

# **HERE AND NOW**

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## **In Defence of Humans The Warfare of Everyday Life Cyberdrivel**



**Supplement On Guy Debord**

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### SUPPLEMENT On Guy Debord

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*IN DEFENCE OF HUMANS*



At a packed meeting during this year's Anarchist Bookfair signs of the contemporary malaise seeped into the ranks of those who most want to overthrow the present. While feuding has always been traditional amongst anarchists, only this era has achieved such a hollowing out of truth that insult and innuendo have become the sole criterion of political difference, as **Frank Dexter** detects in his guide to the fight among radical political gangs. But anarchists should not panic. The derangement that they find fermenting within their own milieu is no worse than the empty frenzy which informs a more powerful politics. While those who used to call the ideological tune (academics and experts) have convinced themselves that they are still worth listening to, even while they are trying to think the unthinkable and demolish every category in sight, it is the men with guns who have moved in to fill the vacuum. In the absence of any idea of the good, the political psychopath, the huckster, the trader in rumour, and the gangster move in to claim the territory. The three articles on Italy, Bosnia, and Chechnya reveal that nowadays power has no need of truth, nor even a claim to justice, to underline its right to dominate, simply the ability to do so is enough.

Abandoning the human could therefore seem a sensible response to this triumph of power, manipulation and cynicism. Despite our resistance to intellectual and political fashions we have engaged here with things on other people's minds. In this issue we deal with two very different manifestations of the flight from the human: on the one hand **George Williamson's** deep ecological argument for the toppling of human beings from the centrality of political and social concerns, and on the other, the growth of **Cyberculture** and its desire to supersede the limits of the human body. Both reflect a profound unease with the status of the human and are searching for something else to which to give their allegiance. But we are nothing else than human, and this identity can no more be superseded by new paradigms than can kinship with the rest of humanity be camouflaged by pretensions to being "aliens". Those who do wish to have their bodies obliterated by new technologies can find easier ways of doing so. Just because capitalists, ideologues, priests and revolutionaries have foisted rigid identities upon what it is to be human does not mean there is nothing to being human. If that one remaining intuitive allegiance goes, nothing stands in the way of a total and habitual warfare of everyday life.

Despite the fear and loathing, emotions confirmed and fuelled on all sorts of different media fronts, and all of which seem designed to portray the human as a force which can only be controlled, corralled and contained, some humans still roam wild and free. This freedom is neither the obsessive acquisitive permissiveness of the capitalist, nor the voluntary surrender of the individual to an embodiment of the general will of the bureaucrat. As **Peter Porcupine** describes on the allotments, and **Jim McFarlane** relates in the popular resistance to the M77 in Glasgow, people are always proving the intellectual or administrative description of themselves wrong. Culture may be banal, empty and hopeless but people have never seen themselves completely reflected in that particular distorting hall of mirrors anyway as **Tom Jennings** reports in his review of Hollywood's latest shock-horror movie *Natural Born Killers*. The everyday is far more enchanting, and reality still more full of possibility than its caricaturists allow.

So though it is no longer possible to "speak Truth to Power", it is because Power is now so rancid that even to imagine it as a potential audience is to contaminate one's voice in advance. But far from renouncing truth or meaning, or making power vanish by linguistic subterfuge, as academic wankers and superannuated aesthetic vanguardists pretend, it makes it more important to call things by their proper names. If this is unintelligible to theorists it is because for them knowledge can only be power. We may be speaking to an audience that has yet to realise it is being addressed, but we are not going to stop speaking just because no one, as yet, wants to listen.



# Heresay



## Homage to Civility

There are about 30 plottolders on our allotments. Men and women, Yorkshiremen and Irish, plus a couple of Poles washed up by the Second World War who have managed to turn a bit of Leeds into Central Europe. Even the soil on their plot looks like the Black Earth of the Ukraine. Fifty years of Polish peasant knowledge has been worked into 300 square yards of English clay. In summer the results are spectacular - I doubt there is a more productive couple of acres of land in Leeds. Flowers, vegetables, grapes, apples, plums - even plants which experts would deny could grow so far North - all are grown by dedicated amateurs. There used to be beehives as well until local householders complained about their swarming, so the allotment committee found a new site for them. You can still buy fresh honey on the allotment, illegally, of course.

It is a serious business. A lot of labour is involved and for some, particularly the unemployed, it is a way of making a bit of money - selling flowers or vegetables in the street, much to the chagrin of the local shopkeepers. I suspect that one of the Poles makes his whole living from his gardening (he has a plot on another

allotment) but, given the restrictions laid down by the Council lease against selling, no one enquires too closely about what anyone is actually doing with their produce.

Every winter old faces set about repairing greenhouses, digging the soil, putting up new frames in an act of faith in the future - that all this cold hard labour will bear fruit in the summer. Each year there is another affirmation of trust in the world and the society people find themselves in to seed, propagate and grow in an essentially public space. Although two sides of the site are walled the other two are poorly fenced off, with one running alongside a main road. The allotments are below the level of the road and are thus visible for anyone - nice in summer for people taking a stroll, but a thieves' and vandals' paradise as well.

When you've found a 70 year old Yorkshireman crying his eyes out over the theft of all his potatoes (not just a few which would be understandable and sustainable, but all of them) you start to think about security, about how to prevent our labour being ripped off by predators. When you come down to the allotments to find that someone has systematically broken greenhouse windows with a hammer you can find yourself close to despair. Along with the weather theft and vandalism are the most talked about and the most complained about subjects. No one keeps anything of any value down there any more, signs are put up 'No tools kept in Shed', but that doesn't stop periodic break-ins - one plot-holder had to physically prevent a young man from snorting paraquat. Brambles are strategically grown to hamper access, barbed wire is invested in to act as a deterrent, but ultimately there is no defence. Five or six years ago the Poles brought a gun down to frighten off persistent vandalism. It worked for a while, but then another outbreak occurs, or suddenly all the ripe strawberries on site disappear in one night, and we're back to the same state of siege.

So when one freezing morning in January of this year a plottolder found his greenhouse had been broken into, he thought it was the usual vandalism and prepared to make repairs. On closer inspection he found all the signs that someone was trying to live there. There was a bit of rotten foam making do as a mattress, a blanket and the remains of a fire could be seen just outside the greenhouse. When he came back the next day he found that the intruder had been there again. Someone definitely was making his home in a draughty, jerry-built greenhouse. Since he couldn't imagine anyone doing this except out of desperation, the plottolder left him some pies and a note saying that he could stay until March, when the growing season began, and asking him to be careful about what he used to burn to keep himself warm. The squatter left a note thanking him for the pies.

