. Baudrillard, Debord, and others allow us to understand the ways in which these technologies are used in late-capitalist society but say little to the more difficult question of the ultimate potentiality of these technologies.

On a broader level, the Inuit adoption and absorption of postmodern technology raises questions concerning our whole understanding of "development." The logic of development as it is imposed by so-called "advanced," late capitalist social formations on various "other" societies has no place in a meaningful understanding of either social formation. As Stanley Diamond has argued, "the basic apology for imperialism remains the idea of progress."[20] The term development implies the idea of simplicity: Inuit society, at least, does not exhibit that characteristic and probably never did. The term development further implies that Inuits should strike for what we have (this is the political significance of the Irish Spring soap commercial, and most southern television representations of the Inuit) while our understanding of their appropriation of technology leads us to con-

clude that such striving would mean important cultural losses rather than advances. We need to reject all those logical constructions that imply that "other" cultures are inferior, less developed, simpler, primitive or less advanced than our own. Furthermore, we need to reject understandings that hold to a sense of the "pure" pre-capitalist cultures as superior to our own. The latter understandings leave no room for modern adaptations and often involve an underlying sense that "other" cultures are much weaker than our own, and that they can adapt, can successfully absorb the postmodern and retain their integrity. We need, then, to understand the advantages offered by both postmodern and paleolithic cultural and economic strategies, as well as their ultimate limitations. In Diamond's words, "the problem... is to help conceptualize contemporary forms that will reunite man with his past, reconcile the primitive with the civilized..."[21]

Yellowknife, Summer 1985

> Another act at the 1985 "Folk on the Rocks" involves an Inuk man and woman. She plays the traditional drum while he dances and sings. Both are dressed in traditional costume. At some point, when he is tired, he leaves the stage. She turns on a nearby drum machine, picks up a bass guitar and sings–in English–a few country and western songs.

In his notebooks on pre-capitalist social formations Marx wrote that "the community itself appears as the first great force of production."[22] In the West, we have barely begun to understand the full significance of this statement and perhaps will only be able to when the process of vitiating meaningful community nears its end. For Inuits, it is the community itself that buffers the debilitating shock waves produced by the totalizing power of the late-capitalist State, economy, and culture. Where there is desperate poverty, despair, and violence, only the community can prevent total devastation. But the Inuit community has been able to engage in something more than a holding pattern. They have been able to subvert the ideology of form–to borrow Jameson's evocative phrase–and employ western technology in sustaining and entrenching the Inuit way of life. This is, admittedly, a process that has its dangers. But there is no going back and no "pure" Inuit culture that will somehow exist in isolation from the rest of the world. What may remain distinctively Inuit about the hybrid culture that is emerging is a community that is strong enough to break the logic of the spectacle and to employ "advanced" technology in a radically subversive way: as communication that defies the sender-receiver model and organizes speech with responses.

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Notes

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1. Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 388.

2. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of Signs,* trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis, Telos Press, 1981), 169.

3. Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (New York: Adline-Atherton, Inc., 1972), 32-39.

4. Ibid., 101.

5. cf. Ibid, 102fn.

6. Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1974).

7. Ibid., 173.

8. cf. Baudrillard, *Critique,* 63-87.

9. cf. Arthur Kroker and David Cook, *The Postmodern Scene,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 10.

10. Hugh Brody, *Maps and Dreams,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), xi.

11. Brody in *Maps and Dreams* and *The People's Land* (Harmondsmith: Penguin Books, 1975); Peter Usher, *The Bankslanders: Economy and Ecology of a Frontier Trapping Community* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1971); and Michael Asch, "The Dene Economy" in *Dene Nation: The Colony Within,* ed. by Mel Watkins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

12. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics,* 37.

13. L. Irqumiaq, *Taqamriut/The Northerners/Les Septentrionaux, (Quebec: Northern Quebec Inuit Association, 1974), 98.*

14. *L. Epoo, Taqamriut,* 116.

15. P. Inukpuk, *Taqamriut,* 111.

16. Ibid., 170.

17. Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production,* trans. Mark Poster (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975), 145.

18. E. Cain, *Taqamriut,* 121.

19. E. Irqumiaq, *Taqamriut,* p. 99.

20. Ibid, 38.

21. Ibid., 175.
22. Karl Mark, *Grundrisse,* trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 495.

CITIES OF THE DEAD

Hannah Vowles and Glyn Banks

Mastery of nature seems less a grand enterprise of the species than a means of upholding the interests of particular ruling groups.

W. Leiss[1]

Mastery over inner nature is a logical correlate of the mastery over external nature.

M. Horkheimer[2]

No consumption, production, communication, transportation, illness, health care, death, learning or exchange occurs without the intervention of centralised administrations or professional agencies.

A. Gorz[3]

That there is a crisis in architectural education today is perhaps due in no small measure to the fact that Architecture is now in our consumer society nothing more than a combination of technology, administration, politics, and economics with a design facade. For the most part, those people who are working in educational institutions are trying desperately to maintain *professional* standards while implementing cuts and working within Government guidelines, failing to notice (or pretending to) that it is the nature of *professionalism* itself which is being changed.

The fact that Architecture (as with all professions) is being driven into the arms of 'private enterprise', and its reliance on 'new technology' should be obvious by now to all, things however are more complicated within

our educational institutions. Here those who (secretly or explicitly) support the "Thatcher Revolution" promote the autonomy of Architecture (from *ideology* but not from economics) and those who don't, end up supporting the very same notion, in their failure to recognise (or admit) their complicity within the institution, to that *revolution*. Both sides bemoan the intrusion of *ideology*, and the only difference between them seems to be the positing of *autonomy* as something under threat or lost (due to Thatcher) or as something yet to be achieved (through Thatcherism). Nearly all our professions then, (including education) preach in defence of their *autonomy* while practising whatever is necessary to the ideology of economics; for to admit dependency and "*complicity*," rather than *autonomy*, would be to reveal all professions as already political and would perhaps lead to a demand for a political conscience and politicized action. Instead of denying the crisis and serving economics, professions and institutions would become (visible) sites of struggle.

The crisis in architectural education today, then, is quite simply the failure to consider Architecture in a socio-political, cultural context; that is, in relation to *consumerism*. (There is, after all, not much difference between the articulation of free-floating space in architecture, the free-floating sign in linguistics and the free-floating commodity).

Perhaps Architecture has always served power, whether it be the Church, Sovereignty, the Industrial Revolution, the Third Reich, the Colonial Empire, or the People (the Administrative State). Architecture may be nothing more than a form of built power where today this is denied and disguised by its pretence to *professionalism*, taken to mean only the *emancipation* of all by an elite (concerned with its own *autonomy*) which results in the protection of buildings against the people they are supposedly designed (to emancipate) for. Dr. Alice Coleman is ridiculed by the profession for over-determining Modern architecture's relation to alienation, crime and despair, while (although she may underplay elements of education, class, and consumerism) at the same time "experts" claim that "good" architecture by "approved" practitioners results in a "better" environment.

It is hard, if not impossible, to conceive of Architecture (and in fact, Art) outside of its fatal attraction to power. It is however, this very urge to *build at all costs* and to work for the highest bidder that has today created the situation where Architecture is dead.

At the centre of this situation is the relationship of Architecture to technology. Modern architecture's mostly uncritical celebration of the machine metaphor has meant that in tying itself to 'functionalism' Architecture finally becomes the victim of technology. Whereas industrialism needed Architecture to legitimate its power through the coercion of bodies to rationalized discipline, the technological imperative of post-industrial society does not need even bodies to legitimate its power.

> In the modern state, there are no rulers enforcing obedience by virtue of command, or requiring allegiance and submission to their

person. In the modern state, the bearers of power enforce obedience in the name of *objective necessities* for which *no-one can be held responsible*. Contemporary technocratic power has an essentially *functional* legitimacy. It does not belong to an individual subject but to a function, to a place occupied by an individual within the organigramme of a firm, an institution or the state. The particular individuals holding this or that functional position are always contingent, can always be called into question. They have no majesty or moral authority ... For the greatest secret of large-scale industry, as of any vast bureaucratic or military machine, is that *nobody holds power.*[4]

As Hal Foster has said, the plug-in architecture of Archigram and others in the sixties merely fed into the ideology of consumer culture, and did not contest it.[5] Now that the "degree-zero" (so important to Roland Barthes, and influential to Modernist artists and architects alike as a strategy of "de-personalization" as deconstruction of the sovereign subject or bourgeois individual) has become the logic of a technological society (information as neutral, technology objective) rather than a resistant artistic strategy, Modern architecture disappears, becomes nothing more than the functional (economic) administration of corporate identities.

The computerized world of our post-industrial information society no longer depends on Architecture for legitimation and anyway cannot be celebrated or symbolized through architectural metaphor. As a reaction, High-Tech appears, as a fiction, as a celebration of the ruins of dead technology (technology as style), to disguise the disappearance of Modern architecture into the blank corporate look of power. Perfectly complicit with a certain stage (now passed) of industrial development) where the outside and the inside become reversible, a metaphor for the technological externalization of all bodily functions, where at the same time the inside of our bodies become perfectly flexible (to the penetrations of power, administration, medicine, discipline) with no sentimental human *attachments*)– the collective brain that is outside and over us, and whose sleep-walking, servo-mechanism we have, in shocked response, unfortunately become. High-Tech appears almost reassuring in its nostalgic celebration of the now redundant machine metaphor.

The High-Tech architecture of Rogers, Foster, et al. can today look almost comforting because it suspends the technological development of Western culture at a certain point where a well-crafted metaphor makes dead power visible, and reminds us of a time before the human body became so completely redundant to the development of a technological imperative (where the whole development of technology in Western culture can be seen as a development based on a *religious* distrust and purging (externalization) of all bodily functions; a distrust of oral culture; and the mastery of space–nature and inner nature–as *revenge* for an inability to master time– the decay of the body. Information as knowledge without bodies; intelli-

gence as knowledge without minds; the library, museum and now the data-bank as the collective but neutralized information storage system–memory without bodies). High-Tech suspends the body at that point where it has been emptied of all content, but just before it was invaded by consumerism, and suspends Architecture at the point at which, before having nowhere else to go, chose to celebrate this invasion.

The "degree-zero" emancipation (disappearance) of Architecture and the body leaves them both in a position to re-appear as 'hyper-real simulation', and Postmodernism as style rather than critical strategy, appears as both the fiction designed to disguise those disappearances and at the same time a celebration, on the one hand, of dead *"community"*)–designer subjec-tivity as the consumption and internalization of all the signs of the body's 'liberation' from the "dead scene of the social," re-presented as "participa-tion"; and on the other hand, as *eclecticism* as the re-cycling and continu-ous exchange of all signs of dead power for consumption–ruins re-presented as emancipation.

It has become obvious today in our postmodern promotional culture, that advertising has discovered something that Roland Barthes (and others) did not foresee, and that is the fact that at the very point that a "degree-zero" of neutralized ethical, social and political value and meaning is real-ized in society, all human experience (memory, imagination, etc), having been 'emancipated' from the social body and referent in the real world, is freed to enter the free-marketplace of interchangeability and exchange, and "eclecticism" spontaneously occurs as the consumption of all "signs" as an expression of our "unhinged" (disembodied) emancipation as *free individuals*. With the disappearance of the embodiment of subject and object in the real world and the body, they become merely 'signs' refer-ring only to each other, free to re-combine at will, and signifying nothing but the almost complete colonization of the life-world by consumerism (as technological liberation plus economics).

Postmodern consumer culture becomes the new site of power disguised as *liberation*, and Architecture, because of its fatal attraction to power, at-tempts its aesthetic expression, moving *from a celebration of technology to a celebration of its effects*, and in the process disappears once again, now into a designer collection of eclectic fragments of all the signs of mere-ly what architecture once was. Just as the designer body re-appears (and then disappears) into a celebration of all the signs of its own "extermina-tion." The eclectic architecture of Nato, Terry Farrell, Michael Graves, et al. are perfect "illustrations" of our *unhinged* freedom and Architecture's disappearance into nothing more than an expression of the unlimited re-cycling and re-combination of dead meaning as spectacle in our post-modern consumer society.

Needless to say that in response to this condition there has arisen an architecture that attempts to confront Architecture's triple disappearance, into redundant technology, corporate administration, and stylish eclecti-

cism, by appealing not to a "lost tradition" or a "lost subject," but by introducing *anxiety*, as an attempt to subvert consumerism from within. Architects like James Stirling and Frank Gehry (and others) seem aware that the consumer freedom advertized by eclecticism, is a designer illusion, a trompe-l'oeil disguising the fact that all 'signs' retain the traces of embodied meaning and power, and that the "pleasure" of eclecticism is the *frisson* of knowing those traces while not feeling bound by them. They recognise, as did Nietzsche, that the more you penetrate life the more it appears as meaningless, at the same time as knowing that a meaningless world is intolerable to human beings.

Brian Hatton recently observed in *Building Design* that Stirling does nothing externally to alleviate the effects of Thatcherism in the North, apart we would say, from taking "revenge" by re-building "Liverpool" in various configurations in different countries. It may be that architects like Stirling and Gehry are the "last men" of Architecture, problematizing "professionals" who attempt to forestall the disappearance of Architecture through their articulation of "anxiety" and who at least, for us, pinpoint exactly those problems concerning Architecture's relationship to, and "professionalism's" complicity with, consumer and technological society.

This anxiety over meaning, this aporia at the heart of Western culture, is also a dominant theme of deconstruction and is by now overshadowed by the trivialization of deconstruction as a critical strategy through its consumption as yet another style. The absorption of Derrida into American consumer society through the Academy, where deconstruction has for the most part become a validating methodology for *producing* texts in ever greater numbers and legitimating *commentary* as a new discipline, rather than undermining the whole "Western metaphysical project," is parodied by the recent Philip Johnson sponsored 'Deconstructivist' exhibition in New York, where deconstruction in architecture becomes no more than methodology for producing buildings in ever greater numbers. It may be that in privileging the 'text' over 'presence' (of the body) Derrida colludes with, rather than resists, a technological and consumerist culture based on 'signs' and 'absence' (the disappearance of the subject and object, the real and the body.) By refusing to deconstruct deconstruction's relationship to both the Academy and consumerism, Derrida's project falls victim to exploitation and neutralization by both.

The appropriation of Derrida by Peter Eisenman results in the cannibalization of all forms of cultural difference reduced to an *abstract* principle of *anxiety*. In the hands of Eisenman deconstruction becomes not much more than an extension of Modernism where the *uncertainty* at the heart of experience is seized upon as a new International Style. This attempt to suspend and universalize *uncertainty* de-contextualizes *"anxiety"* as the productive force of difference in the world. Once ambiguity and equivalence are recognized as the "degree-zero" basis of all culture, the question of the contextual articulation of difference based on power relations soon

arises, and deconstruction (as could be described as being employed by Edward Said and Michel Foucault, for instance) becomes a socio-political method of tracing both the manifestations of power (both its "limits" and that which "exceeds" those limits), and the constitution of the contemporary social body; articulating cultural difference as discourse; and the utilization of *anxiety* to pursue the notion of "liberation" in specific contexts.

For Eisenman, deconstruction is a project which incorporates the threat of actual difference as an abstract principle, an institutional attempt to keep white, male, middle-class corporate culture alive by continuing to exclude actual "anxiety"–from nuclear power, AIDS, ecological disaster to blacks, gays, feminists, and all dispossessed "politicized" minorities by incorporating the *frisson* of the "threat." Here postmodernism as deconstructivist style continues, with Philip Johnson's patronage, the Modernist project of purging *difference* in the world only to re-present it as abstract "culture."

The problem for Bernard Tschumi, who seems to have read more than just Derrida, including, it seems, Lyotard and Baudrillard, is that unlike Eisenman's desperately white attempt to deflect *anxiety* into abstraction, Tschumi feels no anxiety at all about our cultural condition and Parc de la Villette in Paris becomes nothing more than an *illustration* of the analysis of our cultural condition. In appropriating Lyotard's and Baudrillard's analyses of new technology's effects on society (the disappearance of subject and object, public and private, in favor of network and event; representation into simulation), Tschumi loses sight of the fact that those analyses are made in a specific context, the main purpose of which is to provoke *resistance.* Baudrillard's presentation of his own reflections as simulation (the disappearance of an object on which to reflect), is a strategy to push the logic of Western technological experience to a point where we can look back to survey the ruins of the present.

If Tschumi's 'network' stands in metaphorical relationship to media technology (where all limits and borders, inside and outside, have broken down), then the events ("folies") stand as a metaphor for *catastrophes*, because on the computer screen of our everyday media lifestyles, only, as Baudrillard points out, *catastrophes* (and bodies) disturb the network. Teschumi seems quite content to substitute for the power relations of subject and object, technological domination where even the impact of *catastrophes* is reduced to the level of "folies."

In failing to take note of the relationship of Architecture to consumerism (using critical theory only to liberate Architecture from its history) Tschumi does not take into account the fact that *at the same time* as the object disappears (into the 'network'), the subject also disappears (into a "blip with a lifestyle"); and Architecture disappears into designer deconstruction)–technology, administration, politics and economics plus V.A.T. (Value Added Theory).

Tschumi fails to see that as soon as Architecture becomes programme

(with plug-in functions), rather than a (social) product/object, not only does he absolve himself (and Architecture) from any responsibility for those functions, handing them over to Administration, but furthermore, there is also no 'subject' to people his park, only abstractions consuming their own Leisure Time as a sign of their emancipation. Thus it is that Tschumi's parodic appropriation of Constructivist forms is perfectly appropriate for deconstruction as a *celebration* of the post-industrial revolution, where 'the people' are finally emancipated to become, as Baudrillard would say, no more than "the masses."

The attempt to resurrect the masses into "subjects" is, ironically enough, another site of Architecture's disappearance, this time into the celebration of *dead community* disguised as "democratic participation;" in other words, Community architecture. Prince Charles is more aware, perhaps because of having more to lose than Bernard Tschumi, of the problems of "disappearing subjects" and of the dangerous effects of new technology and consumerism. What is the point of being landed-gentry if the land isn't worth landing on because it is contaminated, and your "subjects" have disappeared? So it is, that an elite group of *"professionals"* can now claim to work "By Royal Appointment" for a vanished (and vanquished) "community."

It is more than ironic that, just at the point where Royalty and Architecture develop a 'conscience,' the 'subject' disappears, and all attempts to find out what the community really wants meet with no more than a parodic response to the initial problem. To design a local hospital (with Royal approval) in collaboration with the doctors and administrators, is simply a case of collaborating with 'Medical Care' as nothing more than an expression of "Health without bodies," a profession that is, dedicated as much as technology is, to the punishment of the actual body, through normalizing techniques and the private enterprise of pharmaceutical corporations.

Of course, at this stage of the emancipation of the free individual, even if the 'patient' (that is, an actual person) is consulted concerning Architecture, the result might resemble the effect of carrying out an opinion poll where starving people are asked which brand of fish fingers they prefer.