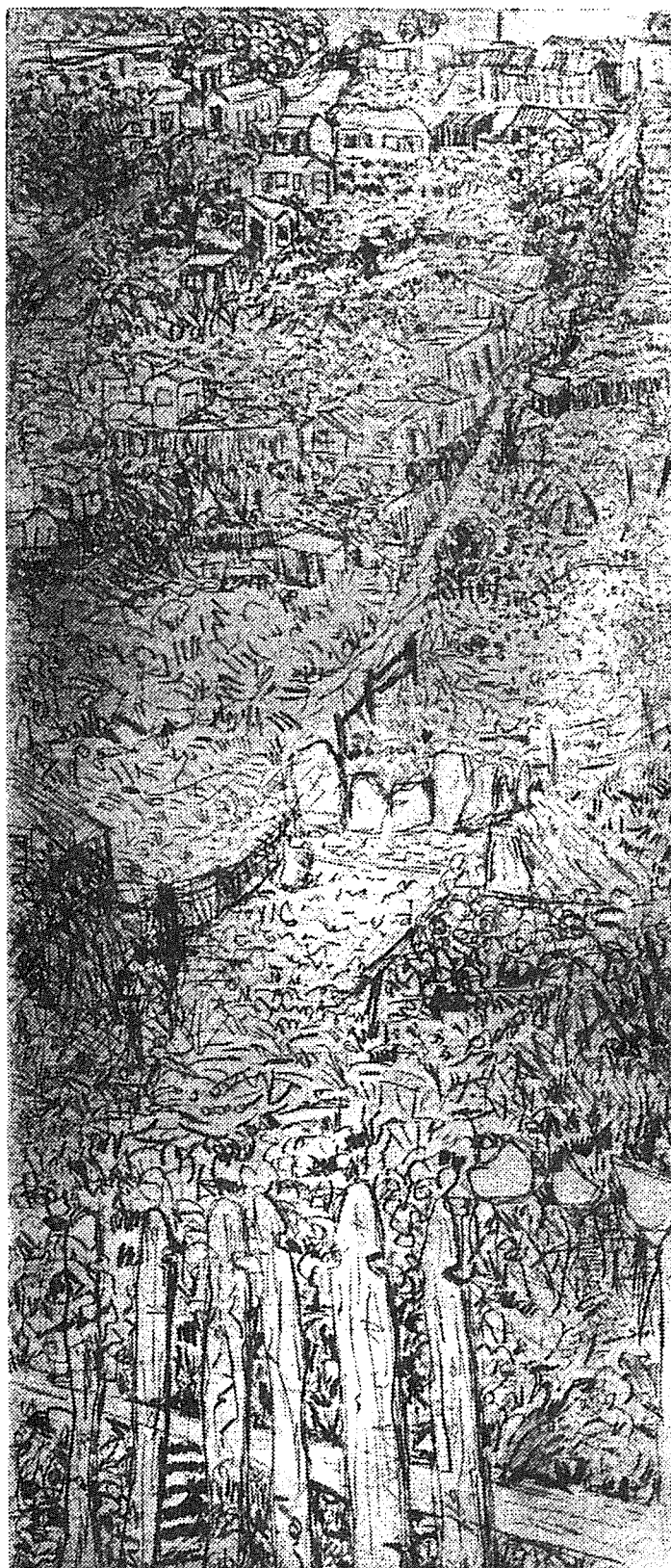
This arrangement worked for a while, with neither plottolder nor squatter ever actually meeting, until the firewood problem emerged. What anywhere else in our society of novelty and disposability would be regarded as out-and-out rubbish is often on an allotment a vital piece of equipment, or at least something which has a definite use. What to someone is just a bit of rotten wood could be the ideal door wedge for a shed. As plottolders began to find their favourite bits of wood disappearing from their gardens, rumblings of discontent worked through the community and the allotment committee was notified. At first just another note was left for the squatter pointing out that what he thought was firewood was often useful, and asking him to be more careful. At the same time the plottolder in whose greenhouse the squatter had taken up residence began to worry about what was going to

happen in spring when he would need the greenhouse to start growing. He made enquiries at the Council regarding emergency accommodation, pointing out that he knew of an unknown person who was sleeping very rough. The Council said that they would provide emergency accommodation, so the plotholder got up early one morning to meet the squatter and tell him how to apply for emergency housing. He turned out to be a young man, about 21 years old, who kept himself clean, but who would not give his name. He also refused to try out the Council accommodation.

It became clear that this guy was on the run from some authority or other. No one knew which nor wanted to know why. Some idea of its seriousness was confirmed by a search of all the allotment sheds by 8 CID men a month after he left. The whole strange negotiations with the squatter had tended towards respecting his obvious desire to be unknown. His privacy was honoured by the fact that people didn't go down at night to confront him. The extremity of his circumstances did not rule out acknowledging his dignity as a human being. People were pissed off with him when he nicked their wood, but they didn't turn him into a nothing to be flung out without a thought. Come March he disappeared. He didn't want the Council accommodation and no one could find him anywhere else to go. Maybe he found an empty house, or another greenhouse. Despite the problems he caused the allotments, he had been given hospitality. People had tried to sort out problems themselves with the most limited of resources.

It's unfortunate that the bourgeois triumphalists of the eighteenth century cornered the word 'civilisation' to define their singularly uncivilised and ruthless social arrangements.<sup>1</sup> By rubbishing the society of Native Americans, Scottish Highlanders or English commoners the idea of civilisation became synonymous with capitalist society with its strong state, hierarchical social relations and production for profit, consumption for emulation. Other social arrangements were simply designated as barbaric despite the *civility* with which these other arrangements conducted themselves. There is a temptation to use the word 'community' to provide a positive term for human relationships which operate without coercion or manipulation, but there is a danger that it be used as an exclusive term defined by who is *in*, and who is *out*. What impressed me about the attempt of the plotholders to maintain society in the teeth of all sorts of very good reasons to simply exert their legal rights and expel the squatter was the respect they gave to his privacy. It was a lesson in civility that the up-and-coming new 'communitarians' of Right and Left would do well to contemplate. For what appears to be alarmingly absent from their vision of an institutionalised community is any conception of privacy or secrecy. If community means just a democratic panopticon with everyone snooping on everyone else, then give me civility, an idea that respects the community without destroying the individual.

*Peter Porcupine*



1. A very interesting article on the origins of 'Civilisation' and its roots in the assault upon English Common Law in the 18th century has been published in *Common Sense* No16: 'On the Scottish Origin of Civilization' by George C. Caffentzis.

# Revenge of the Repressed

*John Barrett warms his hands on the glowing embers of the 'Jolly Brewer'*



Once upon a time there was a pub called The Newlands enjoying a seedy existence in the backwaters of the Leeds Hyde Park area. Situated in a 'student' area but patronised largely by locals and various scallywags, it never achieved the notoriety of its rival Bass pub The Little Park (a.k.a. Armley Prison D Wing).

True to the spirit of the New Leeds the brewers, Tetleys, upgraded the pub in order to make it attractive to the high-spending student-type which is the fantasy-citizen of the current gang of Leeds City Fathers. Acting in harmony with a massive city centre face-lift designed by yuppies for yuppies, the brewers sought to emulate the trashy futurist 'vision' of a 24 hour city of spending, by changing the name of the pub to The Jolly Brewer, an utterly bogus attempt to tap into popular nostalgia for a Merry England.

Unfortunately for them, and fortunately for the rest of us, Hyde Park was never equipped with the paraphernalia of surveillance and control which has turned Leeds city centre into a transparent zone of non-event in the name of 'safety' and 'equal opportunities'. While the centre has been effectively cleansed of undesirables and the consequences of their lives - graffiti, rowdiness, joints and bottles - areas like Hyde Park continue to sustain a healthy unhygienic, untamed hidden life. While the centre of Leeds abolishes all traces of its history, replacing it with a benign and banal surface of prosperity, the unconscious of the city re-emerges with all the fury of repressed nature.

So when the new landlord of The Jolly Brewer decided to invite undercover cops into the premises in order to spy upon local

dealers and their clients, his efforts to ally himself with the pacifiers of subterranean humanity exploded in his face. With a ferocity that shocked policeman and politician alike 150 locals burned the pub to the ground, took on the riot police and entered Hyde Park into the annals of riot-torn Britain. An insignificant, generally ignored bit of inner-city Leeds, with no previous convictions, rattled the cage of the New Leeds.

More disturbing for the City Fathers, there was no easy ethnic spin to put on the events - the area contains a prominent Asian presence, but neither they nor the students were conspicuous in the riot. As journalists toured the ruins, these stirrings of the suppressed subjectivity of the New Leeds were given a voice. It was about resentment at the Council-funded accommodation projects to house the burgeoning student population of the City of Education; it was about frustration at the lack of places to go for young people; it was about the despair of small pockets of high youth unemployment. But all these explanations remain complicit with the general lie that is at the heart of the New Leeds - that if you provide an efficient infrastructure available to all regardless of race, gender or disability, garnished with opportunities for cultural 'improvement' and educational advance, then disorder is merely a pathology requiring management and control. But this is just the theorising of narrow-minded technocrats, arrogantly certain that in their plans of ordered passivity and pleasant ambience the human subject to fit them has only to be imagined in order to exist.