That Community architecture can so easily find (*resurrect*) a community, is simply a disguise for a *profession* (and a future king) smugly claiming its concern, and entails the disappearance of Architecture into a nostalgia for a lost subject, and a parody of its own 'signs' of *professional* care. To attempt to analyse the crisis accurately, and to *produce a 'constituency'* (as the feminist co-operative Matrix attempts to do) is to attempt to politicize *both the profession and the public* (which is no doubt why, even with all the publicity concerning Community architecture, so little attention, including the Royal gaze, is focussed on co-ops like Matrix), and at the same time to admit that perhaps *no-one* knows what is to become Architecture.

If with Modernism we had Architecture without bodies, then with Late Modernism corporate architecture and corporate bodies, now, in our post-

modern condition, we have the resurrection of both Architecture and the body as designer ruins, free-floating signs of their disappearance. Commodity architecture for a consumer community. If Architecture has finally disappeared, then to ask what Architecture once was, is to search the past for clues as to what Architecture may become, as with technology:

> ... were technology to be understood as a form of historical, actual, social manifestation, then discourse about technology would be able to study technology in direct relation to society, and to suggest how society might influence concrete social manifestations of technology. Here, potential for judgement and change would replace a discourse of inevitability ... The cliche about technology which epitomizes the demythologisation of the world is one where technological means legitimate themselves with no attempt to seek a ground in goals or ends outside of themselves: 'Technology for technology's sake', and "Technology is imperative." Instead of asking what would be a good technology for society it is assumed that what is required is a good society for technology because only means are considered to be important (or able to be discussed rationally).[6]

As Tom Markus has said in a recent issue of *Building Design* ("Down to Earth": July 15 1988): "Almost all architectural discourse now treats buildings as art objects ... The idea of products as social objects is more alien to architectural critique than it is even in the arts ... the overt and covert functional programmes can now be excised from critical debate by creating the myth of the neutral brief. The social relationships, encapsulated in spatial structures are produced and reproduced through a code so powerful that silence is enough. Explicit control of function and implicit control of spatial relationships, accompanied by the promise of artistic autonomy and opportunites for technical and economic innovation, prevents even the questions being asked) *questions about power, technology and people."*

> Indeed, it is apparent, now more than ever, that we are living in the midst of a terrible *ethics gap*: a radical breach between the realities of the designed environments of the new technologies, and the often outmoded possibilities of our private and public moralities for taking measure of the adequacy of technological change. It's as if we live in a culture with a super-stimulated technical consciousness, but a hyper-atrophied moral sense. It is just this gap between ethics and technology which makes it so difficult to render meaningful judgements on specific technological innovations in satisfying or thwarting the highest social ideals of western culture ... What is our practical situation now? It's just this: *technology without a sustaining and coherent ethical purpose; and ethics, public and private, without a language by which to rethink technolo-*

gy in late twentieth-century experience.[7]

> The sense of 'beauty' or aesthetic appeal that draws the scientist
> in one direction rather than another may indeed, then, be a proleptic
> glimpse of its 'fit', 'fittingness' or 'rightness': not, however, in the
> sense of its correspondence with or conformity to an independently
> determinate reality but, rather, in the sense of its suitability for even-
> tual communal appropriation.[8]

It is as *'narratives'* (of power relations), value-laden (though usually dis-
guised, or hidden) discourses, that all *professional* disciplines, including
science, technology, medicine, law, education, architecture, and art, have
to be examined for their "hidden agendas". In architecture the question
of "What kind of society do we want?" (the ethical and moral question)
can be approached by a *combination* of deconstruction (in social 'con-
texts'), 'Community architecture' as the active formation and politicization
of a constituency based on difference (as discourse), and an 'eclecticism'
which uses the 'liberation' from history (through technology) to *recon-
sider* history, technology, and the present. The aim being of course, to re-
discover the body (*and* its decay) and to re-invent the social body (both
bounded by language but exceeded and renewed by *politicized* imagina-
tion and action) and finally to emancipate us from 'emancipation' (the con-
tinuous expansion of 'power and mastery over nature' and inner nature,
rather than the recognition or reconstruction of 'limits').

The fact that almost none of this will take place within the *"profession"*
or our educational institutions for the time being, seems depressingly in-
evitable.

> In intellectual culture, both the nostalgic pursuit of the permanent
> value referents as regulators *and* the nihilistic refusals of value dis-
> course altogether, may be perhaps characterisable as mimetic repli-
> cations, incarnations and effects of vampirical postmodern
> displacement of creatively orientated value-life.[9]

In the meantime we wander as Zombies through the ruins of the Cities
of the Dead searching for signs of life, awaiting the "catastrophe" which
will liberate us from the twilight zone of corporate bodies and designer
subjectivities, the twin fictions expressly designed as the final solution,
to effect our disappearance (along with Architecture and Art) as the sur-
plus refuse of a technological imperative.

Art in Ruins
London, England

Notes

1. William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature*, (New York: G. Braziller 1972), 171.

2. Max Horkheimer, quoted in W. Leiss, *The Domination of Nature*, 152.

3. A. Gorz, *Farewell to the Working Class* (London: Pluto Press 1982) 41.

4. Ibid, 52-3.

5. Hal Foster, *Neo-Futurism: Architecture and Technology*, A.A. Files No. 14, 1987, 26.

6. Marike Finlay, "William Leiss on Technology: A Foucauldian and Habermasian Reading," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 10, nos.1-2, (1986), 185.

7. Arthur Kroker, *Technology and the Canadian Mind*, (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1984), 127.

8. Barbara Hernstein Smith, "Value Without Truth-Value" in *Life After Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture*, ed. John Fekete, (London: Macmillan 1987), 12.

9. John Fekete, "Vampire Value" in *Life After Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture*, ed. John Fekete, (London: Macmillan 1987), 72.

DISCO TUT:
POSTMODERN EXHIBITIONISM

Robyn Gillam

Between 1976 and 1980 North America experienced a recrudescence of interest in the art and culture of Ancient Egypt. Although such episodes are not unprecedented in recent times, nothing could parallel the range of consumer products, publications, and events that proliferated during this period. As noted by the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, by late 1979 every feature of daily existence had been included by such paraphernalia.[1] Yet, while the object of this celebration resided in a travelling art exhibit that visited Toronto as well as a half dozen American cities, Tut'ankhamen, himself, was an extremely remote figure, dead three thousand years, still lying in his tomb in the desert hills of southern Egypt. Who was "King Tut" and why did North America seek to saturate its marketing space with his image? This paper tries to answer these questions and show how these activities fit into a postmodern "sign-scape" of the type described by Baudrillard and Jameson.

1

In those tales of the genesis of Ancient Egyptian kings that survive, the ritual of naming invariably coincides with the moment of birth. Attempting to hasten the child's deliverance from the womb, the mother or midwife spontaneously utters the name by which the offspring will later be known.[2] [He is] the living image of the Sun!"–Tut'ankhaten[3]–is the exclamation that is thought to have greeted our protagonist on his entry into the world.

If his name seems inoffensive to modern ears, it did not sound that way to the Egyptians of the late fourteenth century B.C. Although the word "aten" does indeed denote the physical manifestation of the sun as it appears in the heavens,[4] its connotations in the years immediately prior to Tut'ankhamen's accession were far more complex. For a period of almost two decades, his predecessor, who called himself Akhenaten ("Useful for Aten"), had tried to completely remold the religious beliefs of his people in honor of a god he called by this name. He first went about this by attacking the tutelary god of his own ruling house, Amen of Thebes. It was under the aegis of Amen that Akhenaten's ancestors had rid Egypt of foreign rulers two centuries earlier and had gone on to conquer most of Syria-Palestine. They expressed their gratitude by making his temple the richest and most splendid in the known world and his priesthood the most powerful in Egypt. The family further honored him by naming many of its sons Amenhotep ("Amen is content"). Akhenaten was the fourth king of the line to bear this name and his repudiation of it was his first act of rebellion. Later he not only founded a new capital city but actually began a campaign to have the name of Amen expunged from the written record. Everywhere it was hacked from stone and erased from papyrus. Later not only the names of other gods, but even the plural of the word for "god" itself was attacked. There was no god but Aten and Akhenaten was not only his prophet but his son. The king sought to augment his already semi-divine status by making himself the sole intermediary between the world and its creator. The new god was depicted in the form of the sun as it appears in the heavens. The only concession to anthropomorphism in this image was that the rays of the sun ended in tiny hands which held the sign of life. It is only the king and his family who are depicted as receiving this gift. Indeed, in the funerary art of this period, the images of the ancient gods are not replaced by the image of the sun but by that of the king. Such a severe and iconoclastic heterodoxy, however, proved to be both too authoritarian and difficult to grasp for the people of Egypt, and this so-called religious revolution died with its creator. Although his name marks him as one of Akhenaten's circle, Tut'ankhaten soon changed it to Tut'ankhamen. During his short reign of about nine years, he presided over the reinstatement of the old dynastic god Amen of Thebes as well as the rest of the traditional Egyptian pantheon. Tut'ankhamen sought to change the image of the god that formed his name. By so doing, he not only hoped to change his image politically but to alter his own essence.[5] Once this had been achieved, his name and good reputation would endure forever, for the Egyptians believed that to speak the name of the dead was to make them live again and that their other-worldly existence would continue for as long as they were remembered.[6] The young king's successors had other ideas however. These were the rulers, who had usurped the throne and tried to legitimize themselves by substituting their own names for those of Akhenaten and his immediate followers in the king lists. To this end

they usurped the monuments and hacked out their names and images where convenient. They may even have destroyed the body of Akhenaten (whom they referred to as "the great criminal"), thus according to their beliefs, completely annihilating him. With the others of his house, they were not so thorough. If the cult of another king was celebrated in his funerary temple and his name forgotten, so was his burial place. But here Tut'ankhamen slept for over three thousand years, awaiting a resurrection of both body and name, strange beyond the imaginings of himself or his detractors.

2

In Egyptian, the word "tut" meant image, figure, statue, or likeness. By an adjectival extension of meaning, it could also be used to denote "like" or "like to."[7] Up until the sixteenth century, a similar range of meanings is found for "image" in English. It came via the French *image* from the Latin *imago*, itself derived from *imitari*–to imitate, copy, portray, or ape.[8] From the sixteenth century onwards, additional meanings are found for "image." They include: something that represents or is taken to represent an object (like a symbol or an emblem); a thing which exhibits a particular quality, becoming its symbol; a vivid description of something; a simile, metaphor or figure of speech.[9] The idea of the symbol, or something that embodies a particular quality, is that which informs the use of this word in advertising and mass media. It can also be used in this context to connote perceived reputation.[10] Unfortunately, an etymology of "image" does not not always reveal the intention with which the word is being used. Is the image actually of something that exists, or not? Even in ancient languages a tension exists. (Note Latin *imaginari*, to imagine, with the same meaning as its modern counterparts.) The mind can devise things which have no physical existence, but are these figments more or less real than everyday experience? Today we would answer this question in the negative, but this has not always been the case. Platonism, for example, held that the material world was derived from an intellectual and ultimately spiritual realm of ideas. This viewpoint, which heavily influenced both Medieval and Renaissance Christianity, enjoyed great popularity until the seventeenth century. At this time, radical Protestantism had envisioned a transcendent God, leaving the world to the steady gaze of Empiricism and Rationalism. The creation of modern science and the rise of the capitalist economic system thus took place in a universe purged of ideas and essences.

While the biological sciences have reduced essence to a genetic code, structural linguistics has shown that the meaning of language, the primary medium through which humanity has engaged its world, is not only purely relative, but constantly shifting. De Saussure was able to show, through etymologies, that what is signified by a word may change in the course

of time in an arbitrary fashion. Indeed, all the terms in a language, grammatical and syntactical, as well as lexical, exist in a one-to-one relationship grounded in difference.[11] In Jacques Lacan's theory of the "floating signifier," the sign and its meaning are forever separated by language and experience.[12] Any disturbance in this chain of relationships entirely displaces meaning, reducing the subject to the condition of schizophrenia. One in such a condition is subjected to the direct materiality of the instant, unmediated by either significance or temporality. Such a process is observable even in some modernist works of art and literature, but it is more characteristic of the postmodern period.[13] Since the First World War, consumption has replaced work as the chief labor of Western society, and sustained effort has brought all classes (in North America and Europe, at least) into this scheme. A subtle manipulation of common social codes has generated a perpetual train of needs and wants whose circulation guarantees the perpetual growth of a system/code to fill every corner of existence.[14] It was Roland Barthes who first pointed out that the images used in advertising and other forms of mass culture have often had their referents arbitrarily changed and are not what they seem.[15]

This process has greatly accelerated since Barthes's first observations in the early fifties. The entire contents of history and culture (greatly augmented by the labors of academe) have been liberated of their putative meanings and set free as floating signifiers in search of advertsing copy. The *logos* has become a logo and everthing is a sign or image without an outside referent. Thus the Tut or "image" show, even if it occupied particular sites on specific dates in North America from 1976 to 1979, seemed timeless and all-pervasive. It became a seamless extension of our collective sensorium that constitutes the cultural and social environment of the postmodern age.

3

The discovery of Tut'ankhamen's tomb in 1922 by Howard Carter and George Herbert, the Earl of Carnarvon, constituted one of the first great media events of the twentieth century. It appears that from the very beginning the excavators realized how valuable a commodity it was and sought the most profitable contracts with newspapers, magazines, and motion picture companies. The documentation and removal of thousands of objects from the tomb were so skillfully stage-managed that public enthusiasm was maintained over a period of eight years.[16]

The widespread interest generated by this find must also be considered in its historical context. The discovery of Tut'ankhamen comes at the end of the golden age of archeology. This discipline had its origins in the Renaissance when humanist scholars and artists sought closer contact with their classical forerunners. This early period had culminated with the uncovering of Pompeii and Herculaneum at the end of the eighteenth century. Such ventures, based on the aesthetic and intellectual aspirations of the likes

of Goethe and Winklemann, had little in common with what followed.

Napoleon sought, through his invasion of Egypt in 1799, to capture that country not only physically but within a complete discursive framework. His army was accompanied by a host of scholars, artists, and cartographers who documented every aspect of Egypt, ancient or modern. The entire field of Egyptology as well as much of the history and sociology of the Middle East is based on their reports.[17] In a similar way, agents of the western powers, both in officially sanctioned forays and private expeditions, appropriated the remains of cultures from Asia Minor to the Far East. This enterprise, a forgotten aspect of the Western colonial push, can also be seen as an outgrowth of the historicist outlook. One cannot possess, let alone manipulate history, without its raw materials in one's possession. At first this activity was limited to the recovery of textual material, as well as the plundering of attractive or valuable objects. But by the late nineteenth century, simply pilfering treasures did not seem as interesting as studying them in accordance with the scientific method. As noted above, attempts at systematic excavation had already been attempted in Europe on remains of different periods and, by the end of the nineteenth century, various practitioners had tried these methods in the Middle East.[18] At this time, a larger literate public had arisen to take an interest in these proceedings. The newly educated working classes of Britain and North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries still counted the Bible as one of their main literary influences. The names of Egypt and Babylon and even some of their rulers were familiar to a public also steeped in the Classics.[19] This audience, although sensitive to the cultural significance of such discoveries, was still more interested in the idea of buried treasure than archeological niceties. If such a fascination strikes us as unsophisticated, it is only because we have been subjected to endless images of opulence from every period of history and past culture.

When Carter first discovered the tomb, it was obvious to both him and his patron, Herbert, that they did not have the resources to deal with a find of such magnitude. It so happened that the larger and better equipped expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of New York was excavating nearby. Carter asked them for assistance. Having sought and obtained permission from its superiors, the Metropolitan team was able to provide photographic and conservation facilities for the entire operation. As a result of this, the Metropolitan holds a considerable amount of material relating to the excavation, including a complete photographic record and substantial quantities of notes.[20]

Despite the tremendous publicity that it garnered and the interest thus generated in Egyptian archeology, the results of this project were not all advantageous to its directors. The discovery of the tomb coincided with the formation of the first parliamentary Egyptian government.[21] Carter and Herbert's determination to treat the excavation as their own personal fief grated on the nationalist sensitivities of the new government. As time passed, and the archeologists' behavior became increasingly intransigent,

the anger of the Egyptian officials grew to the point where the excavation was temporarily closed. As a result, the guidelines for the division of objects found between foreign archeologists and the Egyptian government were completely changed. Until this time they had been divided equally. A special act of the Egyptian parliament prevented any object from Tut'ankamen's tomb from being surrended to foreigners and subsequently non-Egyptian excavations have been allowed to keep only unimportant objects or duplicates.[22] Thus Carter's and Herbert's work in the Valley of the Kings signalled the end of an era as well as a beginning.

4

Despite avowals that the treasures of Tut'ankhamen would never leave its native soil, the Egyptian goverment allowed a collection of some of the smaller objects to circulate in Europe, North America, and Japan. Each of the countries that hosted this exhibit had been engaged in archeological salvage work in the southernmost part of Egypt throughout the sixties. This was part of an operation coordinated by UNESCO to document and salvage, where possible, ancient sites about to be flooded by the waters of the Aswan dam. This display was intended as a gesture of appreciation to the governments of those countries which had contributed expertise and equipment to this project.[23] Most of these shows received little publicity and the objects in them were of more scholarly than aesthetic interest.

The great travelling exhibits of the seventies constitute, however, a completely different phenomenon. Although they were still a form of cultural exchange conducted at the highest level of government, much of the expense and all of the publicity was handled by multinational corporations. This situation undoubtedly reflected the waning economic power of govermental structures at this period, as well as the ongoing need for expansion in the corporate marketplace. The earliest of these shows, the Chinese Exhibition, for example, symbolically re-opened China to all kinds of intercourse (most of it commercial) with the West. Although not all of these exhibits originated in underdeveloped countries, in all cases those who created them stood in need of monetary gain. The Tut exhibit which toured North America from 1976-79 was the direct result of Egypt's turning away from the Soviet Union towards the United States. This direction was clearly motivated by a desire for economic improvement and was symbolized most clearly by the Tut exhibit and the Camp David accords. In a direct way, all proceeds from the sales of tickets, official literature, and souvenirs went to the Egyptian Antiquities Organization for the upgrading of all cultural properties and in particular for the refurbishment of the permanent display of Tut'ankhamen's burial ensemble in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Indirectly, publicity for Egypt as a tourist destination was supposed to lead to an influx of foreign currency into that country. All of this however, was nothing compared to the revenue generated within the United States and Canada during the course of the exhibit[24] Once the American sixth Fleet

had moved the show to New York safely and cheaply, it was handed over to its proper custodians, Exxon (Egypt is after all an oil-producing nation) and the Metropolitan Museum.[25] The oil company provided the form and vehicle for this event and the Met supplied the content.

5

The size, design, and central concept of "The Treasures of Tutankhamun" are all claimed by Thomas Hoving, Director of the Metropolitan Museum from 1967 to 1977. This is not the place to challenge such an assertion but rather to examine the actual exhibit and the man who established it in more detail. By 1976 Hoving, who was nearing the end of his tenure at the Metropolitan, was already famous (or infamous). His populist, salesman-like persona first began to develop during his tenure at the office of Parks Commissioner in New York in the mid-sixties. Hoving had achieved notoriety for staging "happenings"; later, as curator at the Met, he devised exhibits which juxtaposed the work of Poussin with old cars, spaghetti, and pop art. He once earned the admiration of Andy Warhol by referring to the busts of three Egyptian princesses as "The Supremes."[26] Hoving was also responsible for the appointment of the ex-editor of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar,* Diana Vreeland, to the position of curator-consultant in the Met's costume institute. This engagement, although at first controversial, in later years provided the museum with some very profitable connections in the worlds of fashion, business, and politics.[27]

In many ways, Hoving presided over and was personally responsible for the final absorption of this, the pre-eminent American art museum, into the marketplace. The way he organized the Tut exhibit is no exception to this trend.

6

"The Treasures of Tutankhamen," as conceived by the Met's director, consisted of fifty-five objects, one for each year since the tomb had been discovered. As such it was the largest exhibition of its kind, containing several pieces, most notably jewellery, that had never before left Egypt. The pieces were to be displayed in the order that they had been found in the tomb and were juxtaposed with blow-ups of photographs taken during the course of the excavation. The intention was to recreate the entire discovery for anyone who passed through the exhibition. The official catalogue supplemented this experience with concise, scholarly commentary, giving more detailed descriptions of each exhibit and some historical background to the period when Tut'ankhamun lived. It also included a brief account of the excavation.[28] Although it is more plausible to try to evoke the experience of the archeologists rather than of those who buried the king, supplementary material produced by the Met went even further. In an album of field photographs from the Metropolitan's archives, tremendous

emphasis was placed on the role the museum played in the excavation. A past director is approvingly quoted to the effect that the museum's expedition alone was equipped and competent to cope with the situation.[29] The international, cooperative character of the venture is noted, a state of affairs which in hindsight seems to suggest the multinational corporation.

Equipped with the catalogue and attendant publications, the exhibit moved around the North American hinterland in the form of that quintessential postmodern phenomenon, the franchise. Chicago, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Seattle, and as an afterthought, Toronto, one after another, received this package. The success of the project was ensured by Exxon's saturation advertising campaign, commencing up to nine months before each show. It was eagerly taken up in media, such as newspapers and lifestyle magazines. Thus was simulated "Tutmania," a phenomenon not unlike Beatlemania in that it was just as carefully engineered and the object of its enthusiasm equally insubstantial.

Any successful media event, be it a film, royal wedding, or TV miniseries, is not complete without a book. Thomas Hoving produced *Tutankhamun: The Untold Story* in 1978. The phenomenal success of this publication was to be expected, given the effectiveness of the Tut publicity campaign. It also added to the carefully constructed Hoving persona, through his manipulation of the materials for the book. It purports to be the result of his "discovery" of valuable correspondence concerning the excavation, in the Egyptian Department of the Met, where it had been predictably ignored by its custodians.[30] The documents Hoving uses that show that Carter and his patron were not just venial and ambitious but downright dishonest. Not only did they go right through the tomb before it was properly excavated, but persistently attempted, and with some measure of success, to smuggle objects from it out of Egypt. This in itself is provocative enough, but the book is also filled with rumors and innuendo about a great many persons, most of which appears quite unfounded. But although it caused controversy and criticism in the scholarly community, this was not the book's main purpose. The entire narrative is a pop cultural simulacrum of history, ripe for transformation into a miniseries. Even the title is more redolent of the *National Enquirer* than a legitimate work of history or biography. The first two chapters are entitled respectively "*Dramatis Personae*" and "The Stage." It follows naturally that the characters are delineated in a fashion at times uninformed and at others bigoted and downright racist. This brings us to the main thesis of this work and that of Hoving's later publications: that the Western (read American) art curator/collector and his minion, the archeologist, owe it to "civilization" to remove as many beautiful and culturally significant objects as possible from Third World countries. This is done so that they may be properly appreciated by a cultivated audience and suitable measures taken for their conservation and storage. It goes without saying that, in the eyes of the Hovings of this world, no one in the countries where these objects originate

is willing or able to fulfill these requirements. That such a state of affairs is in large part due to the inequities of the global economy goes unnoticed and unremarked.

For these reasons, *Tutankhamun: The Untold Story* is a deeply ambivalent narrative. While much of it concentrates on Carter's and Herbert's attempts at theft,[31] Hoving never really passes judgement on their behavior in the book. His views have been stated quite clearly elsewhere. In an interview with John McPhee, Hoving says of the sources of his own museum's collection:

> The Metropolitan Museum has never done anything slightly illegal. And you had better believe that. We are not more illegal in anything we have done than Napoleon when he brought all those treasures to the Louvre.[32]

In a discourse where collecting is legitimized plunder, any agent moving to hinder this activity is seen as the enemy. Such an attitude explains the unflattering light in which Hoving casts the members of the Antiquities Service, both foreign and Egyptian, along with members of the government, press, and other scholars. While the head of the antiquities organization is quickly dismissed as "the French Jesuit,"[33] Hoving's most unpleasant characterization is reserved for Morcos Hanna, minister in charge of antiquities. After describing him as "a stolid bear of a man... his knowledge of archeological affairs negligible," Hoving notes that Hanna had been tried and convicted for treason.[34] As far as I have been able to ascertain, Hanna's only "treasonable" act was to sign a manifesto demanding the release of the leader of his party who was interned by the British in 1922.[35] Such an act has none of the violent and unsavory undertones that Hoving would like to impute by the use of this word and merely serves to further unmask his neo-colonialist bias. Throughout the book expressions of outrage at Carter's treatment by the Egyptian government are found.[36] Furthermore, this work may be criticized for its use of unsatisfactory source material, gossip, hearsay and the author's propensity for unfounded assertions. It seems most unlikely, for example, that the objects in the Metropolitan and Brooklyn Museums, which Hoving says come from Tut'ankhamen's tomb, actually did so. None of this matters, however. Hoving has little interest in "facts" or the "experts" who supply them. This is suggested not only by the way he has written this book but by his treatment of specialists who have assisted at this and other exhibitions he has organized. In hypermuseology, "information" is not a path to knowledge, but an ingredient in the semiosis of culture and commodity.

7

The modern museum, a late comer to the commodity simulacrum, is an historically and culturally complex phenomenon. Its ancestors, the royal and aristocratic collections of Europe, were put together under the in

Photo Credit: Lee Boltin
The Goddess Selket (detail) Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Photo Credit: Gillean Proctor
Cover, *City Magazine* 9 Sept. 1979

fluence of Renaissance humanism. When the revolutionary government first threw open the Louvre to the public in 1793, these assemblages joined the Enlightment project that sought to substitute culture and science for religion.[32]

By the mid-nineteenth century, many hoped that teaching cultural pursuits to the newly educated working classes would serve to inoculate them against the virus of revolutionary agitation. In Britain, English Literature was seen as the ideal medium for such an enterprise,[38] but in North America the museum was deemed more suitable. In a very direct way the contemplation of art was considered as a means of fighting vice and crime, and provided "entertainment of an innocent and improving character."[39] This led not only to a plethora of educational programmes, but explains in large measure, why tycoons such as J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, and William Mellon were so generous in their donations to these institutions. (The Egyptian Expedition of the Metropolitan was a direct result of Morgan's largesse.[40]

The museum's appearance coincides with the rise of historicism at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It quickly became part of a project that sought to validate the rapid social change that characterized the industrial revolution and shift to the capitalist mode of production. The present was displayed as an improvement on the past and a road of infinite progress into the future. The "moral and improving" nature of the objects in the displays was given a more specific meaning as part of a continuum of betterment. An intense, increasingly "scientific" study of the contents of the museum only magnified and reaffirmed the exultant Candidian outlook of the bourgeoisie.

Today, however, few would try to reconstruct a past out of which some kind of blueprint for the future could be put together. Events of the last half century have deprived us of both the desire to undertake such an exercise and have faith in its results. While history as a discipline may have lost its credibility among western intellectuals, its place has been taken by antiquarianism and nostalgia, the latter enjoying a special place in the realm of mass culture. The realm of nostalgia is style, and style as we know it is almost always the product of the mimetic photographic image. André Malraux observed in "Museum without Walls," that when objects are photographed, it is their common elements ("style") rather than their individual characteristics that are emphasized. These characteristics can thus be stressed irrespective of the original medium (for example, whether in two or three dimensions). Thus art is sublimated to a history of style which for Malraux is much more important than the individual pieces; indeed it is a form of superart.[41] The popularity of the artbook and the postcard has done much to transform the entire living space of the postmodern into an imaginary museum. But it is an environment which, because of its ability for total electronic recall, is also burdened with complete functional amnesia. In connection with a project for the Tut show, a school

child might be asked to "interview an old person about what life was like in Canada when they were young."[42] Or, as President Carter told us, what happened in Iran in 1951 is ancient history. If, as in Nietzsche's formulation,[43] an historical culture presupposes the old age of Mankind, we have finally reached senility. So it came about that nostalgia for the twenties and a past colonial age becomes inextricably linked with the exhibition itself. The field photographs are just as much artifacts as the objects from the tomb. In fact it is only when we can locate exhibition pieces in the photographs that the former acquire a validity for us. This has little to do with the proof offered as to their origin but rather with their authentication in the form of a two dimensional image, which has become the primary medium of communication.[44] The image with a caption, whether written or spoken, is the basis for transmission of the sign, both as information and commodity. As was long ago recognized by Walter Benjamin, information *is* a commodity, and this is what distinguishes it from knowledge. Information relies for its impact on prompt verifiability and that it appear "understandable in itself."[45] Everything is explained and there is no opportunity for the recipient to interpret the facts as she or he understands them. The consumption of information is a completely passive process. Indeed the consumer is just one in a series of "transmitters," continually beaming signs from one monitering screen to another. The function of information is that of lubrication. A highly motivated sign slips more easily through the channels of communication. The opening up of higher education to larger numbers of students from the middle and working classes in the sixties seems to have finally achieved its objective of the "educated consumer" in the "yuppie." To know of something is to want it, be it a country (as tourist destination), an historical period, a new type of cuisine, or even just a work of art or architecture. Where the more tangible thing cannot be obtained, the sign will do, although against all odds, the auratic power of works of art still seems to hold, which is perhaps just another illusion. The North American audience, for the most part, only knows of the golden funerary mask of Tut'ankhamen through its images found in popular culture: a piece of chocolate, a china plate, or a poster on the subway. Almost no one is alive today who remembers the actual discovery of the tomb and only a tiny fraction of the population went to see the exhibit (in the United States, only about half a million people).[46]

It is indeed a paradox of the modern museum that despite prodigious, almost frenzied, efforts at populatization, it has failed to corner an audience substantially larger than that which it acquired in the nineteenth century. Surveys taken during the last fifteen years continue to show that between ten and twenty percent of the population ever visit its component institutions and this audience is composed of an affluent middle class, typically aged between thirty and fifty.[47] Even for the Tut show, the audience profile was almost identical.[48] It seems that the elitist nature of the modern museum, inherent in its origins, has operated against its popularization. Indeed, the appearance of a technology capable of the endless reproduc

tion of objects (through photographic reproduction) and information about them, has not brought about the acculturation of the general population. Rather, what has actually occurred is the desublimation of culture. This phenomenon has come about through the short-circuiting of the avant-lgarde project which sought the break down of formal categories of artistic production. This was a process where modern artistic endeavor, originally a form of self-criticism by the bourgeoisie,[49] was incorporated in a utopian social project for its own complete dismantlement.[50] With the final demise of both political and cultural aspirations in 1968, these strategies were co-opted by the consumer economy of late capitalism. The disappearance of a shockable bourgeois audience and the need for constant novelty to stimulate the circulation of goods and services have transformed the daring strategies of modernism into the trappings of an aestheticization of an alienated everyday life. All forms of knowledge, be they practical or cultural, have become commodified and this includes the museum, one of our main points of contact with past historical periods. Ironically it was the modernist struggle to liberate the aesthetic impulse from individual works of art that brought about their replacement by events such as the Tut exhibit. Such happenings, however, are only the beginning of a chain of events unleashing a whole new set of floating signifiers into circulation. The liberated consumer is let loose to romp ecstatically through the entire span of world history and culture, while the so-called expert, theoretically the custodian of this cultural property, is reduced to the role of a eunuch guarding the cultural harem.

History, art, and authenticity have disappeared in the free flow of signs, the endless code of the consumerist marketplace. It is a movement of signs with no outside referent that has replaced commodity exchange. Such activity inexorably replaces all cultural intercourse. We all went to the Tut exhibit whether we wanted to or not, just as we witness the image of every newsworthy event on earth, no matter how trivial or monstrous. As Baudrillard puts it:

> All functions abolished in a single dimension, that of communication. That's the ecstasy of communication. All secrets, spaces and scenes abolished in a single dimension of information. That's obscenity.[51]

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Notes

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1. Liam Lacey, "In Tut We Trust," *Fanfare* Magazine, *The Globe and Mail*, 27 October 1979.

2. Anonymous, "Legend of the King Cheops and the Magicians," (Papyrus Westcar 10.1 ff.), in Miriam Lichthein, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. Volume One, *The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), 220-1.

3. There is some disagreement as to how this name is to be interpreted. "Beautiful is the life of the Sun" as well as "All life is in the hands of the Sun" have also been suggested. See Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt, *Tutankhamen: The Life and Death of a Pharaoh* (London: The Connoisseur and Michael Joseph, 1964), 136.

4. On this period in Egyptian history, see Donald B. Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

5. On the importance of the king's name see Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 61.

6. See above and Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 88ff.

7. Raymond O. Faulkner, *Concise Middle Egyptian Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 295.

8. Charlton T. Lewis, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, n.d.), 888.

9. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1971), 1376.

10. Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London, Fontana 1983), 295.

11. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (London: Fontana, 1974), 100, 120.

12. Jacques Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud", *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 146-78.

13. See further Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review*, 146 (July-August 1984) 71-75.

14. Jean Baudrillard, *Consumer Society* in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988), 44-5.

15. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 109-37 and passim.

16. Unfortunately, the most accessible source of such information remains Thomas Hoving's *Tutankhamun: The Untold Story* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 146-57.

17. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 42-43, 80-88.

18. Kenneth Hudson, *A Social History of Archaeology: The British Experience* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 43-97.

19. Paul Fussel, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 155-69.

20. Tom Buckley, "The Discovery of Tutankhamen's Tomb," *Treasures of Tutankhamun* (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 1976), 4, 14-15, and Harry Burton; *Wonderful Things: The Discovery of Tutankhamun's Tomb* (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 1976), 1ff.

21. The Wafd Party, under Zaghlul Saad, forced the end of the British protectorate in 1919 with a broadly based agitation for independence. Egypt was declared a constitutional monarchy. A power struggle between the king and the Wafd ensued which lasted until the fifties. See Marius Deeb, *Party Politics in Egypt: The Wafd and its Rivals 1919-1939* (London: Ithaca Press, 1979).

22. Charles Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past: The Story of James Henry Breasted Archeologist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 360-72; and Hoving, *Tutankhamun: The Untold Story,* 219-22, 239-52, 256-62, 270-76, 276-325, 338-49.

23. Rudolph Anthes, *Tutankhamen Treasures: A Loan Exhibition from the Department of Antiquities of the United Arab Republic,* forward by Sarwat Okasha (Washington: The Smithsonian Institution, 1961).

24. *Treasures of Tutankhamun,* 4ff.; and Grace Glueck, "Where Tut Money is Going," *New York Times,* 23 March 1979; and G. Wall and C. Knapper, *Tutankhamun in Toronto* (Waterloo: University of Waterloo, 1981), 2. The total expenditure generated was in excess of 259 million dollars (U.S.), while the Antiquities Organization expected to receive about seven million.

25. *Treasures of Tutankhamun,* 4-5, 8; and C. Ratcliff, "Tut, Exxon and Anita Loos," *Art in America* (March/April 1979), 94, 96. In Canada, the exhibition was sponsored by American Express. American Express has stated that it became interested in cultural sponsorship and especially conservation of art objects because of the material deterioration of tourist sites! See *Public View: The ICOM Handbook of Museum Public Relations* (Paris: The International Council of Museums, UNESCO, 1986), 88.

26. A.S. Witlin, *Museums: In Search of a Usable Future* (Cambridge, MASS: The MIT Press, 1976), 187; and Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol '60s* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1980), 207, 221.

27. Debora Silverman, *Selling Culture: Bloomingdale's, Diana Vreeland and The New Aristocracy of Taste in Reagan's America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 106-07.

28. Concept and layout described in the catalogue itself, *Treasures of Tutankhamun,* 4.

29. See Burton, *Wonderful Things,* 1.

30. Ibid., 16.

31. Hoving, *The Untold Story,* 318-37, 349-57.

32. John McPhee, *A Roomful of Hovings* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1979), 60.

33. Hoving, *The Untold Story,* 64.

34. Ibid., 277.

35. Deeb, *Party Politics,* 58 and note 61.

36. Hoving, *The Untold Story,* 290-92, 300.

37. Edward Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979), 23-24; and Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity – An Incomplete Project," *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture,* ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 9.

38. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 22-30.

39. Alexander, *Museums in Motion,* 34-5.

40. Alexander, *Museums in Motion,* 34; and Burton, *Wonderful Things, 1ff.*

41. André Malraux, "Museum without Walls," *The Voices of Silence,* trans. Stuart Gilbert (St. Albans, Herts.: Paladin, 1954), 21-23, 46.

42. As suggested in J. Free, *Tutankhamun, Mysterious Boy King of Egypt* (Durham Board of Education, 1979), 1.

43. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History,* trans. Adrian Collins (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 48-49.

44. Rosalind E. Krauss, "Sincerely Yours," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985), 191.

45. Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the works of Nikolai Leskov," *Illuminations,* trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schoken Books, 1969), 88-89.

46. Wall and Knapper, *Tutankhamun in Toronto,* 2.

47. P. Di Maggio and M. Useem, "Social Class and Arts Consumption: The Origins and Consequences of Class Differences in Exposure to the Arts in America," *Theory and Society,* 5 (1978), 141-61; and Canadian material in R.E. Schliewen, *A Leisure Study-Canada 1975* (Ottawa, 1977), 17-55.

48. G. Wall and C. Knapper, *Tutankhamun in Toronto,* 18-23.

49. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 46-54.

50. Russell A. Berman, "Modern Art and Desublimation," *Telos* (Winter 1984), 33-35, 41-42.

51. Jean Baudrillard, "The Esctasy of Communication," *The Anti-Aesthetic, 131.*

DAVID CRONENBERG:
PANIC HORROR AND
THE POSTMODERN BODY

Douglas Kellner

> There's a Latin quote that goes "Timor mortis conturbat mea" which, roughly translated, means "The fear of death disturbs me." I think that death is the basis of all horror. For me, death is ... very physical. There's where I become Cartesian, you see. Descartes was obsessed with the schism between mind and body, and how one relates to the other.
>
> —David Cronenberg.[1]

Canadian filmmaker David Cronenberg, whose early films, *Shivers* and *Rabid,* provide frightening visions of deadly sexual epidemics and psychogenetic bodily mutations, is among the first cinematic explorers of (post)modern panic,[2] where bourgeois individuals are attacked by viral forces and undergo mutations of mind and body. In Cronenberg's films both mind and body, in mysterious interaction, disintegrate or mutate out of control and wreak havoc in a hyperfunctionalized and hygenic social order unable to deal with frenzied metamorphosis and proliferating disease.