# Carnival of the Depressed?

*Mike Peters is left cold.*

My view of the Hyde Park 'riot' (sic) couldn't be more different. I share your disgust for the current wave of urban cosmetic surgery and share your analysis of the profoundly anti-social spirit that informs it. I simply think you've assumed that the riot was animated by motives like your own - as if to say the enemy of my enemy must be my friend (the fallacy that *Here and Now* normally repudiates). Burning a pub down is hardly reclaiming a zone of shadow that in any case didn't exist in the way your argument seems to suppose. The Newlands was a shitty place and this particular abject part of the Leeds underworld doesn't deserve your misplaced nostalgia. I grew up in this area and there *were* things worth evoking for revolutionary memory (sweeping rebukes against nostalgia in general are surely just as facile as what they are directed against). The local cosmopolitanism and vernacular multiculturalism of the late fifties and early sixties was part of a world where the 'intellectual' scenes and everyday 'proletarian' life coexisted in far closer social and spatial proximity than anyone today could imagine (that was, of course, an epoch before the growth of all the urban apartheid which seem to have reshaped the psyche as much as the space). But it was the massive redevelopments of the *sixties and seventies* which destroyed this city and removed virtually every physical trace of where it had been.

More pertinently, I don't think the kids whose actions we are talking about had anything of the emancipatory motives of the kind you imagine. It was a simple reaction to real oppression with nothing to defend and nothing to capture. Their action itself, *by its very form*, necessarily prevented any new emancipatory *possibilities* growing out of it. It can only be defended as a negative act of "causing trouble" - but such temporary disturbances work precisely as signals to the prevailing regime of how better to proceed rather than real disruptions portending something different. I'm afraid I'm going to use this as another pretext for recycling familiar *Here and Now* criticisms of riotism.

## Decline of the English Riot

It's no news that rioting is an old and hallowed institution. What can only sadden custodians of the heritage of revolt is the impoverishment in the *quality* of the riot in recent years. Let no sarcasm be suspected here: this is a sincere complaint at yet another degradation in the spirit of resistance and at the continued desocialization of modern life, in England at least.

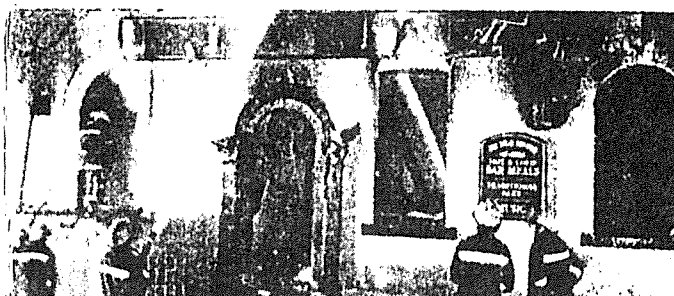
In Leeds earlier this summer a number of young men responded to a recent police initiative (the usual thing: unable to go into Chapeltown, they tried to open up a fresh market in Hyde Park, on the dubious grounds that they would tackle England's most-burgled streets by engaging in a bit of random stop-and-search, house-breaking, and harrassment of their own). The response was typical and crude. In its very English way, it had no style, no *panache*, no poetry and even less imagination.

For some reason the *barricade*, for example, is hardly heard of in England. Is it beyond the imagination of the youth? (in Ireland, as in France, where older heads are on hand, the construction of barricades is almost second nature). What a barricade does is create a boundary, and space to be defended, which activates symbolic territory and thus collective allegiance and energy, unavailable to a purely offensive assault - eg. firebombing a pub or shops. The group attacking a target acts collectively but in a nomadic way that prevents it having anything of its own. And this is why the purportedly most 'radical' (at least as represented by trendy theories) social formation is the *least revolutionary*. Indeed the ambush-pack (which is invariably made up exclusively of young males) is a stripped-down, only nominally 'social', unit which cannot do anything other than temporary action. It changes nothing, creates nothing, and hardly needs the police to 'disperse' it. Even in its negativity it doesn't even really 'destroy' or 'smash' anything other than precisely those things which can be easily repaired by power.

When King Mob burned half of London down in 1780, it was, by all accounts, a very different affair from the kind of thing that now happens as a matter of course in English towns and cities. It's not just a matter of scale but more a matter of specialisation: it makes a difference whether it's a multi-generational activity of a whole community or a just a Club 13-20 exercise. It's certainly not a matter of "consciousness" - the 1780 riot was triggered off by grotesque popular anti-catholicism (a fact, incidentally, deliberately ignored by *Midnight Notes* in their reconstruction). It is collective action that can *create* revolutionary consciousness. To expect the latter to come first is to put the cart before the horse. Above all, what matters is *HOW* to riot. Let's take Quality on board, right?

Rioting can of course be exhilarating, but nobody would claim that fairground rides are prefigurations of revolution or that lynchings are insurrectionary.

As Adorno said, glorifying splendid underdogs can be tantamount to glorifying the conditions that keep them under, and to defend any and every attack by the oppressed on new forms of oppression can easily slide into a defence of existing conditions of oppression. People who have never experienced anything other than oppression are not going to know automatically by some kind of innate instinct how to overthrow it.



# The Italian Political Crisis and the Decline of the Public Sphere

*Dario Padovan describes the devastation inflicted on the Italian political scene by the rise of the integrated spectacle. Edited by Roberta Farber*

## 1. Remarks about the Italian “revolution”

In Italy a “revolution” has happened. A silent “revolution”, not much noise, a political and institutional “revolution” which did not take many lives or spill much blood. Although some suicides have occurred among powerful men and some bombs have been planted by both secret service agencies and the Mafia which have claimed victims, this cannot be compared to the insurrectional revolutions which have marked more famous political and social changes.

Even though the Italian “revolution” did not stir up social and class rebellion, it has had extraordinary repercussions, spread by newspapers and the mass-media. It profoundly changed the ruling class which for fifty years had held power and controlled the state economy. This “revolution” appears as a real political and social experiment, as an example which is very useful in understanding how bloodless revolutions could happen in “democratic” western countries. The immediate upshot was to bring a conservative and free-trader Right to power. This Italian experiment offers new forms of governance which could spread in Europe and maybe even world-wide. In short, it is not excessive to say that the Italian predicament is a good example of what a capitalist post-modern society could look like.

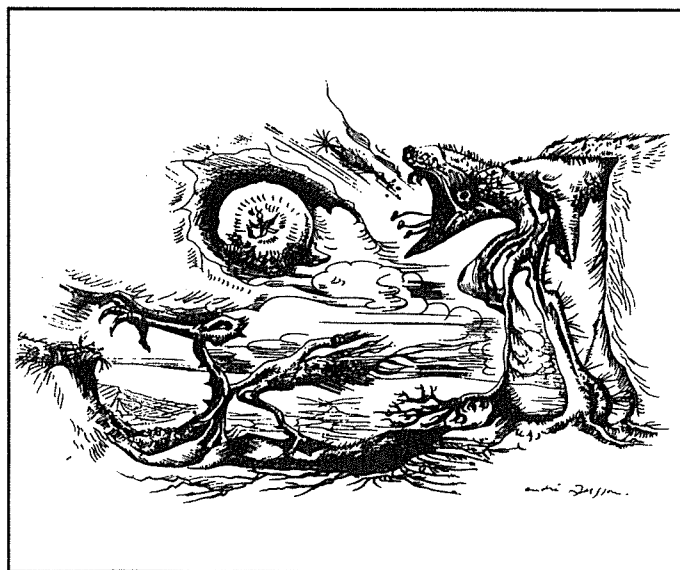
## 2. The end of the first Republic or “omnia revolvere”

In the last few years, with the judicial proceedings called “tangentopoli”, we have seen a rapid disintegration of the power elites which were the public face of the first republic. These competing elites are identifiable as political parties, even though it is realistic to say that they have occupied almost the entire state. Nevertheless, other centres of power have competed with government parties within the same state structure. For example, the circles of civil servants within a powerful Ministry of the Home Office, or civil servants of uncontrollable Ministries like those of Public Health or Public Finance. These Ministries lived luxuriously with a lot of power, as did those blackmailing government officials and administrative managers responsible for crucial sectors of the economy and politics, who often favoured the formation of autonomous centres of power which influenced politicians through devious methods.