What we can now see as Cronenberg's middle films (*The Brood, Scanners,* and *Videodrome*) present psychotropic and telematic powers invading both the mind and the body. Although Cronenberg presents himself as a Cartesian in interviews, his films deconstruct the Cartesian opposition between mind and body, presenting the mind as a *res extensa* subject to control by both psychic and material forces, while presenting the body as a site of psychic and ideological invasion where *res cogitans*, often mul-

tiply reproduced, literally reifies the body to subjectified excess. *Scanners*, for instance, presents new drugs creating destructive psychic powers while *Videodrome* shows telematic invasion conquering mind and body at once in the creation of a new species which synthesizes the technological with the human. Going beyond McLuhan's vision of the media as the exteriorization of mind and body, Cronenberg explores ramifications of media interiorization in an era when media and radical semiurgy are said to produce a catastropic implosion of meaning, masses, and society which obliterates boundaries of the real and referential security.[3]

His most recent films *The Dead Zone* and *The Fly* focus more obsessively on the specific roles of politics, science and technology in a new technocapitalist political economy. Most of his films, in different ways, present technology out of control, intersecting with the imperatives of capital accumulation to produce disaster. Consequently, Cronenberg naturally comes to make use of the disaster, conspiracy, and dystopic genres which have become key forms of contemporary cinema.[4] While his style and use of genre is somewhat conventional, he can be read in retrospect as a pioneering cinematic auteur of a specific version of Canadian/North American (post)modern social theory.

Cronenberg, Horror, and the Viral Body: *Shivers* and *Rabid*

Cronenberg's early films used the horror film to explore contemporary anxieties about the viral body and its frightening invaders. This is not surprising, for horror films have traditionally encoded some of our deepest and most unspeakable fears. The classical horror film articulated anxieties concerning sexual thralldom and depravation (*Dracula* and vampire films), worries about science and technology out of control (*Frankenstein, The Invisible Man*), fears of ancient evils (*The Mummy*), anxieties over psychological disintegration and metamorphosis (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), and fears of uncontrollable bodily metamorphosis (*The Wolfman* and werewolf films). Horror films allow the playing out of these multiple fears, and the classical horror film attempted to provide symbolic resolutions to primal and social anxieties, while offering reassurance that institutions, authorities, and society were capable of eliminating evil and restoring order.

Since the era of German Expressionism in the Weimar Republic, horror films have been the shared nightmares of an industrial-technological culture heading, in its political unconscious, toward catastrophe. In (post)modern theory, the catastrophe has already happened, and the contemporary horror film can be read as indication of a (post)modern society in permanent crisis with no resolution or salvation in sight. Recent horror films–and especially those of David Cronenberg–reveal a society in a process of mutation and crisis; uncertain of its institutions, values, and way of life; and undergoing the panic disintegration of subjectivities and the terrifying techno-viral invasion and re-making of the body.

90

Cronenberg's 1975 film *Shivers*, (*They Came from Within* in its U.S. release) has been aptly described as a "venereal horror" film.[5] A scientist who believes that the contemporary individual is "an over-rational animal that's lost touch with his body," has produced a parasite which is a combination aphrodisiac and venereal disease. This parasite will both stimulate sexual activity and infect its partner with similar intense desire, and the contagious virus will be passed on to further hosts.

The plot suggests that the virus is transmitted through blood and sexual activity. Early scenes show blood dripping through windows, being smeared on bodies, intermingling with sweat, in sexual tableaux which mix Eros with Thanatos, passion with blood, in a polymorphic perverse transgression of sexual taboos profuse enough to arouse the most jaded Sadean. The virus takes the form of phallic excrement: the perfect symbol of the wastes and excesses of excremental culture. The parasite violently transforms the body and mind of its host, and relentlessly passes from one individual to another; like sex itself, it is impossible to avoid or resist. The mise-en-scène frames the Sadean orgies and sexual excess within the ultramodern architecture of a highly controlled apartmentscape, and against the cold, sterile urban cityscape the sign of an overly functionalized modernity. Moreover Cronenberg periodically withdraws his camera from jerky, disjointed images of hysterized sexual panic within, to classical, well-framed and centered images of the apartment complex against the calm Montreal night. Canadian tidiness and cleanliness is befouled by filthy parasites who excrete noxious fecal matter and tiny droppings of blood–as if the excremental waste of a techno-utopic living scene refused repression and occlusion, and vomited up its material underside to remind the ultramodern denizens what decay and horror they were at once fleeing and engendering in their sanitized techno-environment.

The body invaders in the film obviously anticipate AIDS, though the parasites do not seem to kill the hosts but rather transform them into hyperactive sex machines recalling the frenetic sexual experimentation of the era. The film ends on an ironic note as the infected viral bodies drive off gaily into the night, ready to invade Montreal and take on its citizens who seem destined to assume the role of the sexual avant-garde.

Critics attacked the film as a manifestation of "sexual disgust," and the film was savaged in the Canadian magazine *Saturday Night* for its scandalous use of state funds provided by the Canadian Film Development Corporation.[6] Yet the final scene is highly ambiguous, and can be read either as an horrific vision of sexual apocalypse (the destruction of civilization through sexual excess), or as a missionary attempt to share new-found sexual liberation with others. Cronenberg's text privileges the first reading, though I shall later examine the possibility of the latter.

Cronenberg's next film *Rabid* (1977) goes even further in linking body invaders with sexual parasites. The story features Rose, played by porn queen Marilyn Chambers who embodied innocent purity in Ivory Snow

soap ads as a child: a modernist iconic inversion which becomes resonantly intertextual in Cronenberg's film. Rose is involved in a motorcyle wreck and requires plastic surgery. In the Keloid clinic, she is treated to an experimental skin graft with synthetic flesh, which is supposed to read the genetic code of its host and grow into whatever was there previously, producing a typically Cronenbergian synthesis of nature and technology which, in turn, gives birth to a new flesh.

The implant mutates, however, into a parasitic new organ. A vaginal cavity erupts under her armpit and gives birth to a penile syringe which both extracts blood from its host and transmits a form of rabies. While *Rabid* intimates that the production of mutated designer bodies is highly problematic and dangerous, it does not particularly villainize the scientists who inadvertently cause the viral mutations. Indeed, there are no real villains, nor any sharp distinction between good and evil, in Cronenberg's early films. Although there is a technophobic element in the depictions of technologies and experiments producing catastrophic consequences- as well as in the repeated images (literal and microscopic) of the menacing viruses in *Shivers* and *Rabid*-for Cronenberg the catastrophe is a product of the implosion of nature, technology, capital, and humanity, and it can thus not be blamed on any one factor.

In resisting an explicitly technophobic reading of his films, Cronenberg prefers to explore the possible consequences of technology out of control in specific socio-economic contexts. Thus he always depicts technology as the product of historically specific relations of production, deriving from institutions and individuals pursuing economic as well as technological imperatives. This materialist contextualization distinguishes Cronenberg's films from films which merely blame technology for social disaster.

Within this context, *Rabid* challenges the technological rationality of high-tech society and portrays the unintended consequences of new technologies, as well as, the limits of technicisme as a project of dominating and controlling nature.

The Carcinogenic Body and Viral Images: The *Brood, Scanners*, and Videodrome

> The battle for the mind will be fought in the video arena, the video-drome. The television screen is the retina of the mind's eye. Therefore, the television screen is part of the physicalstructure of the brain. Therefore, whatever appears on the television screen emerges as new experience for those that watch it. Therefore, television is reality, and reality is less than television.
>
> –Professor Brian O'Blivion in *Videodrome*

"Words begat image and image is virus."
                –William Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*

The Brood (1979) continues Cronenberg's obsession with mutating bodies. Dr. Hal Raglan is the inaugurator of a psychic technique which enables patients to externalize their rage in carcinogenic growths. The result is catastrophic for Toronto's Carveth clan. Their daughter Nola is Raglan's most sensitive and prolific patient, who is able to externalize her "psychoplasmic" rage into mutant children, the brood, who carry out her unconscious and perhaps conscious anger. Accordingly, they beat her daughter when she misbehaves, they kill her deeply-hated mother, and they destroy her daughter's school-teacher with whom she imagines her estranged husband is having an affair.

Cronenberg's psychoplasmics provides a gruesome deconstruction of Cartesian mind/body dualism and is the ultimate manifestation of psychophysical disease or power. One of Raglan's patients, who has developed a lymphosarcoma which hangs from his neck like a shrivelled breast, complains: "I've got a small revolution on my hands, and I'm not putting it down very successfully." The images also provide frightening manifestations of the cancer epidemic which is currently causing around 35% of deaths in North America, and whose carcinogenic cells are probably up to something in all of our viral bodies: radical metastasis as the fate of the West. Yet Cronenberg's disaster films are resolutely dialectical: the sexual epidemic in his first two films provides both miseries and pleasures, and the carcinogenic revolutions in *The Brood* are seen as embodying a new ecological environment whereby mind and body can co-exist in harmony as well as disharmony, and can exhibit new powers as well as dangers.

I read Cronenberg's next two films, *Scanners* (1981) and *Videodrome* (1983), from this perspective. While in *Shivers* and *Rabid* sexual viruses produced "abnormal" mental behavior, in *Scanners* a new drug, Ephemerol, which was intended to tranquillize mothers during pregnancy, produces paranormal psychics called "scanners," who can scan (i.e. read) other minds, much as one scans a computer system for information. The scanners are also able to externalize their psychic powers: exploding heads, causing fires, and producing a host of spectacular cinematic effects.

Scanners thus leaves the hermetic sphere of sexuality and the family which framed Cronenberg's early films, while moving out into the corporate-political world of techno-capitalism. A corporation Con Sec produces international security systems, weapons, and high-tech opticals, while experimenting with computerization and the exteriorization of the mind (which prove to be one and the same).

Scanners suggests that the new mental powers generated by corporate/economic excess can be used for power and domination or for empathy and community. While Darryl Revok wants to organize the scanners into a corporate-political force to take over the world, a small scanner underground wants to use its unique powers for human empathy,

solidarity, and creativity. Cronenberg thus tries to represent the new tech-noscape both as a catastrophe and as a potentially higher and better stage of evolution. In good Hegelian fashion, his dialectics of disaster reach a higher stage and new synthesis in *Videodrome* (1983)–his most complex and disturbing film. To the viral body (*Shivers* and *Rabid*) and the car-cinogenic body and mind (*The Brood* and *Scanners*), Cronenberg adds viral images and the telematic body. *Scanners* concludes with a very McLu-hanesque figure of one of the scanners using his central nervous system to scan and explode the central nervous system of a mainframe computer, and *Videodrome* carries through Cronenberg's exploration of his fellow-Torontonian's media probes.

In *Videodrome*, a video-machine produces viral images which create brain tumors and hallucinations, and a "new flesh" which is able to as-similate and generate technologies. The film thus thematizes the implo-sion of mind, body, and technology in the media society. Cronenberg pictures video at the center of social life, emblematic of (post)modern so-ciety as site of a radical semiurgy–a proliferation of viral images which produce a new techno-reality. In the film, Cathode Ray Missions gives derelicts free exposure to video to help socialize them. The shelter is run by Bianca O'Blivion, whose father (an obvious McLuhan figure) had evi-dently been the first victim of Videodrome. His daughter preserves thou-sands of tapes of O'Blivion and pretends that he is still alive by releasing his tapes to TV stations. For O'Blivion, "public life on television was more real than private life in the flesh," thus his death has no sting–as long as his videotapes and video image circulate.

The body invasion pictured in *Videodrome* produces psychic mutations which give rise to a new mode of perception where there is no distinc-tion between video hallucinations and reality. We are in Baudrillard's world of simulations where representation and the real implode in an undifferen-tiated play of signifiers. While, like the carcinogenic body in *The Brood*, the telematic mind/body in *Videodrome* is presented as a sinister develop-ment, the film also suggests that the viral images of Videodrome might produce a new stage of perception and reality *and* a "new flesh"which are potentially positive for human experience.

Interestingly, while the mutations of Cronenberg's earlier films were primarily products of well-meaning scientists, the inventors of Videodrome are more diabolical. The Spectacular Optical Corporation intends to use Videodrome to produce a populace "tough" enough for the "savage times" envisaged in the techno-future. "North America's getting soft... and the rest of the world is getting tough, very, very, tough." To survive, North Ameri-ca must become "pure, and direct, and strong." To reverse the trend toward "rotting away from the inside," the inventors of Videodrome want to produce technologies that will generate a species which merges technolo-gy and mind, video and body, in order to preserve white male hegemony in North America in the world of the future.

Videodrome thus projects a future of techno-fascism some moments into the future, anticipating the 1987 TVcult series *Max Headroom*.[7] In the final images, the TV programmer enters the video screen to make love to the video image of a woman with whom he is sexually obsessed. After watching his own simulated image blow itself away on the screen he shoots himself to enter the new video-sphere and become a new video-flesh. These virtually unreadable polysemic and surreal images recall the hallucinatory efforts of Nietzsche's Zarathrustra to use parables, puzzling images, and cries of distress to awaken the 19th century to the mutations which it was undergoing. Cronenberg's films pose the enigma of the fate of a society of proliferating images and mutating bodies where the dwarfs and moles on Zarathrustra's back become body invaders which enter our minds and bodies in a hyperreal new world that we are only beginning to understand.

Panic Films: *The Dead Zone, The Fly*, and The Resurrection of The Flesh

The truth, when it emerges, is more terrible than you could possibly imagine ...

–David Cronenberg[8]

The catastrophe has already happened ...

–Jean Baudrillard[9]

The viral, carcinogenic, and telematic bodies in Cronenberg's films present images of a *new* organic-conscious being which replaces the "natural" body of evolution and the designer bodies of recent consumer society where the bourgeois body descended "into the empty site of a dissociated ego, [becoming] a 'volume in disintegration,' traced by language, lacerated by ideology, and invaded by the relational circuitry of the field of (post)modern body."[10]

For Cronenberg as well as for Baudrillard, the catastrophe has already happened—many times. The (post)modern body is invaded and remade, or unmade, not only by parasites of dead power, but by viral, carcinogenic, and telematic parasites which are posing new challenges to bodily survival and human evolution. The bodies of the (post)modern have good reason to panic, as well as to meet the new challenges—first posed by Marx and Nietzsche—to remake the body corporeal and the body politic.

Within this context, David Cronenberg emerges as an auteur of panic films who uses and merges the horror, disaster, science fiction, and conspiracy genres to provide original meditations on the fate of the mind and body in the (post)modern scene. His films exhibit thematic inventiveness, philosophical complexity, clever irony, subtle humor, and nauseating gruesomeness in the context of Hollywood narrative codes, where such gestures are not often found. Yet the most astute afficionado of the contemporary

horror film, Robin Wood, claims that Cronenberg's works are paradigmat-
ic examples of the reactionary horror film.[11] For Wood, Cronenberg's
films are anti-sex, anti-women, anti-life. *Shivers*, in his opinion, views sex-
ual liberation with "unmitigated horror" and the "entire film is premised
on and motivated by sexual disgust."[12] In a later text, Wood complains
how, in a symposium on the horror film in Toronto, Cronenberg was univo-
cally metaphysical and refused to consider the social and political elements
of his films.[13] In his most recent critique, Wood refuses to revise his nega-
tive readings of the films, and steadfastly continues his polemic.[14] In the
context of the previous readings–and in the light of those that will follow–I
would argue that Wood's critique is vitiated by his failure to see how the
metaphysical and the social, the artistic and the political, are interconnected
in Cronenberg's films, and that his films are full of social and political com-
mentary that should be congenial to a critic with Wood's radical political
commitments.

To begin, the major villains in Cronenberg's films are corporate execu-
tives, and throughout his films there is sly and sometimes strong critical
commentary on corporate capitalism and hegemonic class formations. The
corporate apartment manager, technocratic doctor, and bourgeois apart-
ment dwellers in *Shivers* are obviously the butt of Cronenberg's satire, as
are the executives in the skin graft clinic in *Rabid*, who discuss setting
up a chain of plastic surgery clinics around the country. (A dissenter states
that he does not want to become the "Colonel Sanders of plastic surgery.")
Throughout his films, Cronenberg links capital accumulation and corporate
hubris with the production of destructive technologies and sterile techno-
urban environments. Thus his films can be read as critical visions of the
production of designer bodies self-destructing in technocapitalism. Even
more explicitly, the villains in *Scanners* are the corporate executives and
functionaries who wish to take control of the world: an obvious allegory
for the dangers of capitalism producing a techno-fascist world order. Fi-
nally, the villains in *Videodrome* are Convex and his minion Harlan (the
corporate executive and his flunky), while *The Dead Zone* attacks a power-
mad politician.

Furthermore, Cronenberg's films embody contemporary tensions and
conflicts between good and evil, the rational and the irrational, the old
and the new, repression and emancipation, which rarely privilege one side
over another, and thus explore a wide network of contemporary opposi-
tions in a proto-deconstructive vein. Although Cronenberg is clearly not
a sexual emancipationist a la Reich, Marcuse, and Wood who see the un-
doing of sexual repression and unleashing of sexual energies as good per
se, Cronenberg clearly is not a sexual conservative who comes down on
the side of tradition, repression, and patriarchy. He is certainly critical of
bourgeois normality and patriarchy (*The Brood* contains a compelling ex-
ploration of the conflicts hidden in the bourgeois family). And he reserves
some of his strongest criticism for patriarchs (Raglan, Dr. Ruth, and the

most despicable characters in *The Dead Zone* and *The Fly)*.

Thus I suggest that Cronenberg's panic film express legitimate anxieties concerning the machinations of corporate capital, technology, and the state in the contemporary scene of techno-capital. His films exhibit anxieties about body invaders, fascination with the changes and mutations produced, and critical visions of the corporate-technological forces behind the body invasion. While Cronenberg's films are negative and pessimistic, they deal with real anxieties and phobias. His horror films combine projections of the universal fears of death, and the bodily mutations, invasions, and disintegration which nourish the classical horror film, with fears of contemporary viral, carcinogenic, and telematic body invaders. The horrors often mutate into phantasmagoric nightmares of catastrophe and apocalypse, reminding one of the disaster films which became one of the 1970s proto-typical genres. And the critical takes on corporate capitalism remind one of the corporate conspiracy films of the past fifteen years, while the political fears beneath *The Dead Zone*, which I shall examine shortly, resonate with the political conspiracy films.

The limitations of Cronenberg's films reside in the limitations of his genres and his use of Hollywood narrative conventions-though he often inventively expands these conventions and uses them for incisive social commentary. Yet his social critique is often of a conventional liberal/humanist mode, lacking both radical negation and social alternatives, preferring cool dissection of the contemporary scene and imaginative projections of possible futures. It was, indeed, Cronenberg's use of conventional genre and narrative cinema which enabled him in the mid-1980s to enter the mainstream cinema and make relatively well-bugeted genre films: *The Dead Zone* (1983), *The Fly* (1986), and *Dead Ringers* (1988).

The Dead Zone, based on a novel by Stephen King, utilizes the genre of the political conspiracy film, popular in the 1970s. Cronenberg's use of conventional genre and narrative cinema enabled him in the mid-1980s to enter the mainstream Hollywood cinema and make relatively well-budgeted Hollywood genre films: *The Dead Zone* (1983) utilizes the genre of the political conspiracy film, popular in the 1970s. In Fredric Jameson's reading, the conspiracy films represent an attempt of the political unconscious to map the networks of economic and political conspiracy and power in the (post)modern world of multinational capitalism.[15] Conspiracy films can thus be read as an attempt at a cognitive mapping of the unmappable, or as a representation of the unrepresentable.

The Dead Zone is one of Cronenberg's most overtly political films. The film articulates fears of not only political conspiracy but nuclear holocaust. Johnny Smith, an all-American everyman, detects through psychic visions that an opportunistic politician will start a nuclear war. He then proceeds to assassinate the politician. The film depicts Smith's powers as mostly positive, though difficult to live with. Johnny pays the price of isolation and assumes the burden of perceiving the horrifying spiral of history from the

holocausts of World War II to post-nuclear destruction. Yet he copes and lives on and tries to use his powers to preserve and enhance human life.

Both *The Dead Zone* and *The Fly* continue Cronenberg's obsessive inquiries into mind/body mutation in the contemporary scene of techno-capitalism. The films bring to the fore a tragic dimension less visible in the earlier films. Both Johnny Smith in *The Dead Zone* and Seth Brundel in *The Fly* are victims as much as agents as they cope (unsucessfully in the end) with their new minds and bodies, and both expire as sacrificial victims of the new flesh. Each embodies, however, a utopian fantasy of transcendence, of evolution to higher forms of life. Both show the risks involved in evolution to the new flesh, and both show how the conventional world threatens and resists their mutations. Like Max Renn in *Videodrome*, both go all the way to the end of their experiments and both perish along the way.

As Julia Emberley has argued, Cronenberg's films incorporate a radical discontinuity, incarnating a rupture with "life as we know it."[16] Metamorphosis is thus the theme and syntax of Cronenberg's films which portray mutating minds and bodies in fragmented narratives and discontinuous cinematic space ruptured with dead zones, shivers, quickly scanning camera movements, a videodrome of strange images, and broods of frightening horror. Perhaps only the horror film could capture the terror of radical metamorphosis, of fateful mutation of our minds and bodies in a society characterized by radical semiurgy and radical toxification. Yet *The Fly* also contains the desire for a higher mode of being, for transcendence, for a new energy and flesh, that is a recurrent theme in Cronenberg's cinema. Indeed, the very notion of metamorphosis so crucial to *The Fly* is utopian, though in the contemporary horror film, following Kafka, it more generally takes dystopic forms. A comparison with the earlier version of *The Fly* might help clarify the dual vision of metamorphosis in Cronenberg—and his (post)modern break with an earlier world.

While the original *Fly* (1958) safely anchored the scientist's experiments within the bosom of the family–and centered on his devoted wife–Cronenberg's *Fly* takes place in the post–familial singles scene. And while the original took place in a Montreal suburban home and garden that looked like a Disneyesque small-town U.S.A., Cronenberg's film takes place in an urban loft filled with junk–food, computers, and other detritus of ultramodernity. While the metamorphosis machine in the earlier *Fly* looked clumsily mechanical, Cronenberg's teleportation apparatus is controlled by computers and operates according to the principles of genetic engineering. Embodying Baudrillard's (post)modern molecular model of life as a code, of genetic miniaturisation (DNA) being the ultimate constituent and aleatory determination of human life,[17] Cronenberg's teleportation machine breaks down the mind and body into its primary molecules and encodes the molecular structure into one telepod while decoding it in another.

While the earlier *Fly* presented the teleportation experiment as a means to bring food to the starving, Cronenberg's *Fly* presents the invention as an exigency of (post)modern life to overcome space and time: moving the body instantly from one place to another and thus overcoming inertia, entropy and bodily limitation. It also depicts mutation of the body as the evolutionary/devolutionary fate of the human species as it enters a new age and new world. Although Brundel/Fly is destroyed in a paroxysm of special effects, his earlier metamorphosis is presented as a synthesis of wonderful new powers. Brundel/Fly is in touch with his body to an unparalleled degree, he discovers new physical and sexual energies, and he is aware that he is the bearer of a new species being. Yet he is unable to synthesize the new and the old, and eventually destroys himself. At one point, Brundel/Fly complains: "I'm saying I'm an insect who dreamt he was a man and loved it. But now the dream is over and the insect is awake."

This inability to incorporate new mental and bodily phenomena runs through Cronenberg's films. In *Shivers*, one of the male characters tries to live and harmonize with the parasite virus living in his stomach, saying: "You and me are going to make friends...atta boy." And the characters in *The Brood* attempt to control their cancerous growths. Indeed, the feared concepts of carcinogenics and mestasis signify growth and development. Cronenberg's characters try to accept their viral and carcinogenic body invaders in the hope that the new flesh will be able to evolve to a new mode of existence. These would-be-*Ubermenschen* generally fail, but their efforts display fascination with and a utopian desire for rebirth and resurrection.

Dead Ringers (1988), by contrast, deals primarily with fears of mental disintegration and the loss of identity in contemporary techno-culture. Two identical twin brothers (both played by Jeremy Irons) become successful gynecologists and scientists and habitually share experiences. Consequently, both sleep with a movie actress with whom the more introverted brother becomes romantically involved. She is extremely angry when she learns they are trading her off, and her absence precipitates a disintegration of first one and then the other brother.

The film raises complex philosophical questions concerning identity and articulates panic over loss of identity in contemporary society. The sets are all ultra-modern and the high tech hospital/science scenes are framed with cool classical and ultramodern architectural design, picturing a rationalized and cyberneticized world without passion or intensity. Blue is the dominant color which permeates objects and lighting, connoting a cool technoscape where individuals are expected to act "normally" and predictably. The two ultra-intellectual scientists lose their cool and their identities in frightening scenes of psychological disintegration. Although Cronenberg depicts once again his obsession with mind/body interaction and personal identity, this time there is no suggestion of utopian rebirth or resurrection.

Yet, I wish to fantasize that someday Cronenberg will make a film which will follow the adventures of his sexually emancipated viral bodies who, at the end of *Shivers*, happily drive into Montreal. I imagine that they would produce new forms of sexuality, society, and technology. I imagine that they confront new challenges and disasters with good humor and good will, and maintain their social solidarity and individual integrity. Such a film would present the resurrection of the body, the new flesh, both positively and negatively, as the site of loss and new possibilities. It would embody the most progressive insights into a non-repressive (post)bourgeois civilization set out by Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown in the 1950s, and would move beyond to a new modernity for which we do not yet have a Concept.[18]

Such a utopian vision seems, of course, impossible in the present situation of panic sex and techno-capitalism–and survival is no doubt the imperative of the moment. But radical philosophy–and progressive filmmaking–should contain a "dreaming forward" (Ernst Bloch) as well as an illusionless diagnosis and critique of the present grounded in historical comprehension of the past. As Herbert Marcuse put it, "Thought in contradiction, must become more negative and more utopian in opposition to the status quo."[19] Otherwise, it's unlikely that we'll have either a nice day, or a better one to look forward to tomorrow.

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Notes

1. "David Cronenberg. Article and Interview by Paul M. Sammon," *Cinefantastique* 10.4 (Spring, 1981): 22.

2. On (post)modern society, see Arthur Kroker and David Cook, *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1986). For my reservations about current postmodern theorizations, see Douglas Kellner, "Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems," *Theory, Culture & Society* 5.2-3 (June 1988), 239270.

3. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983) and *In the Shadows of the Silent Majorities* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1983), discussed in Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

4. Douglas Kellner and Michael Ryan, *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideologies of Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

5. David Chute, "He Came from Within," *Film Comment*, March-April 1980: 36. The original title was *Orgy of the Blood Parasites*, followed by the title *The Parasite Murders* for English Canadian release and *Frissons* for French release. When the French version was more successful, the film title was changed to *Shivers*, though it was released in the U.S. as *They Came From Within*.

6. Sammon, p. 25.

7. Is it an accident that Max Headroom takes on Max Renn's first name, and that Renn's Channel 83 becomes Headroom's Channel 83 in the TV-series? Someone who plays with words and names as creatively and intertextually as Cronenberg would certainly appreciate such a gesture....

8. Cronenberg, in Chute, p. 39.

9. Jean Baudrillard, *Les strategies fatales* (Paris: Grasset, 1983).

10. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, "Body Digest," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 11.1-2 (Winter/Spring 1987): i.

11. Robin Wood, *American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film* (Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 1979), pp. 24ff. I would further argue that Cronenberg's films, cited by Wood as paradigmatic of the reactionary horror film, do not generally exhibit the features he ascribes himself to the reactionary horror film. 1) Cronenberg's films do *not* designate the monster as "simply evil" and "totally non-human." Cronenberg's monsters always contain some humanity and are worthy of at least some sympathy more so as the films progress. 2) There is never any "presence of Christianity" or even religious transcendence in Cronenberg's films. 3) Although some of Cronenberg's films can be read as equating "*repressed* sexuality with sexuality itself," as I try to show here, other readings are plausible. Further, Cronenberg's monsters are products of existing bourgeois-capitalist society–and not invaders from outside–and point to the "monstrosity" at the heart of "bourgeois normality," thus meeting Wood's criteria for a progressive monster figure.

12. Ibid.

13. Robin Wood, *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 129-130.

14. Robin Wood, "Cronenberg: A Dissenting View," in *Shape of Rage: The Films of David Cronenberg*, ed. Piers Handling (Toronto: General Publishing Company, 1983), pp. 115-135.

15. Fredric Jameson, unpublished paper on conspiracy films.

16. "Metamorphosis: *The Fly*," *Impulse* 13.3 (1987): 19-22.

17. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, pp. 103ff

18. See Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955) and Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death* (New York: Vintage, 1955).

19. Herbert Marcuse, *Negations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

BLADE RUNNER AND *DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?*: AN ECOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF HUMAN-CENTERED VALUE SYSTEMS

Norman Fischer

The ecology movement, which sprang into public consciousness in the 1960s, has recently moved into a reflective stage as philosophers and activists try to state more clearly the overall meaning of ecology for human values, consciousness and modern life. The old ecology movement tended to look at such discrete issues as the disappearance of a species, cost benefit analysis for maintaining a public park, etc., but did not attempt to reevaluate the relation between humans and nature, a goal which characterizes the new ecological philosophy. One of the fundamental questions posed is how far traditinal respect for human life can be extended to other forms of life. At least a partial answer is that overly human-centered value systems cannot adequately expand empathy and respect for other beings.[1] Such questioning of human-centered value systems can be very illuminating for the study of cultural texts and works of art; at the same time art is often capable of developing this questioning much further than the philosophers and activists of the new ecology movements imagine. Furthermore, as I will argue in the case of *Blade Runner* (directed by Ridley Scott) and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Phillip K. Dick's novel which inspired *Blade Runner*), works of art can extend and illuminate the critique of human centeredness through both theme and form. Indeed

much modern art, with its sense of distortion and paradox, seems particularly oriented to expressing crisis, loss and disappearance, all themes of the new ecological philosophy. In the two works in question theme and form work together to give a new understanding of the issue of how far human empathy can be extended beyond the human, a question which is posed against the background of the potential destruction of nature, including animal nature.

In addition Dick's novel and Scott's film deal explicitly with two issues of particular concern to the new ecologists: respect for animals and genetic engineering. Tom Regan has argued that increased respect, both for animals and for marginalized humans, depends upon seeing how their specific life has value and can be better or worse for them, independent of what others say or do. (Regan 1982: 135-138) The expansion of empathy, as depicted in *Blade Runner* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, seems to rest upon such a notion of respect.

The close connection between issues of animal liberation and genetic engineering is suggested by a recent interview with Jeremy Rifkin, who has campaigned against genetic engineering because it violates species integrity and thus runs the risk of producing monsters or slaves – such as ten-foot cows – that would simply provide milk and meat and not be allowed to lead any significant life on their own. He connects his own fight with that of the animal liberationists who are struggling to develop a "new deep ecology philosophy about the sacredness and integrity of life" (Rifkin 1987: 41).

Issues of genetic enginering and animal liberation raise with poignancy questions of how far empathy can be expanded and what the paradoxes and limits of such expansion might be. To the general question of how far traditional respect for human life can be extended to other beings we can add the question of whether such respect can or should be extended equally in all directions for all beings. Could humans, for example, ever care for all forms of life as much as they do for human life? Even if it was agreed that this was a good thing, one might still argue that it is an overly utopian notion. Preserving animal life, for example, entails recognition that animals often eat each other; thus extra efforts to preserve them may not lead to a steady expansion of life preservation.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? depicts a post nuclear war society in which bounty hunters track down genetically engineered androids who have escaped from a life of semi-slavery on colonized planets. The action of the novel concerns the effort of the protagonist Rick Deckard to execute a particularly dedicated band of rebel androids who have returned to earth. In this attempt he begins to question his own notions of empathy.

In the background of the story Dick manages to convey the sense not just of a nuclear explosion but also of the implosion that followed it, producing a mass of rubble or "kipple" as it is called in the novel. The

kipple makes the regeneration of earth seem hopeless. But what *can* be regenerated is the feeling for the things on earth. They are more valued than they were before the implosion. In particular this process of reevaluation has affected the attitudes of human beings toward animals. Because most animals were destroyed by the aftereffects of the nuclear war, and indeed many species became extinct, it is universally considered wrong to kill them (one character says that it is a crime and another says that it was only a crime immediately after the war – Dick 1982: 10, 241.) The new attitude to animals surfaces in the extremely important empathy test for identifying androids by checking whether they have normal human sympathies, including feeling for animals.

The paradoxes generated by this situation allow Dick to meditate on the issue of whether there are limits to the expansion of empathy. The novel emphasizes the dichotomy humans feel between wanting to respect androids, because of their human characteristics – and what appears to be the beginnings of feeling for humans on the part of androids – and not wanting to respect them, given their inability to feel adequately for humans and other animals. Their inability to respect animals is regarded as particularly horrendous, because at least the appearance of human respect for animals has grown vastly since so many animals became extinct as a result of nuclear war.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? is thus concerned with valuing beings produced by genetic engineering and with respect for animals. It counterbalances the theme of the expansion of empathy for such nonhuman beings with the theme of the limits of such expansion. Only at the end of the novel does the puzzling title become completely clear. It asks whether androids, as they increase their emotional range, would still be limited to empathizing with animals that are, like them, not fully organic. There is a certain irony here, since many humans own electric animals both for prestige and as substitutes, as objects of affection, for real animals, which are scarce and expensive. Throughout the novel the expansion of empathy is dealt with in both a utopian way (for example through the depiction of a religion of empathy, Mercerism) and in a more practical way, through the depiction of actions which lead some of the protagonists to a position where they can glimpse the workaday possibility of expansion of feeling in their own lives. The novel describes not only the general situation of animals but also Deckard's own quest to own a real animal, as well as his ambivalent relation to Mercerism.

Throughout, the justifiable (as opposed to prejudicial) reason that humans prove limited in their respect for androids is shown to be android inability to appreciate and respect the human and animal world. Although androids may dream of electric sheep, an electric sheep is different from a real sheep. This is not to imply that humans are always sincere in their interaction with animals, since they too are often satisfied with electric animals as status symbols. Furthermore, for humans the religion of empa-

thy is often a matter of hypocrisy. Still, the novel envisions that caring for others is something of a fixed natural element, unsubjected to cultural change and personal idiosyncracies. If this were not the case the empathy test would not work.

Dick depicts humans as capable of following the Mercerite commandments of respecting all life and killing only the killers (Dick 1982: 27). Deckard's killing of Roy Baty and Pris and his ultimately harsh rejection of Rachael (the android with whom he has a relationship) seems to be justified by Baty's torturing of a spider and Rachael's killing of Deckard's pet goat. And when the novel ends, Deckard has accepted enough of the religion to give up his bounty hunter job. However, acceptance of Mercerism leads to no utopia. The novel ends ironically when Deckard discovers that the toad that he found in "the north," and which caused him for a moment to see "through Merceer's eyes," is itself electric (Dick 1982: 210-211).

Mercerism is shown as both a fake and a reality. It is certainly real as finally incorporated into Deckard's life, but even that incorporation has a dichotomous aspect. Deckard stops killing androids and has expanded his feeling for them and for animals. Yet he continues to justify, although ruefully, his killing of Roy Baty and his group of androids, partly because Mercer himself has given a personal message to him indicating that these acts of killing are justified. At the same time, Deckard has been struck by the capacity of the androids for what appears to be genuine feeling, an example being the android Luba Luft's interest in expressionist art, specifically in Munch's *Puberty*. Because of Deckard's understanding of the unique value of Luba's way of life, the "kill-only-the-killers" slogan – to the extent that it entails killing the androids – is ultimately undercut. It is seen as a fundamentalist or right-wing interpretation of Mercerism which is inconsistent with its deeper critique of human centeredness.

Although the ecological questioning of human centeredness is done differently in *Blade Runner* than in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Blade Runner's* use of expressionist form to convey such questioning makes it a significant translation of the novel, even though the religion of empathy does not appear, and, unfortunately, much of the explicit animal material has been banished from the film. (Although in the film animals are depicted as scarce, there is no attempt to explain this as a result of nuclear war. And while animals do play the same role in the film version of the empathy test, this device isn't used so much to reflect on the animal/human relation.)

The film concentrates on Deckard's increasing feeling for the androids (now called replicants) and particularly for Rachael, with whom he falls in love. It concentrates as well on Batty and Pris, who articulate most clearly the android philosophy of rebellion. Whereas in the novel Deckard simply kills Roy Baty (Batty in the film), in *Blade Runner* Deckard winds up being rescued from death by Batty after a climactic battle scene. After ar-

ticulating a newfound understand for the dying Batty, Deckard, along with Rachael, escapes from the imploded city to the relative refuge of "the north."

In the novel, in contrast, although Deckard is attracted to Rachael, their relationship is not treated very romantically. Whereas in the film Deckard's growing awareness of android claims for respect is depicted through the romance scenes with Rachael, in the novel this awareness is better depicted through his encounters with the other androids. Another important difference is that the film stresses the possibility of empathy simply increasing, whereas the novel is more ironic. This is not to deny that the growth of respect for other beings remains an ideal in both film and novel. Furthermore, in some ways, in spite of its irony, the novel remains truer to this ideal than the film. For in the novel, since there is not as much emphasis put on the relation between Deckard and Rachael, the issue of expanded understanding does not become as confused with romantic love as it does in the film.

In spite of this problem, I believe that the film does succeed in expressing the dilemmas of expanding empathy in a way that the book does not, by using its expressionist form to depict these dilemmas. Douglas Kellner, Flo Liebowitz and Michael Ryan have emphasized the expressionist aspect of *Blade Runner:* "In fact the formal style of *Blade Runner* borrows entire sequences from German Expressionist films. In addition to the *Metropolis* parallels, the sleazy bar where Deckard finds the android Zhora is reminiscent of Mrs. Greiffer's party in Pabst's film, *The Joyless Street.* Moreover, many stylistic elements of film noir make *Blade Runner,* even more complex. Deckard appropriates the first-person narrative role of the film noir detective, and Rachael acts as a classic femme noir-dark sensual, mysterious, and seemingly morally ambivalent" (Kellner et al.: 6).