A radical disintegration of the power relationships which governed the country for almost fifty years was realised by means of the legal process. A ruling class was dismembered, de-legitimated, and condemned by the whole country. However, the ‘fall from grace’ has revealed a total lack of real political and social opposition. What little there was was not able to communicate, criticise or propose an alternative within an open public sphere, defining politics as a social alternative to the power-vacuum of the state.

In its place at a social level, indignation, moralism, and self-righteous condemnation of others prevailed. The use of magistrates to enforce justice in the name of the entire society merely served to obscure social conflict and collective protest as factors of change.

What is still not very clear is which powers have protected the judiciary. If all the scholars agree that the Italian State is an efficient concentration of autonomous and occult powers,<sup>1</sup> few scholars agree with defining “Tangentopoli” as a system of reciprocal protection. The relationships between big firms and political parties guaranteed the defence of the internal market from both competitive foreign enterprises and the control of workers and





Labour Unions. Party and government officials were being bribed, and their careers sustained, with generous funds from private entrepreneurs. The problem was that those bribes, compared with those of other countries, were too high.

It is obvious that a system based upon reciprocal complicity could not be easily dismantled. The fall of socialist governments in Eastern Europe provided a trigger for the removal of the Italian political class. In the view of its international allies such as the U.S., the political class was deemed unreliable and too expensive;<sup>2</sup> thus fit for abandonment. This poses the question: what role did the U.S. and Germany have in the removal of this political class and in the penetration of the Italian market? This institutional change in Italy should be viewed in a context of an “underground, violent, implacable but soft, even hypocritical”<sup>3</sup> conflict fought upon Italian soil between the two dominant capitalist models: the ‘Renan’ one and the ‘neo-American’ one.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. The Right wing to power

According to Norberto Bobbio, a famous contemporary political philosopher in Italy, the electoral victory of the Right is based upon the traditional political immaturity of the Italian people who embraced fascism in 1922. He emphasises that this society leans toward the Right by nature, particularly amongst the young people, who are influenced the most by the mass-media and by widespread unemployment.

Bobbio also blames the lack of identity of the Left which was unable to feed the desires, passions and feelings of the people. It even failed to affirm social rights such as health care, education and quality of life. Regardless of whether the Right referred to inequalities as a necessary element of economic competition, the Left should have projected an alternative vision encompassing some notion of equality.<sup>5</sup>

Even though Bobbio’s analysis holds some truths, it still lacks serious analysis of the new right which has been consistently underestimated by its historical enemies. Nor have the various guises in which it presented itself to civil society been adequately understood.

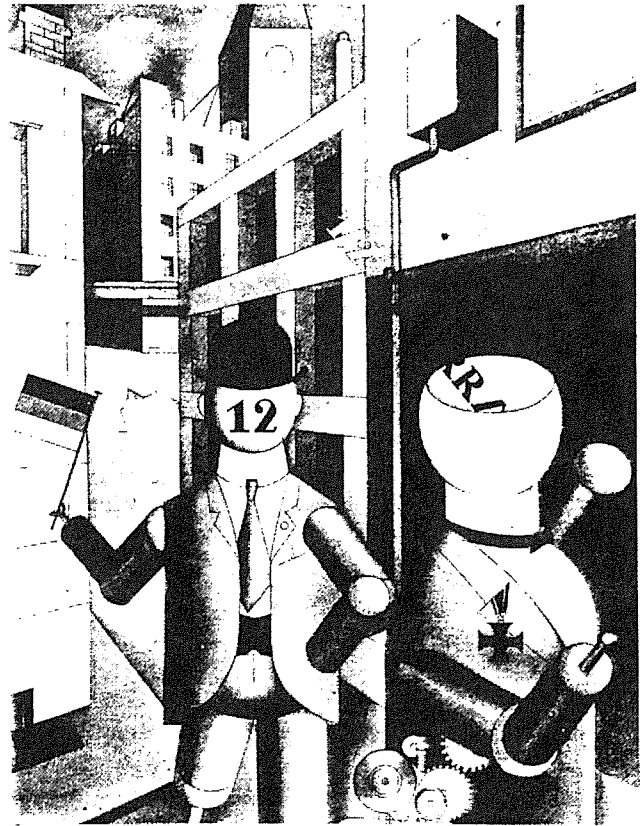
Before the elections some newspaper articles warned the people against the new right. Marco Revelli admonished those who thought that the situation was going towards a modern and moderate Right like Britain.

*The Right which we see indistinctly taking shape is anything but Tory: it has the toothed profile of localism, business and demagogy. It combines the materialist egoism of the new rich with the residual authoritarianism of the old gentry; the instantaneous spectacle of post-modern powers and the spirit of old-bourgeois vengeance of the orphans from the cold-war.*<sup>6</sup>

A Right, in substance, that feeds itself with a ‘fascism’ cultivated by the middle-class in their own ‘televsual’ privacy.

The local Right, represented by the Northern League, and even the ‘Berlusconian’ party called ‘Forza Italia’, represents the reactionary and corporate drift associated with the race towards material acquisition and consumption which produced social identities during the Craxi years. This race has involved the ‘amoral familismo’ which continues to nourish the structures of small firms and self-employment. Here the family has:

*“found its own cohesion within income generation, savings and*



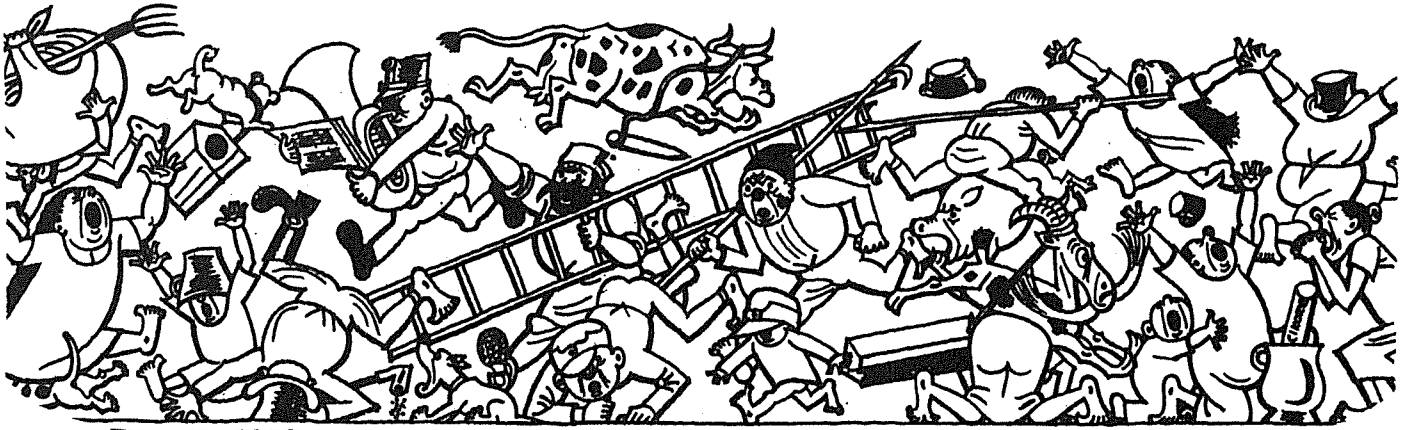
*accumulation. The family has based itself on hierarchy and the work ethic, pursuing economic affluence through self-exploitation and the exploitation of family members and workmen. Home and factory have become the symbolic myths of unity and identity for the new family.”<sup>7</sup>*

If consumption, family, and work are the common characteristics of the transnational populist Right, then the leaders of the Right in Italy have also succeeded in spreading an incredible paradigm of the ‘non-political’. This Right has realised a growing tendency towards “the denial of any notion of a conflict of interests.”<sup>8</sup> The different social bases of the Right try every method to abandon anything which is related to ‘politics’ or ‘partisan politics’, which are needed for class conflict. After all, it is not only concerned with revenge against anything that emanates conflict, but also with the re-occupation of social and existential space in a way to extract from it the ‘politics’ which characterised the Seventies. This project is aided by both the failure of the Left and the workers’ movement and the crisis of the State as a site of mediation. Yet, we can also see the return of state sovereignty as the place of ‘unpolitical autonomy’,<sup>9</sup> as the place of policy making and of the administration of particular interests. These phenomena have the same origin: the eclipse of class conflict focused on labour.