In *Blade Runner,* I will argue, expressionism often points to a critique of human centeredness. Above all it is this which makes *Blade Runner* a genuine innovation and not simply a postmodern pastiche of past films.[2] The reason why some of the film's expressionist techniques can illuminate the critique of human centeredness that informs Dick's novel is that they can convey the border between human and nonhuman life in a way that few artistic techniques do. Thus, they are ideally suited for depicting the issue of the expansion of empathy beyond ordinary human limits. A short excursus into the theory of expressionism developed by Wilhelm Worringer aids my argument. (Worringer's theory was formulated in the early part of the century, as central European expressionism was itself developing.)

Worringer questioned and creatively incorporated into his analysis the results of two types of German aesthetics of his day. The first was the art history of Alois Riegl and others who had explored non-representational, abstract art, often of a geometric nature, and largely outside the canon of classical western painting and sculpture. Riegl, for example, had studied

late Roman crafts (Worringer 1959; 55-56). The second line of research was that of Theodore Lipps, who had suggested that the emotion of empathy *(Einfuhling)* was particularly elicited by the works of the naturalistic classical Western canon of great painting and sculpture. Starting with these two lines of research Worringer asked what the emotional correlate of the abstract, geometrical art was. In asking this question he assumed that the answer was not empathy. His answer was essentially "alienation and denial of the world." Thus, Worringer saw art as either naturalistic and empathic or abstract and life-denying (Worringer 1959: 35-60).

In the extended, tripartite (as opposed to dualistic), version of the theory, there is a third possibility: an abstract art which was neither as geometric as the art studied by Riegl, nor as naturalistic as the art studied by Lipps, but a distorted version of natural life. Such work aroused emotion between anxious denial and empathic affirmation. Worringer discovered this third possibility in analyzing some of the grotesque aspects of Gothic art, which he characterized as "a hard angular, ceaselessly interrupted line, of the most powerful vehemence of expression" (Worringer 1964: 43). Although the affinities between Gothic art and the expressionism that was then developing in Germany and northern and central Europe are fairly clear in Worringer, it was his English follower, Herbert Read, who most explicitly tied the jagged lines of Gothic art to the new expressionist art – whose artists were fond of depicting beings such as monsters or robots. These figures could be empathized with as having similarities to humanity, but they also conjured up terror and disassociation because of their distorted and nonhuman characteristics. It was a short path from this third type of emotion to classic German expressionist films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Nosferatu, The Golem,* as well – I maintain – as to *Blade Runner.*[3]

Furthermore, such figures as Nosferatu and the replicants in *Blade Runner* represent expressionistically, in terms of their physical characteristics, the border between that with which we can and cannot empathize. The expressionist form of these films is therefore particularly able to depict the theme of the border between human and non-human, the border where our sympathy with living beings can easily break down. It is also possible that the expressionist form of the film, for which there is no analogue in the novel, (other than the scene with the Munch paintaings) also represents a thematic change. In the film the replicants are in many ways more human than the androids in the novel. This change may reflect subtle differences in the understanding of genetic engineering between 1968, the date the novel was published, and 1982, the date the film was released. In some ways the genetically engineered androids of the novel are more robot-like, and the genetically engineered replicants of the film are more organic.

Above all *Blade Runner* must show the education of Deckard to the possibility of expanding his feeling for other beings and coming to understand

the relation between human, replicant, and animal empathy. Just as in the novel one of the central moments of this education is Deckard's understanding that Luba Luft can appreciate the expressionist paintings of Edward Munch, in the film the expansion and contraction of empathy is depicted through expressionist scenes. The central task in the education of Deckard is for him to give up the detachment with which he administers the empathy test. He must begin to assimilate the world of the replicants, to begin to understand that the person to whom he is giving the test has a standpoint also, a standpoint which would have to be incorporated into the test in order for it to work properly. The test's purpose is to pick out beings who do not have adequate respect for others and thus are recognizable as replicants. But this fails to acknowledge a replicant type of empathy. It also fails to recognize that the person who is giving the test in order to capture replicants is himself a good candidate for failing a better honed test, perhaps even this one. This point is underlined when Rachel asks Deckard whether he has ever taken the test.

Director Ridley Scott needed a way of visually illustrating the dichotomy in Deckard's education between the assurance that he already has the foolproof test for empathy, and his realization both that the test is inadequate and that his own feelings should expand. Scott's solution to this problem was to present in the various expressionist scenes a range of ways in which the genetically engineered replicants are disassociated from or connected with life, human or not, and thus a range of degrees to which a human can empathize with them. Sometimes they are close to human life and sometimes they are far away. Usually they are both at the same time and present a dichotomous aspect. They are living examples of how, in Rifkin's words, genetic engineering is the "violation of species integrity" (Rifkin 1987: 5). In general, however, there is a progression toward merging replicant and human.

One of the harsher dichotomies between human and replicant is introduced in the early scene in which Leon, the fierce rebel replicant, not only fails the empathy test, but also shoots the person who gives it to him. Leon's fierce response shows, paradoxically, an almost human desire to be perceived as human. The harshness of this scene utilizes expressionist depiction of brutality to get across Leon's disassociation from human life, while at the same time letting Leon's violence express deep emotion.

In contrast to this scene is the one which follows shortly after in which Deckard discovers that, as a replicant, Rachael has memories which are not real but mechanical. Rachael does not appear to be a monstrous other, as Leon does in some ways, but the mechanical insertion of memories reminds us that genetically engineered beings, no matter how human, still cross the line between human and non-human and have something even of the non-organic in them. The fact that her dress, hairdo, and general ambience identify her as a *film noir* heroine may well add to her human features, while at the same time suggesting some distant connection with

a robot.[4]

If these two early scenes suggest oscillation between identifying replicants with human life and separating them from it, a third expressionist scene begins more fully to explore the range of expressionist techniques for illustrating the empathy/disassociation dichotomy. Here Leon and Batty visit the place where Batty's eyes were manufactured. By showing the contrast between the human and animal function of Batty's eyes and their artificial, non-human construction, the director is able to get across the sense of the tortured lines and spaces of expressionist art, caught between the organic and the nonorganic, striving for life at its fullest but not quite achieving it.

This scene is closely followed by the one in which Deckard does his job of executing Zhora (the replicant most analogous to Luba Luft in the novel) and then begins to communicate with Rachael about her artificial memories. Nothing in these scenes is as powerful as the novel's description of Deckard's increasing empathy, not with Rachael but with Luba Luft – the opera singer and appreciator of Munch's paintings. Because the film takes an opposite turn and thus blurs the theme of empathy in favor of a more traditional romance, it moves at an early stage toward an overly easy resolution of expressionist *Angst*. After Rachael "establishes" her affinity with human beings by killing Leon as he tries to revenge Zhora's death, the key romance scene between Rachael and Deckard occurs. This easy resolution to the dichotomy is continued in the final scene of the film in which Rachael and Deckard escape and are driving away to the relative haven of "the north."

(We should note, however, that the key romantic scene between Deckard and Rachael is something other than merely conventional. For Rachael's artificial memories dissolve into the living and the organic when she realizes that she only needs to use these memories to help her play the piano and to love, and she will begin to overcome the dichotomy – set by genetic engineering and represented by expressionism – between the human and that place where, as species integrity is violated, the human turns into the nonhuman.)

The ecological themes and expressionist form come to a more powerful climax not in the romantic scenes, but in several other scenes depicting the struggle of the replicants. In the first, the two rebel replicants who have so far remained at large, Batty and Pris, visit the apartment of Sebastian, creator of life-like toys. In classic expressionist guise of intermingling the mechanical and organic, they even pretend to be those robot-like objects. In the next scene, Batty, having convinced Sebastian to lead him to the person who invented and thus created him, shows his Promethean and Satanic tendencies by murdering his creator-god.

Satan as Prometheus is perhaps nowhere depicted more graphically than in Gustav Dore's essentially expressionist illustrations for *Paradise Lost*, pictures which could well be the model for the semi-final scene in the film,

The Expressionist Other: Satan
Gustav Dore

The Expressionist Other:
The Golem

the climactic battle between Batty and Deckard. During this scene, when it becomes clear to Batty that he is going to die, he finally rescues Deckard from falling off a building. Deckard sums up by suggesting that in his last moments it was life above all with which Batty had chosen to empathize. This scene is one of the most expressionist in the film, with the characters viewed in a continually distorted way, through extremes of light and shade.

Through this expressionist distortion, the figure of Batty takes on particularly human characteristics. Above all he calls forth empathy and respect. His final words at the end of the film, asking for understanding in spite of his strange life and experiences, extend the expressionist vision of Munch's "The Scream." They recall words from Dick's novel:

> At an oil painting Phil Resch halted, gazed intently. The painting showing a hairless, oppressed creature with a head like an inverted pear, its hand clasped in horror to its ears, its mouth open in a vast soundless scream... 'I think,' Phil Resch said, 'that this is how an andy must feel.' (Dick 1982: 114)

How is it, however, that Batty is able to make the transition from Promethian, Satanic rebel to the symbol of empathic quest that is Munch's screamer? One answer is that the demonic tradition in expressionism, from Milton's and Dore's Satan himself, through Melmoth the wanderer, Nosferatu, and the Golem, is always about rebels who, even as they go beyond normal human feeling, utter the scream of Munch's symbolic figure for more empathy, different empathy, the growth of empathy is new directions. The very reference to fallen angels which Batty makes as he enters the film and which helps establish his position as Satanic and Promethian rebel, furthers this link between rebellion and desired understanding: "Fiery the angels fell. Deep thunder rolled around the shore." Just as nature mimics the plight of the angels, nature, in the Munch lithograph, mimics the plight of the screamer.[5]

Expressionist images which link rebellion on the one hand and alienation and the quest for understanding on the other all serve as a bridge between Batty the Promethian and Batty the Munchian screamer. It is this transition that allows the central battle scene in the film to mirror and extend the central scene in the novel in which Deckard begins to sympathize with Luba Luft because of their common interest in Munch's figures.

Just as Munch's scream echoes through nature, and thus expands the boundaries of human feeling, so too Batty and other figures in *Blade Runner* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* ask us to broaden our understanding and respect for life different and other. For expressionism goes beyond *Angst* to achieve reconciliation when we see in the other – animal, android or monster – a being worthy of respect.[6]

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Notes

1. Arne Naess coined the term "deep ecology" to refer to that ecological philosophy which emphasized the critique of human centeredness. Cf. Naess 1986. For further discussion see Rodman 1983, Devall and Sessions 1985, Rifkin 1987, Sale 1986; the Journals entitled *Earth First, Journal of Environmental Ethics;* and Sale's occasional column in *The Nation.*

2. For an account of *Blade Runner* in terms of postmodern pastiche see Bruno 1987. Of course, *Blade Runner* actually utilizes a variety of expressionist styles and themes, not all of them aiding in explicating the human centered/nonhuman centered dichotomy. For example, Deckard is portrayed as a detective out of *film noir* expressionism and the romance between he and Rachael has many *film noir* elements. Furthermore, the crowd scenes not only harken back to the vision of the crowd in classic expressionist films, but also add a political element which was lacking in the novel. Indeed the film's depiction of a degraded and exploited mass society seems calculated to suggest the social ramifications of ecological disaster. Class divisions definitely seem to have exacerbated in this future society, and the rebellion of the replicants almost seems metaphorical for proletarian rebellion. See Kellner et al: 6. See also Eisner 1985: 151-158 for a discussion of expressionist film and crowds.

3. For a further discussion of the general link between Worringer and expressionism see Read 1977: 100-104, 216-220. For the specific link between Worringer and expressionist film see Eisner 1985: 16.

4. See Kellner et al., p. 6 for a discussion of Rachael as *film noir* heroine.

5. For "The Scream" see Willet 1970: 17. For Dore's illustrations see Milton nd. For the demonic or Satanic in romanticism and expressionism see Eisner 1985: 9, and the introduction to Maturin 1968: xiii. For another attempt to explore the connection between alienation and the demonic or uncanny in expressionist film see Prawer 1980: 108-137.

6. For a film in which expressionist *Angst* and reconciliation are more explicitly linked with animals see Martin Rosen's *The Plague Dogs* (1982).

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MEN IN FEMINISM:
INTERVIEWS WITH VAMPIRES

Marc Driscoll

Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, eds., *Men in Feminism.* New York: Methuen, 1987; 288 pp.

Friends of mine were engaged this past year in discussions of men's place vis-à-vis feminism. My friend Andrew and I positioned ourselves on the side of men's impossible relation to feminism, arguing that men could not be feminists. We felt that our friends who had "come out" as self-proclaimed male feminists, were not as sensitive as we were to the privileged epistemological loci from which they were naming and theorizing. We declared ourselves "radical male feminists" and defined this as a theoretical separatism between men and women founded in the often upspoken assumption that feminist theory is better than male theory.

At the time, I was reading the works of Teresa de Lauretis, Gayatri Spivak, Alice Jardine, and Jane Gallop. Our theoretical separatism did not want to appropriate feminist discourse for male theorizing, and I could not help but notice that men who declared themselves feminists did not question their (straight) male sexual privilege. They also exchanged women more frequently than we did, even though we knew ourselves to be cuter and more sexually desirable than they were. We began to tsk-tsk and roll our eyes at men declaring their male feminism in lectures and seminars. We talked much about male disempowerment and, realizing that although this is impossible, being simply a displacement, it must be "risked" now. If women are taking the "strategic risk of essence," following Gayatri Spivak, why aren't men taking any risks?

CRASH POLITICS

Last week when I began reading for this review, I realized that in my haste to be "cooler" than men who called themselves male feminists, all that I had been doing was dressing up what my female lover had been telling me in *my* theoretical Sunday best. She thinks that men use feminism to facilitate the exchange of women and she views male sexual and theoretical privilege as the *main problem* in the West. She also believes that men must stop their paranoid fretting over losing access to the most exciting theoretical and political site in the academy. I had been using (unacknowledged) my lover's political struggles as a feminist to give live to my theory (now published) of why men need to be "in" feminism right now. I was vampirically appropriating a women's ideas without even finding it necessary to cite her. I hope this acknowledgement is not too late.

Edited by Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, *Men in Feminism* is a collection of essays that were originally presented at the Modern Language Association Meeting and published with additional contributions from the likes of Jacques Derrida, Craig Owens, Meaghan Morris, Jane Gallop, and other theory luminaries, the book concludes with an exchange between Smith and Jardine. Like the MLA session, the collection is organized around the problematics of men in/and/of feminism. Eleven women and seven responses address Smith, and his framing of the question is important: men in feminism is a question of men's relation to a body of theory, not necessarily to the bodies of feminists writing theory or writing feminism.

Compared to Smith's demand for free access to the feminist theoretical terrain, Steven Heath's piece, entitled "Male Feminism," is penitent and apologetic. Heath's text is melancholic in its invocation of the "impossible" relation that men must occupy with regards to feminism. Men cannot be feminists, he admonishes, and later criticizes Smith in a somewhat grandfatherly style for conflating feminist theory and feminism. Heath is especially incredulous to Smith's proclamation that feminist theory does not exist outside the academy. Smith writes that "the intellectual task of underestanding feminist theory is not a problem since feminist theory is situated within the array of post-structuralist discourses with which many of us are now perhaps over-familiar."[1] Heath seems slightly self-righteous in his declaration that the problem for him, unlike Smith, does not lie in men's relation to feminist theory as simply a representation constructed and fixed by men, but in the understanding that feminism

> is a huge problem for men, for us, because it involves grasping the fact that it is not another discourse (let alone a post-structuralist array), not another voice to be added, an approach to be remembered and catered for, but that it radically affects and shifts everything and that that shift is not negotiable, is not radically translatable into a problem of 'inclusion/exclusion'.[2]

Heath is rearticulating the real problem of men's relation to feminism as a problematic of boundaries. He finds Smith's desire to be "in" feminist

theory as not respectful of the struggles women have undergone in the process of procuring institutional respect for the project of feminist theory and women's studies in general. Framed as a text that is insensitive and not respectful enough towards feminists, Smith's essay reads as being somewhat arrogant and his irony seems out of place next to other pieces that are somber and severe in tone. But I think Heath's initial refiguring sets the tone for the subsequent responses by the women who do not seem to take kindly to Smith's claim that as simply a body of discourse, of course, he has a right to reterritorialize feminist theory. Smith is *not* sensitive to the problems inherent in an institutional feminism and the daily battles women wage for hiring, canonical change, and tenure. Smith is implying that feminism is sacrificing its political concerns for institutional rewards and he would hope that alliances would be formed by male and female post-structuralists outside the academy to combat the reactionary 'realpolitik' in the U.S.

For better or for worse, the argument is set and the women contributors do not appreciate Smith's immodest concerns for the political resuscitation of feminism, and they focus on his hubris and the insensitivity Heath emphasizes. This framing of Smith's paper by Heath earns Heath male feminist credits. Alice Jardine tells us in her reply to the men that the members of her feminist theory group found a methodology for locating and recognizing a feminist text: "the inscription of struggle – even of pain."[3] Jardine finds Heath's paper the "most inscriptive of struggle." She admires Heath's confessions of the potentiality of a pornographic effect in men's relation to feminism and she admires the way in which he accuses men (especially Smith, but also Jacques Derrida's comments in this volume) of fetishizing feminism. Jardine likes the insecurity and unfixing of Heath's position vis-à-vis feminism and she quotes Heath asking feminists: "Do I write from desire – fear to say simply in the last analysis, 'love me'?"[4]

Contrastingly, Jardine critiques Paul Smith's whiny frustration at the way in which women foreclose the question of men in feminism. Not sure how and why he could be excluded, Smith claims legitimation through having taught feminist theory. Jardine corners him on his insatiable desire to name and, through naming, set limits. She asks, "Why do you even think it's necessary to try to find a way to say this? What's wrong with withdrawing? What is this desire to play the rhetorical field?"[5] She goes on to say that some men, in their infatuation with always being right and "correct," are wasting their time when it comes to employing feminist discourse. Men in feminism can never possess the correct tone of voice, they "just can't get it right." She is clearly not working out modes of teaching "Feminism as a Second Language" at Berlitz or the Alliance Feministe; (Rather something like, "OK boys, hold down your tongues, round your lips and repeat slowly, clearly, phah-low-goe-sen-trizm").

Isn't it ironic that I am being derisive of Jardine for not having the forti-

tude to tell men to fuck off. It is easy for me to ask, totally ignoring (or fetishizing) her attempt to straddle two difficult and *not* exclusive positions: 1) to be a feminist requires a women's body; and 2) there is no *essential* relation between having a women's body and being a feminist. To have much to learn and unlearn from men is related to and not coterminous with the acknowledgement that for heterosexual women, men are a problem that must be confronted. And of course, Jardine knows very well the real risks faced by academic women, many of whom have no tenure, in telling men to find their own playground.

Here I am observing the effects of introjections from a long line of paternal metaphors, Smith and Derrida inclusive: that is, the male drive to always be in the position of the masterful subject vis-à-vis women; the need to direct and guide female bodies, whether they be bodies moving across streets or theoretical bodies. Stephen Heath's awareness of this desire, and his flirtation with the necessity of an object position for men in relation to feminism are obvious in his paper. He is close to accepting an object space in relation to the female subjects of feminism. This desire/fear that Jardine admired is absent in all the other (primarily defensive) pieces by men, who don't want to sacrifice their ostensibly inalienable rights as subjects to and in feminism. Rosi Braidotti in her assay reminds men that "it's easier for any man to forget the historical fact that is the oppression of women: it's one of their favorite blindspots."[6] Paul Smith cannot imagine that his biological status alone could prevent him from attaining his subject position in feminist theory, and he fights to maintain this space against the much less attractive theoretical topos of an object position resulting from his straight, male, academic place.

Stated like this, the question of a male subject contaminating the object feminism is reduced to a point at which it seems to be primarily one of boundaries whose borders should or should not be respected. The women seem obliged to consider the issue of transgressing boundaries while rejecting men's privilege to do so. The men (with the exception of Heath and Cary Nelson's beautifully emotive essay) want to cross over. For them and for me, feminist theory appears to be a valuable commodity. We often do not see, however, that the purchase of this intellectual capital is achieved at a price. We do not think of it as an exchange; *of course* we do not want to give up or risk much. If feminism is only a theoretical body or space (or topos, a topic to be discussed and "won over") then bodies with a predilection for appropriating and invading will want to pillage and conquer. How do appropriating bodies come to digest theoretical bodies and rob them, vampirically, of their blood – life blood?

In Ann Rice's *Interview with a Vampire*,[7] the vampire Lestat is obsessed with the act of giving birth through killing. He kills and then names in acts of self-paternity. This seems very close to the naming of "self-proclaimed" male feminists. The vampiric desire for naming and self-paternity is a complete disavowal of the mother. The vampire father has

117

that "go anywhere, do anything" spirit. Acts of transgressing boundaries are meaningless to this preternatural creature who moves with the speed of light and is able to disappear at will. Male theoretical vampires, however, have been scolded for not embodying their texts and writing as if they never had mothers. Women have been hurt for too long by disembodied metaphysical systems that have sucked the blood of the female victims of their epistemic violence.

The answer to all this would seem to be that boundaries should be guarded and not be allowed to be violated. The boundaries of the book itself are narrowly drawn. It confines itself to the site of feminist theory in the academic institution, but the book knows this and several of the pieces are quasi-apologetic for this focus. Ignoring these apologies, I hasten to violate the book's boundaries. Difference, it seems, should be maintained. Paul Smith's point that difference within academia is not worth all the trouble that this book mobilizes is either rejected or unheard due to his possibly inappropriate irony. But I, trying to acknowledge my privilege to speak on it here, would like to return to Smith's contention that feminism might be losing any political clout it once had by rejecting alliances with political men and ghettoizing itself in an institution. Again, it is easy for me to say.

There is much talk of difference in feminist theory right now and *Men in Feminism* mirrors this well. Smith's concern for the narrow academic positioning of difference can be buttressed by similar invocations from another masterful theorist, Jean-François Lyotard. In "One of the Things at Stake in Women's Struggles" Lyotard argues that the containment and neutralization of the question of difference is the ultimate goal of capitalism, that the erasure of real difference will increase exchange value." Then, in the *Boston Sunday Globe,* I picked up the Business Section by accident and read: "Fighting Racism, Sexism at Work," an article about the new corporate emphasis and privileging of difference, as minorities and women flood the job market. Companies such as Mcdonald's, Digital, and Hewlett Packard make their employees attend bi-monthly "Valuing Difference" seminars. Corporations now hire "difference experts" to meet with workers individually and in groups to lecture to them on the pernicious effects that racism and sexism can have on profits and corporate morale. The Valuing Difference Director for Hewlett Packard says,

> Now companies do not look at minorities or women as a deficiency they have to blend in, rather, valuing difference strategies are [designed] for managers and [teach] how we can get the most out of each employee so the company benefits [*sic*]. People are beginning to understand that this (valuing difference and ending discrimination) is a business issue. Business can no longer ignore the contributions from women and minorities, or continue ignoring potential contributions and survive.[8]

As usual, corporate capitalism is ahead of academia. I am wondering if

Smith's critique of a depoliticized feminism is relevant here. Is institution-alized theory playing right into the hands of First World multinational capitalism in exploiting workers domestically while raping and pillaging in the Third World?

The absence of any mention at all of the political economy in *Men in Feminism* is somewhat frightening. Let me appropriate an economic cri-tique of Gilles Deleuze and Michael Foucault that is posited by Gayatri Spi-vak. To paraphrase her remarks made in "Can the subaltern Speak?", perhaps a political response for the post-structural feminist would be to put the corporate capitalist economic structure "under erasure," to "see the economic factor as irreducible as it reinscribes the social text, even as it is erased, however imperfectly, when it claims to be the final deter-minant (or transcendental signified)."[9] Once again, it is easy for me to say this, my sole economic concerns being the sharpening and upkeep of these fangs and the dry cleaning bill for my preposterous black cape.

I now realize that Andrew's and my own post-*Men in Feminism* con-cern over disempowerment and non-mastery cannot be assumed unproble-matically. Jane Gallop warns in *Reading Lacan* that to choose to give up one's masterful position may be another ruse towards a more resilient mastery. Men clearly have easier access to positions of non-mastery and we should not occlude the presence of power in these possibly insidious locations. Maybe the answer for me can be found in the oscillating ten-sion at the beginning of this piece when, in the space of one paragraph, I claim: "men couldn't be feminists" *and* "I am a radical feminist." There is inscribed there a flux, an insecure space of decentering, a contradictory place of confusion, resembling the place Stephen Heath recommends as being possibly the most "correct" for men right now. Nevertheless, from where will the motivations come for entering this "most correct" place and what pleasures will men find there? Can male subjects, used to assum-ing rights of mastery over any space and topic, simply give up these privileges overnight? Moving and regrouping from utopia to oscillating, shifting atopia (from all places to no place) won't be easy. There's no place for atopias in the male psychic economy presently, no Nowhere Man's Club. It seems that nothing less than the revamping of the structures of male desire will be necessary to maintain membership quotas in such a Club. I know, I am not yet one of its clients.

My review has been unconsciously centered on the male contributors and, retrospectively, this doesn't seem very "correct." I do not think I made a decision to do this, nevertheless I do completely ignore excellent pieces by Meaghan Morris, Elaine Showalter, Elizabeth Weed, and Peggy Kamuf. In *Interview with a Vampire*, Lestat mainly keeps company with other male vampires in a striking homosocial mirroring of this review. Lestat also prefers male kills, commenting that in comparison with girls, boys stand "on the threshold of the maximum possibility of life."[10] With vampires and male feminists, men are often the primary erotic focus. A few turtle-

neck sweaters might take some of the sting out, but probably will not deter me from draining all the blood from feminist theoreticians's necks, after all the boys go home.

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Notes

1. Paul Smith, "Men in Feminism," in Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, *Men in Feminism,* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 35.

2. Stephen Heath, "Men in Feminism," (New York: Methuen, 1987), 35.

3. Alice Jardine, "Men in Feminism: Odor di Uomo or Compagnons de Route?" in *Men in Feminism,* 58.

4. Ibid., 59.

5. Jardine and Smith, "A Conversation," in *Men in Feminism,* 256.

6. Rosi Braidotti, "Envy: or with your Brains and my Looks," in *Men in Feminism.*

7. Anne Rici, *Interview with a Vampire* (New York: Ballantine, 1976).

8. Jean-François Lyotard, "One of the Things at Stake in Women's Struggles," *Substance* 20 (1978).

9. "Fighting Racism, Sexism at Work," *The Boston Sunday Globe.* 7 August 1988, (Business) Section C.

10. Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,* (Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois, 1988), 280.

11. Anne Rice, *Interview,* 43.

STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY COUNTERPOINTS: VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Henri Lustiger-Thaler

John Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society.* London: Verso, 1988. 253 pp.

John Keane (Ed.), *Civil Society and the State.* London: Verso, 1988. 426 pp.

We live in an age of forced eclecticism in which no particular system of thought appears entirely capable of responding to so many pressing issues of current political and social concern. Consequently, some commentators have taken to speaking of interregnums whilst others sound the arrival of a profound crisis in the very substance of theoretical production, through the elegiac notes of cultural disenchantment, the colorless outer garments of modern cynical reason. The remaining optimists amongst us might argue that there is an evident sense of healthy uncertainty meandering its way through contemporary political and social theory. Boldly held paradigms are no longer perceived to contain distinctive scripts that predict a particular beginning or end to political discourse and analysis. Indeed the unacceptable (unthinkable?) tenets of conservative bourgeois thought have apparently found new and disputable issue, at least in some of their claims, in contemporary radical pluralist rejections of totalistic and redemptive perspectives. These similarities, from the perspective of the engaged Left, stem less from a disenchantment with the fruits of progressive transformative potential (a peculiar French *maladie*), than from the conviction that less historically explored themes need not be abandoned to the draw-

ing boards of the Right. Whilst conservative bourgeois thought has had its central article of faith embedded in the Hobbesian conundrum of how social cohesion remains possible in the face of a multiplicity of conflicting individual interests, the synoptic trajectory underlying new efforts in democratic reasoning is less contrived and at the same instance more open to the theoretical richness of social and political plurality itself.

The crisis of Marxism on the one hand and the general rethinking of universalistic Enlightenment claims on the other, as witnessed in the postmodernity debates, have produced the backdrop for a host of efforts geared towards a spirited defence of the political and the latter's promise of the construction of a morally intelligible world. The emergence of the political, as a way of speaking of the furthest horizon of social action and social formations, the telos of communities and states, has ushered in a new period of self-critical theory building.[1] Indeed the specificity of the political, once so assuredly resolved in Marxian scholarship has, as it were, come home to settle in a very definitive way. Nevertheless, much to the chagrin of established orthodoxy, this critical homecoming is taking place at the very heart of the Marxian claim to distinctiveness, that is to say asymmetrical relations of domination founded upon class struggle. The new and urgent immediacy given over to the primacy of the political has, it seems, triggered into motion a self-reflective process which pulsates backwards into the very depths of the Marxian *Geist*. In observing contemporary debates on the nature of politics, within Marxism, one is apt to recall a long forgotten Roman polemic which speaks eloquently of a captive Greece taking captive her fierce conqueror. Indeed what was wrongly assumed by Marx to be the abstract freedoms of civil society (in favor of concrete freedoms of a truly "emancipated" society) has returned to intrigue a new generation of theorists, creating novel assertions that purposefully tear at the crumbling foundations of the old paradigmatic home.

Certainly, some of the more compelling early results of the discovery of the centrality of politics in social theory have been the state and civil society debates currently gaining ground amongst a growing number of contemporary theorists. John Keane's recent publications, of his own essays in *Democracy and Civil Society*[2] and his collection of some of the finest European contributions (both East and West) on state and civil society relations in *Civil Society and the State*,[3] are a distinct contribution to this literature and deserve a wide and concerted readership. Keane has succeeded in drawing together, in both efforts, a laudable range of themes, perspectives, and proposals for a substantive rethinking of state and civil society distinctions. With the publication of these two tomes, Keane has arguably emerged as one of the more prolific theorists guiding the theoretical renaissance of the old European notion of societas civilis.

Yet his project, however admirable, is not without its accompanying lacunae. I have some rather serious reservations regarding the overly programmatic manner in which Keane brackets relationships between the state and

civil society. We are left, in many of his essays, with impressions and mo-
tifs of political life that tend to undervalue the complex and enmeshed
institutional character of both "state spaces" and the public spheres of civil
society. This leads to some notable and apparent difficulties in the task
of theoretically assessing the many areas of conjunctural and spatial over-
lapping between the state and civil society and the enabling, as well as
negative consequences, this harbors for the politics of progressive move-
ments. Indeed we are led to believe, through many of Keane's assertions,
that society might only fully recognize itself in *civil* society. The non-
problematization of intermediary mechanisms and spaces, between the state
and civil society, creates an absent tension in Keane's approach. I will be
returning to this later in this text. It seems especially apposite however,
given the many banners that have layed claim to the notion of civil socie-
ty, to contextually situate the contemporary resuscitation of this theme;
a revival which clearly has all the earmarkings of being well on the way
towards generating yet another academic growth industry.

The reappropriation of the state and civil society thematic in the mid-
nineteen eighties is not mere happenstance, nor an elegy for the bygone
world of eighteenth and nineteenth century political concepts. Rather, it
is firmly rooted in the deepening sense of doubt within contemporary
Marxian scholarship. This condition is of course not unattached from the
crisis of the Keynesian welfare state nor the debacle of "actually existing
socialism". Revitalizing the notion of civil society, as a manner in which
to escape the all too deterministic framework embedded in contemporary
Marxist state theories, whilst avoiding the similarly untenable position of
the neo-liberal interpretation, has provided the theoretical basis for promot-
ing notions of radical pluralism, autonomy, and isonomy, through a refor-
mulation of politics below the state. Against divergent theoretical strains
of structuralist and cultural Marxist proclivities, which see the state as an
entity, if not to be conquered, then at the very least overcome (miraculously
transforming its appendage, society), the new civil society theorists speak
of the critical levels of distinction between the state and civil society, as
a way to assure and promote greater democratic potential within both
spheres.[4] This proposed distinction, it is argued, cannot be fully grasped
through the rubric of the traditional understanding of asymmetrical rela-
tions of domination. Rather, attention is focused upon the hidden inter-
stices of the state and civil society. The new social movements, (as informal,
sub-institutional, and increasingly institutional instances of signification
and protest) have been the prime beneficiaries of this sea change in theo-
retical perspectives, to the obvious detriment of the asssumed centrality
of class.

Several efforts have been evident, in the literature, to secure a pre-Marxist
basis in the current civil society revival. Keane, for example, has been par-
ticularly adamant in drawing upon early Enlightenment notions of civil
society, in an effort to uncover historical patterns manifested in the con-

flictual relationship between despotism and democracy.[5] Yet the notion of despotism, buried under the detritus of later historical events, remains a dubious conceptual retrieval as it offers a rather limited understanding of complex capitalist systems nourished through the surveillance and control of the minutiae of everyday life. Indeed it is hard to appreciate how despotism might shed some light on modern forms of social and political regulation underlying the perpetual nature of strategic power relationships. And yet, regardless of where one searches for political concepts related to the putative autonomous nature of civil society (be these of a pre- or post- Hegelian strain), these singular or multiple reconstructions must invariably confront the current conjuncture of radical theoretical narratives, which are manifestly Marxian inspired. This relationship to a particular body of thought is unwittingly acknowledged by Keane himself as his central, if at times phantom-like, theoretical interlocutor.

There is, in the above regard, a sense of significant repositioning occurring vis-à-vis the Marxian opus, within the contemporary civil society literature. Indeed, in whatever sense one might pose questions of epistemological articulation to a particular meta-body of thought, civil society theories, as they are being developed tend to be most associated with post-Marxist themes. This implies that these emerging theories are ontologically networked to a host of theoretical and practical concerns (Wittgenstein's notion of "family resemblances" is more than an apt passing metaphor here) which are inextricably committed to an immanent reevaluation of the Marxian premise. The notion of civil society, in this contemporary theoretical sense, more than being equivalent to its own negativity, as Marx opined, has emerged as a busy conceptual station for the coding of transformational practices and exploratory movements, claiming autonomy from the state whilst demanding of that same state the necessary safeguards to protect and enhance acquired liberties.

In the recent literature the recasting of the civil society problematic has been the subject of some discussion. P. Cooke's[6] work has drawn freely from the Gramscian heritage. A distinct neo-Gramscian tone has been evident in the contribution of J. Urry,[7] whilst J. Cohen's work[8] cast in indelible Habermasian strokes, has drawn upon a critical hermeneutics and systemics approach. D. Held and J. Keane[9] have offered one of the early institutional definitions of the range of possible civic associations within civil society. D. Held's well received *Models of Democracy* has further refined the notion of the double democratization thesis of the state and civil society, through an insightful reformulation of contemporary political theory.[10] In addition, C. Pierson has made a case for the continued relevancy of the notion of civil society as a radical rejoinder to the holism, essentialism, and historicism of the Marxian problematic.[11]

Keane's contribution in *Democracy and Civil Society* develops and indeed deepens many of these earlier conceptual attempts to redefine spheres outside of the regulative embrace of the state. In drawing together central

themes in democratic thought since the eighteenth century, Keane delivers a far reaching interpretation of the possibility of conceiving a radical pluralist philosophy void of the arrogant search for ultimate truths or solutions. In an essay entitled, "The Limits of State Action," the author squarely addresses the stakes of the current analytical distinction between state and civil society, within the context of the diminishing popularity and impasse of the Keynesian welfare state compromise and state administered socialism. These two credos, he argues, have by and large failed to produce a sufficient account of state structures in view of the increasing demands of citizens. In fact, solutions from above have harbored the germ for a mode of passivity that could only undermine citizens' confidence in their ability to direct the nature of decision making. Keane argues for a recognition of the need to reform and restrict state power, whilst radically transforming civil society. Civil society, he contends, should be understood as a phenomenon that has no single or eternally fixed form, being an entity made up of a plurality of public spheres that are legally secured and self-organizing. Progressive politics in this ensemble of relations would therefore be focused upon determining the boundaries of state and society, through the expansion of social equality, liberty, and restructuring of state institutions.

In the remaining essays Keane juxtaposes the rediscovery of civil society with the problem of "work societies" (*Arbeitsgesellschaft*), political parties, Central European experiences and, in a rather bold stroke, the contentious issue of relativism within the post-modernity problematic. Addressing the problem of work, the author argues for the possibility of building linkages, through policy initiatives, that would broadly bind work issues to an expanded notion of democratic process. Curiously most of the enactments that the author refers to, in the restructuring of the "work society," are manifestly state directed, such as the support for the social wage, work-time reduction, early retirement, etc. The necessary redefinition of work, from below, as a use-value is barely explored. And, whilst so much of Keane's analysis depends on the vibrancy of exploratory movements within civil society he ignores what social movements have to offer in the area of work itself, particularly in its relation to community based politics. Indeed these latter groups, in the civil societies of Europe and North America, are presently generating some of the more innovative as well as arbitrary challenges to the problem of restructuring economies. In so doing they are posing some very direct challenges to the perceived limits of local democracy.[12]

Although entirely commendable, Keane's support for the establishment of the social wage begs rather than answers any substantive questions regarding the necessary rethinking of work as such. In effect, what new work priorities hold innovative potential for greater citizen control of the labor process, as redefined beyond the parameters of industrial democracy? How does one progress from struggles centered around the organiza-

tion of labor to embarking on a debate regarding the very definition of labor, for example, through endowing informal domestic as well as non-domestic activity with institutional recognition? Furthermore, if devotion to work as defined through contemporary labor markets is irrational from the standpoint of purely eudaemonistic self-interest, as Offe seems to suggest,[13] which rationalities (collective, individual) can we point to as bearing positive transformative potential? Unfortunately Keane's neglect of these issues makes him privilege more formulaic than substantive critiques of the transforming nature of work and society.