These considerations suggest a Right which won the elections by manipulating the refusal of politics including its representation in state politics. Nevertheless, the deep impulses which are the bases of the shift towards the Right in civil society, a change which has involved large sectors of the working class, remain unclear.

As Rossana Rossanda stated the Right secured its victory in the dreams and in the images that were provoked by the “deus ex-machina” of the Big Brother of the communications industry which promised employment and less taxes.<sup>10</sup> In Rossanda’s words

*The massive vote of the industrial triangle (Milan, Turin, Genoa) is a vote for the Right. People no longer believe in the Left because*



*they think that businessmen, capitalism, Germany's Europe, in other words the richest and strongest, lead society; now savage competitiveness is visited upon those who are gathered around a small pie waiting for their meagre share.<sup>11</sup>*

These are credible reflections - considering the data about the "motionless motor" that created wealth in the North<sup>12</sup> and the fact that people embraced the Right in defence of such an idea of society. However these considerations reveal a distance from social change which explains the failure of the Left to defend 'their' supporters from the Right.

The Italian Left believes that it still represents a large part of the hierarchical society characterised as 'Fordism'. But in reality, it cannot escape the radical change which has brought about the decline of the old solidarities, throwing us into the flexible time of the free market economy which has even absorbed politics. The economy has rushed in to devour the political.

However, there is a tragic paradox. While the Right was unique in interpreting the widespread demands and aspirations of change and obviously perverting them,<sup>13</sup> the Left opposed these aspirations, reciting the same lines against radical and 'subversive' movements as they did during the seventies. The parliamentary Left represented, as it still does, the historical continuity of the first Republic: party-crazy, corporate statism and financial stability pursued by public bankers.

The aspirations which led the actions of oppositional movements since the seventies have now degenerated entirely into the propaganda of the Right. The Right appropriated the libertarian and anti-authoritarian criticism of the oppressive, bureaucratic and centralising tendencies of the state and manipulated a general rejection of the "class" of political professionals, even managing to present public and private businessmen as representatives of the public good. Berlusconi could seem nearer to the public good than the politicians of the first Republic.

The Right posed the problem of individual identity and freedom, accepting the challenge coming from widespread forms of disorientation, identity-loss and isolation. It then transfigured

individual freedom into a miserable and not very edifying notion of careers and self-employment, which also served as an invitation to participate in a phoney community. The Left helped in this process by abandoning the communitarian dimension to market ideologies.<sup>14</sup>

The Right risked their electoral appeal by proposing the demolition of the welfare state which just a few years before was based upon the loyalties of political patronage. The welfare state was depicted as protecting the richer middle classes at the expense of economic innovation, the free trade economy and the new poor. The project of dismantling social securities, schools, health care, public disability and old age pensions, was presented as a struggle against privileges, political patronage and state paternalism in order to camouflage the new distribution of wealth, from wages to profits. In this way conservative parties were able to mobilise large numbers of the self-employed, which felt excluded from public welfare rights, and identified their interests as opposed to other sectors of the working class such as public sector employees.

Last but not least, the liberal use of mass-media was able to colonise the weak identities of the public. As the late Guy Debord observed "Everything which was directly experienced in the old days was abandoned in representation."<sup>15</sup> The spectacle no longer presented itself as a group of images or as an addition to the real world but as a social relationship mediated by images and as the heart of society. So, the theatrical Right was able to achieve its latest contradiction by building a new stage for the representation of totalitarian and integrated information. This was repeated throughout the media including the less slick, such as independent radio and magazines, which had been identified as an alternative to dominant communication in the seventies.

The problem posed by new "videocracy" or "telecracy" is that of a mass-mediated dictatorship, which menaces the future of democracy, the public sphere and the modernity of the French and American revolutions and Kantian rationality. The 'new censorship' re-arranges the concentration and division of accumulation and privatisation, thereby de-politicising political space.<sup>16</sup>

## 5. The re-emergence of conflict

The Berlusconi government, in spite of its popularity, has fallen, substituted by Dini's government, which is made up of a cabinet of technocrats led by a former executive director of the International Monetary Fund, Lamberto Dini himself. This is just the sort of government wanted by International Finance, and it is probably worse than the preceding one. Still, for us it is important to appreciate that these political events have their roots in protest against economic policies and against an increasingly unpopular government. This served to defuse direct action (streets and railway stations blocked by workers, sit-ins and pickets in front of factories and public work places, occupation of hundreds of schools and universities) carried out by students, young people, blue and white collar workers, members of social centres, which had not been seen in years.

For two months millions of people went on strike and protested in the streets moving the political axis towards the Left. In the work places, in bars, in the streets and squares, in the schools and universities political discussion was regenerated. Single issues, local struggles and demands assumed a new meaning related to the general movement. Cities buried under the uncertainty of future unemployment and recession like Trieste, reacted by mobilising workers, students and pensioners onto the streets.

This action was exceptional. Young people and workers appeared en masse whereas before they were hidden. «In their action there is a resolution which is distinguished from a simple expression of simple curiosity. It is possible to say that the action of one communicates to the other, but it is not only this: everybody has an aim»: Elias Canetti described, without hiding any uneasiness, the phenomenon of "mass" action. Such concerns do not preoccupy us, but the expression of such disquiet is significant.

This protest movement, as often happens, has been underestimated and above all feared by the institutional Left. The Unions and Left parties would have preferred to prevent it before it escalated to the level of uncontrollable conflict rather than let it grow spontaneously. The first clashes were the fights with the police by the members of the social centre "Leoncavallo" in Milan, then with the construction workers in Rome, and finally with the students in Naples and Bari, not forgetting the dozen of skirmishes which happened in all cities during the demonstrations. All of which persuaded the moderate Left to desist from attempting to control this explosion.

The dynamism of this conflict has made some Governments abroad worry, especially those which "protect" Italy, preferring not to place its trust in a too class-conscious and iniquitous government. By deserting this protest, the Left presents itself with a dangerous choice, because it leaves the control of the "political arena" open to manipulation.

As Italian anarchists, we are unable to continue this mobilisation and this struggle. But, where there are the conditions, we need to develop sites of self-government and the capacity to oppose policies at a governmental level. This could take the form of the self-management of social life as well as new forms of political struggle. Hence social and political dimensions, although they are separate spheres, could return to oppositional discourse to make the state collapse in a non-political way. As Kropotkin said, the relationship between social revolution and a free "commune" must be found, above all where there is social conflict. From this perspective (one which is shared by tendencies influenced by Municipalism) social conflict is regarded as an important way of

generating an alternative political sphere.

However it remains necessary to involve the workers in this project. We are currently living a strange paradox: people give up industrial work only to work even harder. This dichotomy and schizoid existential situation is politicizing many people in the work place. At the very least this is directed towards political and labour union struggles, resulting in intense debate within the organisations of the working class.

## 6. Some reflections about work

In the last decades work has become increasingly flexible, degrading and politically invisible. There is no longer 'dignity' in labour. However this is not to mourn the old 'dignity' attributed to it by socialist scholars. That wage labour made free men was an assertion denied when work was still the motivator of political life in our country. But some reflections should be added.

In ancient society work, linked to the "realm of necessity" or the necessity of survival, was despised and those doing it excluded from citizenship. Even though the bearers of *techne*, which founded the universe of work, possessed skills which were of great social importance, Greek society, even during the polis, tried to control and limit their social status.<sup>17</sup> Ancient society thus had the problem of preserving the public sphere's stability by excluding those parts of society concerned with the sphere of necessity, of non-freedom or work. With capitalism though work becomes the source of all social values; glorified yet remaining a domain of non-freedom.

If the ancients expelled work from the public sphere appealing to the right to freedom from the necessity of survival, capitalism formulated its own public sphere linking it to need, sacrifice, the struggle for survival and against nature. Capitalist labour, as private appropriation of nature, human and non-human, generates the abolition of that which is common,<sup>18</sup> a condition which is needed for the bourgeois public sphere. Work, in spite of being the heart of bourgeois social ethics, in the form of suffering, exploitation, expropriation and alienation of workers, is separated by free time, politics and culture, in substance by other moments of social life.<sup>19</sup> Work as the founding ethical value of this society, became abstracted and separated by the political public space.