In a further article regarding the problem of political parties, Keane makes the case for an anti-party party (a term originally coined by Petra Kelly in reference to *die Grüen*) to redress some of the historical weaknesses in both state socialist societies and Western European socialist compromise parties. The author argues for a creative tension between parties and movements. Parties in this regard become bearers of active parliamentary practice, stimulating (though not leading) political awareness amongst social movements within civil society. And yet, once again as with the work issue, little attention is actually accorded to the internal or external substance of exploratory movements. Consequently, there is a considerable underestimation of the arbitrary contexts traversing movement culture, within the overall tapestry of Keane's analysis. His relative neglect of political spaces existing between the state and civil society at this level becomes most accentuated. By the relative non-problematization of the effects of parties and political systems of the state upon social movements, we are told very little of the latter's arbitrary fields of emergence nor the substantive element of their actual terrains of struggle, which are increasingly situated on the marshlands between the state and the social web.

Keane further explores the issue of redefining parliamentary practices in a deftly critical essay on Carl Schmitt's theory of political sovereignty. In another piece the author draws upon the deep divisions separating Central European and Western European perspectives of socialist transformation in a well crafted "mood article" chronicling a clandestine conversation with Central European friends and colleagues. In the last essay of *Democracy and Civil Society* Keane attempts to relate his retrieval of the state and civil society dichotomy with the insights of the relativist supposition regarding modernity and post-modernity. Although this essay is suggestive of the necessity of positively examining the relativist problematic for democratic theory, the author gives short shrift to the dispersive and unintended dimensional aspects that relativism holds for democratic theorizing. Whilst I find Keane's argument convincing insofar as the problem of relativism underlines the need to institutionally ensure the plurality of public spheres, through which individuals express their solidarities, oppositions, etc., his treatment of this dimension too quickly obscures the problematical complexity of the reconstituted agent in this contemporary drama.

It appears that actors, in Keane's appropriation of the relativist scenario, are more so constituted by the apparent diversity of positions, prefaced upon the state and civil society distinction, rather than by the idea that the preferences of actors themselves create unintended and arbitrary conditions that contain a political momentum and causality capable of traversing boundaries as such. This is a rather important point as the latter condition harbors a great deal more uncertainty than the former in the melee of events which form the everyday stuff of political life. In this sense there is always the possibility of a certain unmooring of the political (from state containers as well as social movements) which risks being transformed or dissolved in the ether of new discourse. This is all the more accentuated when the dividing lines between the state and civil society are notably less clear and exacting than Keane might suggest, through the presence of intermediary mechanisms and institutions conceived by the state. Indeed Keane's linking of the relativist position to the problem of the state and civil society is too neat and tidy and obscures the real theoretical hurdles that post-modernists and their philosophical discontents pose for a critical assessment of democratic practices.

Civil Society and the State, the companion volume to Keane's collection of essays, contains a judicious selection of themes and authors as well as an extensive bibliography of the recent literature. Some of the articles have been reprinted, with good reason, others appear for the first time. Keane's two contributions to the volume are astute in their analytical attempt to gain a directional purchase on current trends. The book begins with Noberto Bobbio's seminal article on the unique position that civil society achieved in Gramsci's thought. This is followed by a timely piece by Carole Pateman on the negative meaning of civil society for women within contract theories. Agnes Heller takes on the problem of transforming formal democracies into socialist democracies, arguing that the very survival of the former rests in its transformation into the latter. Helmut Kuzmics offers a perspective of the civilizing process, the unfolding of civilization through the emergence of civil society, as Pierre Rosanvallon examines the statist and liberal scenarios of the future of the welfare state, proposing a redefinition of the boundaries between the state and society as a way out of the current impasse. Hinrichs, Offe, and Wiesenthal put forward a case for the development of new policy options that would recognize the disparity between individual perspectives, collective strategies, and systemic needs. The crisis of the welfare state, they argue, is not only in the different levels of the state but in the core civic arrangements of civil society. The section on Western European writers concludes with Alberto Melluci's by now well known micro-analyses of social movements.

Perhaps the most innovative contributions to this collection of essays are the much welcomed inclusion of Central European perspectives. In this section Jacques Rupnik examines the phenomena of Soviet style totalitarian systems imposed on Central Europe. In his analysis he shows how the notions of civil society, "parallel polis" or " second society" have

become ways of speaking about political ruptures within the post-totalitarian era. Jeno Szucs reconstructs the complex historical development of Europe, paying close attention to the emergence of civil society. Mihaly Vajda examines the essential European traditions of Eastern Europe, whilst Z.A.Pelczynski analyzes the difficult early trajectory of the Solidarity movement in Poland. As a final contribution, the playwright Vaclav Havel offers a sensitive plea for a politics of practical morality against the impersonal power of totalitarian regimes. Anti-political politics, for Havel, represent a way of rediscovering meaningful practices in a condition wherein the state has taken its form virtually everywhere, nurturing a purposeless regularity.[14]

These collected essays do not follow any particular or privileged approach to state and civil society relations, but rather expose the rich variety of opinion and scholarship associated with them. In this regard the essays are as challenging as they are arguable in their many implications and assertions. Keane, in a sense, was left to offer the synoptic viewpoint, articulating these many expressions of post-bourgeois forms of individuation (in which the privatism of civil society is overcome) without renouncing older bourgeois achievements of rights, liberties, and popular sovereignty. In this Keane performs a both critical and admirable task. Yet one is left with the impression that what has been offered, in a more general sense, is a rather stark paraphrasing of a much more nuanced and interrelated condition that has direct consequences on how politics comes to be enacted. This is particularly the case regarding conflictual regions within which social practices are localized once a particular action has succeeded in procuring some form of political momentum in a given time and space contextuality, whether it be in the state or civil society. This points to the necessity for improved theorizing of intermediary spaces between the state and society which not only function in the post-bourgeois sense of a "public sphere", but actually find themselves overextended, in an elastic sense, within the state (or its mediative periphery) whilst maintaining critical links below the state as such. Politics, in the above singular regard, is perhaps best defined as diverse and embedded practices in perpetual lateral as well as horizontal movement, continually creating strategic forums for power relationships.

Keane's contribution is here at its weakest. He leaves us with unnecessary theoretical polarities, a sort of Manichaeism that posits forms of state politics and societal politics with little conceptual places linking their transformative articulation. Indeed, the formulation of democratic practices between the state and civil society, or on the periphery of the state, must be acknowledged to be as important as what occurs deep within the state and civil society. It is here that one can locate the absent tension in Keane's theorizations which counterpose, albeit dialectically, distinct spheres and their accompanying politics whilst ignoring mediative processes (often enacted by the state) that have a transformative effect upon political content. In this scenario, one risks losing the sense of institutional and extra

institutional struggle to a radical constitutionalist agenda that views the state and civil society as containing conditions for the other's democratization. Indeed this is, in the most hopeful and progressive scenario, ultimately the preferred case within transforming liberal democratic contexts, but, if analytically left as such this understanding remains somewhat thin, reclining on the level of mere description. By ignoring conflictual and regulative processes integral to the conjunctural and temporal contracts between the state and civil society (founded upon institutional compromises) too much is given away (too early) to the still problematical formulation of current radical post-liberal and post-Marxist claims. More sympathetically (but perhaps nonetheless disquieting), Keane seems to be pointing to the end product of a process without informing us as to how we might have arrived there, nor what price may have been paid.

It should be made clear however that these critical reservations, regarding the state and civil society problematic, are not intended to obfuscate levels of distinction, as B. Frankel has attempted for example.[15] Nor do I think sufficient the overly ethereal treatment of these issues, typified by Habermas' colonization and decolonization thesis, as in J. Cohen and A. Arato's more recent work,[16] which tends to bypass the problem of mediative spatiality in favor of a critical systemics bias. Rather, greater emphasis should be accorded to the complexity of the state and civil society distinction in view of the fact that social struggles themselves cut through both spheres in their pursuance of the political. In this regard, Foucault's intuitional notion of "decisional distance" as a way of speaking of the optimal horizon between decisions made and the groups concerned by those decisions, with an eye towards circumventing the maze of regulative processes, is perhaps a propitious manner in which to reexamine the events and practices finding current expression under the rubric of the state and civil society problematic.[17] Indeed to speak of the boundaries of the state and civil society, or the problem of *between-ness*, requires at the very least concepts that can capture the temporal and spatial movement of politics, the latter being causal mechanisms which actually form the conditions in which they are situated.

As the "long march through the institutions"[18] becomes the conflictual terrain of the new exploratory movements, this type of interrogation is all the more purposeful for both analytical as well as practical political ends. In this sense, positing a theory of state and civil society distinctions cannot simply remain fixed upon the abstract locational differences that separate these two spheres. This analytical tendency may in fact have the inverse effect of distancing us from a clearer recognition of the actual processes and diverse surfaces of social and political struggle, as well as new forms of embedded regulation. In this overall sense, a good part of the current state and civil society literature suffers from a particular lingering attribute of classical political philosophy in which one can detect more than a gust of the displaced heritage of the thought experiment.

Further examination of the state and civil society problematic requires a more sustained political and sociological (empirical?) scrutiny. As mentioned above, this should not be pursued with the intention of dissolving the problem of distinction, which remains a complex and intriguing issue, nor to create a state versus society gavotte in which the state assumes the stance of the leading partner, but rather to deepen our understanding of their discursive, practical and institutional interconnectedness, through the constant production of new surfaces of mediation and their concomitant power relationships. This hopefully might give us a better understanding of the regulative and participative designs of contemporary liberal democracies, underlied by a critical spatiality that exists between and within state and society as well as pointing to the unstable political temporality affecting and being affected by new social movements. The overwhelming merit of Keane's two recent books lay in the fact that none of this has to be rethought *de novo*, but can be built upon a critical research agenda that is already well under way, a project to which John Keane will no doubt remain an increasingly central contributor.

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Notes

1. Indeed the notion of the political that seems to be reclaiming a position in contemporary theory has a particular empathy for the classical view of politics which not only refers to governments and their apparatuses of domination, but also points to the shared public life of a community. For seminal efforts in reintroducing these understandings of the political in contemporary theoretical debates, see. H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958); S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision : Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960); and G. Sartori, "What is Politics" *Political Theory* 1 (1) 1973 pp. 5-26. See also the recent work by D. Howard, *Defining the Political* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989).

2. J. Keane, Democracy *and Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1988).

3. J. Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State* (London: Verso, 1988).

4. The notion of the double democratization of both the state and civil society, as containing the conditions for the other's advancement, was first developed in D. Held and J. Keane, "Socialism and the Limits of State Action" in J.Curren, ed., *The Future of the Left* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), and later refined in D. Held's very useful *Models of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987). For an impressive collection of articles on contemporary applications of democratic theory see D. Held and C. Pollitt, eds., *New Forms of Democracy* (London: Sage Publications, 1986).

5. See J. Keane, "Despotism and Democracy" in *Civil Society and the State.*

6. P. Cooke, *Theories of Planning and Spatial Development* (London: Hutchinson, 1983).

7. J. Urry, *The Anatomy of Capitalist Societies: The Economy, Civil Society and the State* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981).

8. J. Cohen, *Class and Civil Society: The Limits of Marxian Critical Theory* (Amherst: The University of Mass. Press, 1982).

9. D. Held and J. Keane, "Socialism and the Limits of State Action."

10. D. Held, *Models of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

11. C. Pierson, "New Theories of the State and Civil Society: Recent Developments in Post-Marxist Analyses of the State" in *Sociology,* 18, (4), 1984. See also, "Marxism, Democracy and the Public Sphere" in P. Lassman, ed., *Politics and Social Theory,* (London: Routledge, 1989).

12. See H. Lustiger-Thaler, *Public Spheres, Work and Civil Society* Ph.D dissertation, Dpt. de sociologie, Université de Montréal, 1988. See also H. Lustiger-Thaler, *Work and Local Politics,* Forthcoming, 1990.

13. C. Offe, "Time, Money and Welfare State Capitalism" in J. Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State.*

14. Havel's continued exposure to the West is of particular importance as he has been recently convicted and imprisoned for 9 months, in his native Czechoslovakia, for anti-state activities. These activities consisited of placing a wreath at the grave of Jan Palach, a student activist.

15. See B. Frankel, *Beyond the State* (London: Macmillan Press, 1983), and *The Post-Industrial Utopians,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

16. See J. Cohen and A. Arato, *Social Theory and Civil Society* Forthcoming.

17. L.D. Kritzman, ed., *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy and Culture; Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984,* (London: Routledge,1988).

18. This is a term first used by Rudi Dutschke.

SITUATION ALERT!

Avery Gordon

on the Passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time: THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL,1957-1972. An exhibition organized by Mark Francis and Peter Wollen, with Paul-Hervé Parsy, in consultation with Thomas Y. Levin, Greil Marcus, and Elizabeth Sussman. Catalogue of the same title published by The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts, 1989.

In Boston and New York this year, the Western returned to the big film screens of the big museums, the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. So, too, this year the cowboy philosophers returned from cult obscurity to give the Beaubourg its spring Western hit. *on the Passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time: THE SITU-ATIONIST INTERNATIONAL, 1957-1972* is the name of an exhibition of situationist 'art' which opened at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, travelled to the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in summer and will arrive at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston October 20, 1989 (through January 7, 1980).

The big question surrounding this exhibit has been whether the exigencies of the site of exhibition, the Museum, will tame the myth of the cowboy philosophers as outlaws. Or, put simply, why put in a museum what was designed to be against everything it stands for? The curators of *on the Passage* are aware, however, of the irony and difficulty of institutionalizing the drift politics of the Situationists--whose critique of Art involved actively dismantling the boundaries between art and everyday life. In a society (of the spectacle) where everyday life may be already fully aesthe-

tized, such a political project fundamentally involves an understanding of *that* boundary as also commodified. Interestingly, Mark Francis, in his introduction to the exhibition, "It's All Over: The Material (and Anti-Material) Evidence," tells us that "in the archives of the Silkeborg Museum in Denmark can be found a handwritten note entitled 'Plan générale de la Bibliothèque situationiste de Silkeborg.' The plan, initialled by "G.D.," Guy Debord, and the listed items which were given by Debord to the museum, represent, Francis suggests, an invitation to put the Situationists in a museum, albeit with Debord's ghostly curatorial advice. Perhaps G.D. is either more cynical or more arrogant than imagined.... Certainly, he might be amused by the fact that attendance figures for the Paris showing were the highest for one exhibition in several years and during the last week of the show security guards struck, locking the public out and themselves in. The desire for the "Abolition of Alienated Labor" (the title of a "painting" by Guiseppe Pinot Gallizio and worked over by Debord) continues even in the most ironic of sites, Debord's biggest situation.[1]

Since the curators decided to "conceive each site–in different museums and in different countries–as a new installation,"[2] how the ICA, Boston, will present the material is unknown at this time. We do know that the exhibit includes various 'art' works (books, paintings, drawings, models, maps) produced principally between 1957-1962 and the non-art works produced after 1962 when the Situationists "actively refused the concept of art as a...exhibitable enterprise," and attempts to contextualize the Situationists in terms of both political and art history. Significantly, the exhibition also "maps the influence of Situationist ideas on later groups and figures" including Malcolm McLaren and the Sex Pistols, and Art and Language. The relationship between Situationism and punk is the subject of another major enterprise, Greil Marcus' most recent and exciting book, *Lipstick Traces. A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*. In Andrew Herman's (forthcoming) review essay of the book, he listens, with Marcus, for what Herman calls "the noise of cultural dissonance."

As a consulting curator, Greil Marcus also appears in the exhibition's Boston catalogue with an essay on Debord's *Mémoires*, a fragmentary, collage cut-up, which, prepared in 1957 and published in 1959, articulates a voice looking for a future, even as "the story it told was about the past...the story of the first two years of the Lettrist International, Debord's tiny pre-Situationist group, active in paris from 1952-1957" ("Guy Debord's *Mémoires* : A Situationist Primer"). Marcus also selected and introduces "A Selection of Situationist Writing: Imaginary Maps of the Real World," translations into English of previously untranslated and unavailable writings.

Irregardless of how successful the various institutions will be or have been in translating the Situationists into an enclosed exhibition, the Boston catalogue, which Elizabeth Sussman of the ICA Boston has edited, is a major and important work in itself. With seven essays, a selection of newly translated and previously unavailable writings, an elaborate chronology of Situ-

ationist activities and writings, a 'dictionary' of definitions, various illustrations (including kindred and contemporary appropriators, such as Richard Prince and Cindy Sherman), and the checklist of the exhibition, the catalogue will be a significant resource for a wide range of cultural critics. As Sussman states in her introduction, "the texts by the authors of this catalogue provide readings of Situationist ideas, their development and their articulation in various practices (both artistic and political) across the fifteen year span of the official life of the movement." Reading beyond just the official life of the movement, the catalogue also attempts to "present for scrutiny a body of work, by the choice of its authors mostly without provenance, that proposes a crucial context for many aspects of the refigured practice of late-twentieth-century culture."

The scope of the catalogue prevents extended review here and since my intention is really to preview–to notify our readers of the opportunity to view the exhibit while it is in North America and to keep an eye out for the forthcoming catalogue, a listing of the catalogue essays will have to suffice. In addition to Sussman's "Introduction," Marcus' essay on the *Mémoires*, the "Selections of Situationist Writing: Imaginary Maps of the Real World," and Mark Francis' introduction, the catalogue also includes extended essays by Peter Wollen, "Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International," and Thomas Levin, "Dismantling the Spectacle: The Cinema of Guy Debord." Levin's essay is particulary welcome since Debord's films (six 35mm black and white sound films and plans for others) are no longer available for viewing, although scenarios have been previously published. Levin tells the story of why the films which, until recently could be seen, "are now invisible." After the "mysterious and still unsolved murder" of Debord's "patron and friend Gerard Lebovici" who "not only supported Debord's work by financing what was effectively a Situationist Press, Editions Champ Libre" but also "bought a cinema...that projected Debord's complete cinematographic production....Debord suddenly withdrew his films in a gesture of protest and mourning.... Today all efforts to view the films in Paris prove futile: the distributor acknowledges that he has the prints but requires Debord's permission to screen them and this permission...is not to be had." Shorter essays by Troels Anderson, "Asger Jorn and the Situationist International" and Mirella Bandini, "An Enormous and Unknown Chemical Reaction: The Experimental Laboratory in Alba" (on the Jorn Pinot-Gallizio connection) are also informative.

Twenty years after May 1968, the cultural politics of the Situationists are in need of both attention and revision. It is perhaps fitting that in Boston as we wait and watch for the upcoming exhibit and catalogue, a coalition of "a few people" on diverse passages are organizing their own version of cultural dissonance to coincide with the arrival of *on the Passage*. The graffati has already hit the streets and its gendered and full of color: "Watch for Operation Risk You. coming to a situation near you." If you make it

to Boston...well...you could be in quite a situation!!

Book Review Editor

Notes

1. See Edward Ball, "Welcome Brigands," *Village Voice,* May 2, 1989.
2. All quotes are from the Exhibition catalogue which, as of August, was still in press. Although I have been able to preview the galleys, it has not been possible to provide exact page references.

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