Work, which causes the suffering of millions of men and women, must now be set free and given its own free and easy relationship with physical matter, nature and social knowledge. The liberation "of work" "by work" is realised by going beyond the material scarcity imposed by capitalism and discovering work as a real organic exchange with nature, while building a public sphere of political action and communication. As Hannah Arendt pointed out, with essential work (reduced to a minimum), work as a free social action realised at the same time in public and communicative action, will form the complex sense of life.

## 7. To build a political perspective

The loss of 'dignity' in work and the decline of the public sphere resulted in terrifying political repercussions as well as a direct action vacuum. On one hand, there is the risk of falling back on stale references to work as the sole foundation of social and individual identities, generalising work separated by other domains of social life and perpetuating the 'worker's' existence. On the other hand, there is the risk that refusing to recognise the effective existence of work causes hedonistic behaviours justified by exemplary, symbolic and individual action: from the refusal of abstract work to the

abstractness of bohemian and romantic life.

It is not easy to escape this dichotomy.

From the point of view of work, the struggle for an equal distribution of resources needs to be present and emerge as a fight for those who work for low wages and in hazardous conditions. Blue collar, white collar and public sector workers, unemployed and students, all must realise that their presence in political and social struggles need not fall into the tyranny of the market economy again. The overcoming of their alienation, as subjects separated by the political and public spheres must become a goal of revolutionary movements.

From a political point of view, the overcoming of waged labour will occur when the "exhaustion of the labour-force" to produce relations of subordination, hierarchy and discipline is no longer required. When work is reduced to as small a quantity as necessary to revive society, this will mean two things: one, that men will be absorbed by creative work developed for themselves and freely given to society; two, that the collective and civic participation in the question of community and the public space which unifies work, culture, science and politics, will finally be realised.

But this public sphere must not be "liberalism". We need a public sphere to regenerate libertarian and anarchist thinking; to direct it towards the perspective of social and political conflict and to unite the "rural and urban plebes".

#### Notes

1. These characteristics are now constant in modern western states. For a sufficient analysis of these aspects see G. Poggi, *Lo stato*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1993.
2. See, on these diverse behaviours of the US in confronting the Italian ruling class F. Gambino, "Senza alzare lo specchio", *Altre Ragioni*, n. 3, primavera 1994.
3. M. Albert, *Capitalismo contro capitalismo*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1993, p. 25.
4. The Renan model represents both German and Japanese capitalism; the neo-american is the Anglo-Saxon capitalism based upon the small shareholders and management. For a profound work on this global confrontation between two capitalist models see M. Albert, *op. cit.*; see also R. Prodi, "C'è un posto per l'Italia fra i due capitalismi?", *Il Mulino*, anno XL, n. 333, gennaio-febbraio 1991, pp. 21-36; G. Sapelli, *Sul capitalismo italiano*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1993.
5. See interview to N. Bobbio, "Sinistra, il futuro è nelle tue radici", in *Reset*, n. 5, aprile 1994, pp. 9-11.
6. See M. Revelli, "Una destra piccola piccola", in *Il cerchio quadrato* n. 18, suppl. a *Il Manifesto*, 27/02/1994.
7. See G. De Luna, "Famiglia, casa e capannone", in *Il cerchio quadrato*, n. 18, op. cit.
8. See A. Colombo, "L'invasione dell'impolitico", *cit.*
9. See M. Prospero, "Il Sovrano contro il Moderno", *cit.* For "unpolitical paradigm" we consider the end of "politics" as conflict within the public sphere and its substitution with forms and procedures of government and mediation in a social unchangeable context.
10. R. Rossanda, "Aspettando la destra pulita", *Il Manifesto*, 08/04/1994.
11. R. Rossanda, "Paura dei «rossi» o fascino dei ricchi?", *Il Manifesto*, 01/04/1994.
12. About financial and real estate income which establishes the "motionless motor" of accumulation within richest Italian regions see G. Gario, "Lombardia, Italia, Europa. Regionalizzazione e internazionalizzazione agli inizi degli anni Novanta", in *Iter*, n. 5/6, maggio/dicembre 1992, pp. 64-69.
13. About this thesis, for different aspects sharing, see Redazione di "Luogo Comune", "Contro la II Repubblica", *Luogo Comune*, pre-print del n. 5, 1994.
14. Marco Revelli maintained that the Left built its own more important myth, the progress one, upon the repudiation of community. See M. Revelli, "Comunità. Soggetti coscienti fuori mercato", *Il cerchio quadrato*, n. 23, op. cit.
15. G. Debord, *Commentari sulla società dello spettacolo*, Sugarco, Milano, 1990, p. 85.
16. Derrida J., *Oggi l'Europa*, Garzanti, Milano, 1991, pp. 77-80.
17. See G. A. Gilli, *Origini dell'eguaglianza. Ricerche sociologiche sull'antica Grecia*, Einaudi, Torino, 1988.
18. See M. Bookchin, *L'ecologia della libertà*, Eleuthera, Milano, 1987.
19. See R. Kurz, *L'onore perduto del lavoro*, Manifesto Libri, Roma, 1994.



# 24 Hours from Tuzla

*As the Yugoslavian debacle lurches into a new phase of 'peace' Jim Mc Farlane reports on an initiative to circumvent the various gangs, national and international, which have fed off the conflict.*

Arising out of a hair-raising but uplifting journey to the far side of Bosnia, Anti-Fascist Aid for Bosnia is an anarchist initiative. They are determined to create links directly with those engaged in a daily struggle with the fascist Chetnik Serbian forces, the Police and other authorities in the rump Bosnian state, and amongst those who distrust the motives of the U.N. and aid agencies and who are aware of the motives of the Croatian State and of its fascist counterparts in Herzeg-Bosnia.

Dean of AK Press in London acted as a driver in the second (August 1995) "Workers Aid" mission to Tuzla, in north-east Bosnia, whose citizens had sent solidarity aid to the Miners Strike in 1984/5. In a talk to the Glasgow Anarchist Group Discussion Forum on 4th September, he outlined what happened on the mission, the situation in Tuzla and the need to create the means for practical libertarian solidarity with the Bosnian working class. The convoy of "aid" arrived in Split, in Croatia after negotiating the journey across the narrow road corridor from Slovenia and northern Croatia. The Croatian offensive against the Krajina Serbs was imminent. They were obstructed by British armed forces commanders at their camp in Split, prevented from entering Bosnia by the HVO Bosnian-Croat forces during the Croat Krajina offensive, and refused to "bribe" their way in due to a principled stand against giving aid to nationalist/fascist forces. During this delay, some Workers Aid members found the remains of a child, dead and abandoned near a mountain path.

Eventually they were allowed to proceed through the devastated ethnically divided city of Mostar to central Bosnia, past "ethnically cleansed" villages, where Serbs and Bosnian "muslims" had been

driven out, their homes torched and looted. The convoy included "delegations" from Unions and solidarity groups. While the "delegates" from Women against Pit Closures and similar groups assisted the drivers and other volunteers, many of the Union delegates were selfish and some even foolish to the extent of being a danger to the convoy.

In one incident near Kalandj, convoys have to proceed along a stretch of road that has Chetnik snipers on both sides, and they have to drive without lights along the mountainous single track dirt road. The delegation from the Communication Workers Union lorry "bottled" it and turned their headlights and rear lights on, thus illuminating (and endangering) the whole convoy, which fortunately escaped attack. There were other incidents which showed up many Union bureaucrats in their 'true colours', not bothering to help the tired drivers with cooking, unloading and disappearing to find drink at every opportunity!

When the convoy reached Tuzla, they found that the Trades Council had refused to believe that Workers Aid could get through and a delay ensued with unloading the supplies. The drivers and other travellers had to do this themselves, amid fraught tempers as rival trot groups from Britain and France predictably fell out. They also had to deal with a near food-riot when some of the provisions were unloaded.

Thereafter, the various "delegations" went off to meet their local counterparts, and as an anarchist in a city with no known anarchist/libertarian contacts, Dean was shown around by local children and given a bed by a local family. The children explained the impact of the recent massacre of 71 children in a Tuzla market-



place, the role of the despised Bosnian Police and the daily incidence of Chetnik shelling, especially of mining villages outside Tuzla. The threat to children and the position of women, in such a conflict with numerous records of rape and mutilation, and as targets for sniping was also a key feature of everyday life.

They also explained how the U.N. were 'a law unto themselves' and how the aid agencies would only give relief to refugees, such as the recently displaced Srebrenica and Zepa "safe haven" inhabitants. In turn these refugees would sell surplus food on the 'black market', driving up the prices for the majority of Tuzla citizens, from working class homes, with water for 2 hours daily, with little or no pay from work such as mining and only receiving relief from solidarity initiatives such as Workers Aid. The refugees, understandably, from small rural and besieged enclaves were embittered and unable to understand that cities such as Tuzla (and Sarajevo) contain Croats and Serbs as well as muslims, who support the pluralist (original) aims of the Bosnian state, and some of them carried out attacks against the homes of local (anti-fascist) Serbs.

The U.N. and media journalists strut around the Hotel Tuzla, never targeted by the Chetnik attackers in a luxurious haven that is blatantly at odds with the suffering of the Tuzla working class. Aid convoys have also had reason to fear the U.N.: many of the trucks which have been driven off the road, into ravines etc. are directly the result of U.N. orders to their army personnel that their tanks and other vehicles have an exclusive right to the limited road space and on numerous occasions they have forced other vehicles physically out of the way.

Although the Tuzla people Dean spoke to were delighted at the advances of the Croats in Krajina and the military reverses for the Chetnik forces (and after he left, would have welcomed the allied bombing/shelling of chetnik positions around Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia) they were apprehensive about the coming "peace" moves which would force the Bosnian Government to accept the partition of Bosnia along ethnic lines and a map which would make the Bosnian rump State dependent on Croatian power.

The discussion which followed showed enthusiasm for the "anti-fascist aid" idea, and illustrated the distrust of the Left. Left groups such as the R.C.P. and S.W.P. have sought to identify the Bosnian territory and rump state as "muslim", and have even sought to suggest that Workers Aid (which includes the participation of the W.R.P. [Workers Press] and another trot grouplet) may be prepared to smuggle in arms - a dangerous suggestion given the route to Bosnia through Bosnian Croat territory, with the explicitly fascist 'White Power' insignia everywhere.

Although "Workers Aid" seeks to identify with the Bosnian (and Serb, Croatian, Albanian etc. working class) they do support the Bosnian State, which they identify as defenders of pluralism and a multi-ethnic society. "Anti-fascist Aid" (see below) would sharply distinguish between the interests of the Bosnian State (and other States) and that of the working class: for whom the cliché: the working class has no country has a certain meaning given the subordination of class interests to the design of any nation state and the tendency of dominant ethnic/linguistic/religious groups fostered as prime indicators of a country's identity.

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# Caucasian Chalk Circle

*Mike Peters wonders why the forgotten war in Chechnia failed to arouse the indignation of leftists.*

Planes of the imperial airforce rained bombs and missiles indiscriminately on the rebel city, killing hundreds of civilians. Throughout the Christmas and New Year festive season shells pounded the people's homes relentlessly day and night for three weeks, but the people's resistance never faltered. Journalists reported their quixotic courage uncomprehendingly: "We are fighting for our honour". They still are.

And during all this carnage, what did that righteous spectre of "World Opinion" do? Were there crowds chanting protests outside the empire's embassies in the capitals of the west? Were there vigils? boycotts? protest marches? flag-burnings?

Of course not. This was not the American armed forces; it was the Russians in Chechnia. Not a 'cause', merely a war, without teacher's handouts explaining the plot. The protesting classes, following as always their official opinion-leaders, accepted that the wisest course of action here is quiet pressure at the highest levels, through the proper channels, tut-tutting rebukes about financial aid and suchlike. An 'internal' affair, in other words. Despite the official demise of 'Communism', the social mechanisms which have used that name for the last seventy years are still intact. The old right-wing sneers about the double-standards of a 'Peace Movement' run by mealy-mouthed hypocrites in the service of Moscow are, in this instance at least, not wrong: the Cold War was never ideological: it was geopolitical all along. The rival blocs of 'West' and 'East' were only ever Orwellian global gang-networks: their domestic refractions of 'Right' and 'Left' made everyone take sides in politics according to the hidden agendas of their respective leaders. This much has hardly changed. The Left shows by what it *doesn't* do that it still exists: an automatic reflex, like a headless chicken with no Great Socialist Motherland to rally to. It still can't break old habits of obedience. Of course we sympathise with the Chechens but it's terribly complicated and what's the *issue?* (so Bosnia is simple!) and anyway it's a long way away (unlike the Gulf?) and what can we do about it (did somebody mention Vietnam?)

'Anti-imperialist' reflexes can't quite summon the same indignation about atrocities committed by dictatorships not on the US payroll. The millions murdered this century by the Russians, the Japanese, the Khmer Rouge etc have difficulty finding space in the moral accounts of the Left. When it comes to oppressions, they ration their condemnation to a quite strict (and eurocentric) canon of oppressors. So, with the breakup of the global duopoly, the

Chechens turn to a world market for moral support and find it is still rigged.

Meanwhile anti-imperialism itself has by now cut loose from its last threadbare pretences to anti-capitalism. It is now worn as a thin veil by an Islamist totalitarianism based on a conspiracy theory about an imaginary Satanic "West" that has had nothing else on its mind for the last 1000 years but the persecution and extermination of Islam (an egocentric fantasy, that has more in common with Zionism than it might care to think). In this way an Islamic International takes over the vacant role of phoney Opposition to a globocracy which is happy to reciprocate the favour.

So, in the Chechen war, as in Bosnia, the Islamist ideology has found fertile ground for its self-aggrandising delusions. Predictably, it pretends that the cack-handed brutality of the Russian invasion was part of a "Western" crusade against a Muslim nation because it is Muslim. There can be no argument with this semi-psychotic delusion. Those who cannot comprehend tolerance can only project their own megalomaniac ambitions onto others. And, of course, this ideology can make its pitch for kids in Bradford or the Paris *banlieues*, who don't need to know any more about the real power-games of the Indian subcontinent or North Africa (or Palestine or Bosnia or the Caucasus) than kids in the sixties felt they needed to know what was really happening in Indochina or Latin America.

Debord's deceptively simple concept of the Integrated Spectacle captures perfectly the operation of this New World Order and how its ready-made 'opposition' works to conceal its true identity. The world of pure capitalism has now incorporated all the technicalities of Stalinism: the cold war, with all its paranoid mendacity hasn't been superseded - it has simply been internalised. The real barbarism continues apace, as a permanent state of war is inflicted in a rolling programme on region after region, proving that capital's global governance still needs war machines to terrorise the natives even though it no longer needs state apparatuses to manage the economy. And this unified world still needs its demonized enemies, so that anyone who might be tempted to take up arms will never be in danger of calling things by their proper names.

There will always be small nations to be subjugated with extreme prejudice. There will always be ideologies to make sure that the most blatant realities are misrecognised, by imputing a wider 'meaning' to conflicts whose true horror is that they have none.

Russia's annual cure carried out by Doctor Schamy! : fifth All wars are an internal affair now autumn.

# Living on the edge of nowhere

*Jim McFarlane reports on the Glasgow road revolt.*

Roads activists based around the self-styled 'Pollok Free State' have been engaged in a defiant actions against the construction of the M77 Ayr motorway extension. The action initially attempted to set up encampments at five geographically dispersed sights within Glasgow and in the outer perimeters towards Parton and beyond. After demonstrations and symbolic defiance against the road building programme, the anti-M77 campaign, like other anti-motorway actions in Lancashire, London & Wiltshire have experienced setbacks as resistance has had to take new forms.

They are facing a highly co-ordinated foe in Wimpey, their 60 or so Security Guards and up to 200 Strathclyde Police on certain occasions. Early successes in persuading some of the guards to walk off the job (and face suspension from Unemployment Benefit in the process) have evaporated as the outgoing Regional Council, takes the 'flack' before the introduction of the new unitary authorities in April 1996.

## **One Man Protest**

The by now well-known Earth First style tactics of non-violent direct action have been followed by the 'tree dwellers' but the significant aspect of this struggle is the proximity of nearby housing estates. Collective working class defence of trees appears novel. In fact the trees are only part of the picture. The motorway extension will 'box in' greater Pollok', separate the scheme<sup>1</sup> from the Pollok estate and the largely middle class 'south side' on its eastern edges.

A handful of previously unpoliticised locals rallied to the cause inspired by Colin, a working class hero with dreadlocks who stayed up a tree on the route in the winter of 1993/4 during a period when interest was largely confined to the lobby politics of 'Glasgow for People' and other earnest roads critics. Although much of the route was levelled during this period, partly under the guise of an adjacent river re-routing scheme, local notoriety for the tree vigil gave the impetus for the camp to be established opposite Glasgow's biggest single site workplace; the National Savings Bank!

## **Schoolkids Get the Message**

A significant feature of the protests has been the issue of schoolchildren. Seeming spontaneous mobilisation of schoolkids from nearby Bellarmine (Catholic) Secondary emerged during the first morning actions against the camp. Other teenagers from Crookston Castle (non-denominational) joined in and 'strikes' were called by kids, who would then engage in demonstrations along sections of the route.

An outcry from teachers, certain parents and the Council bemoaned the politicisation of such disenfranchised youth, unprepared for their environmental studies to be translated into direct action. Even although some youngsters were corralled back into the dead-weight of schooling and non-political delinquency, a few have remained involved linking up with the 'hard core' of camp dwellers many of whom have links with the schemes affected.

## **The Ballot and the Bover Boot**

Also the coincidence of the M77 construction plan with protests against the Criminal Justice Act - which in Scotland have been lively events giving a new character to demonstrations, much less regimented even than the anti-poll tax movement<sup>2</sup> - and the identification of Scottish Militant Labour with Pollok combined to give a different impetus to the current motorway protest.

The Militant shift towards 'community politics' has been pioneered in Pollok where the only Councillors elected under the "S.M.L."<sup>3</sup> banner outwith a by-election have spearheaded an approach which is partly 'getting things done' and replacing inept Tenants Associations and Community Councils with campaigning bodies under their general control. The other characteristic is confrontation, exposing the remote social democratic nature of Labour, and drawing people into direct action to achieve aims. Although there are strains between Militant and community activists and the Earth First NVDA approach this has yet to threaten the roads resistance likely to continue during 1995.





After a series of arrests along the route a major operation was launched which segregated the 'free state' camp from the route and inevitably depressed much of the opposition. Subsequent media reports have strived to convey the picture that resistance is over and that a "second phase" (the words of a Corkerhill Community Councillor) is to demand compensation for inconvenience caused, double glazing etc..

In fact 'guerrilla' tactics continue to cause damage to machinery and opposition switches to adjacent schemes as activists belatedly get a response as the noise and inconvenience reaches their doorsteps.

### Depressing the Panic Button

A problem for the dedicated band of camp dwellers and those on the move & faced with increasingly insurmountable odds is the difficulty to mobilise greater responses to emergencies. To be sure, thousands marched on two occasions for over 5 miles to the camp, but scarcely 5% of these are reached by phone trees or able to disengage themselves from the humdrum of everyday existence: college, housework, jobs, in-between giro days etc.

The Pollok protest unlike Wanstonia in East London does not involve the levelling of houses; protests from communities bordering the road have yet to reach beyond the politicised, or the few citizens not ground down by the cycle of poverty, exploitation, crime, drugs & the drive to consume. Furthermore, Pollok, does not involve the desecration of the Pollok Estate despite some alarmist pronouncements, with the route skirting the huge parkland, and travelling between housing estates rather than through them (much to the disappointment of some of the inhabitants!) and despite the furore about Allan Stewart the Tory Minister who had to resign after brandishing a pick-axe, the main champions of the road have been Ayrshire Labour MPs exploiting fears of current high road fatalities in the non-carriageway stretches.

As mentioned, there is some frustration amongst the many working class protesters whose idea of direct action is 'having a go' rather than avoiding violence, and the NVDA ethic probably repels many or deters participation from a culture so alien to such niceties. Not that violence has been much in evidence, video footage available through Undercurrents and shot by a Glasgow Anarchist is quite amusing with the banter and the constant noising up of Security Guards. It also reveals, however, that force of numbers is not with the protest, faced with early morning police mobilisations & surprise tactics. The balance of forces at present suggests another conveyor belt of concrete rolling remorselessly on, with the blessing of Labour Councils and attention will shift to another development at the M74 extension in Glasgow's east-end.

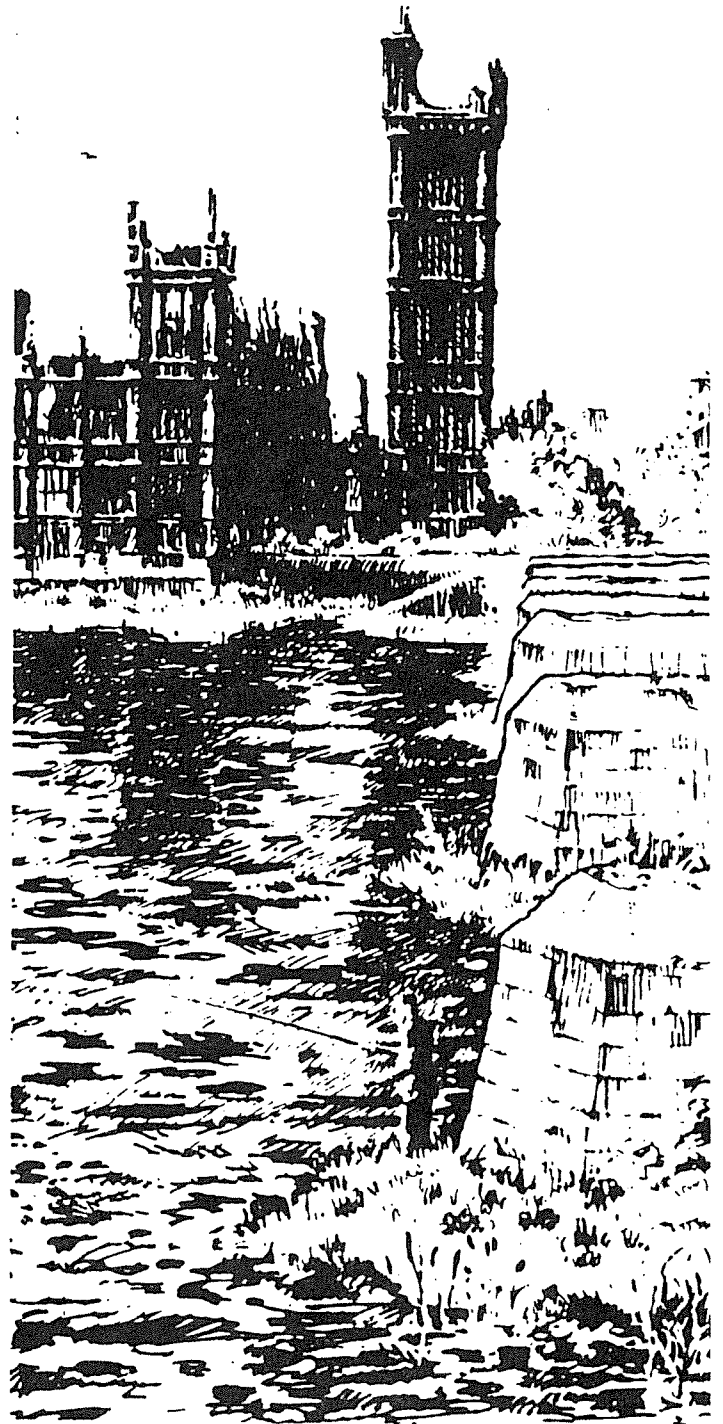
The downturn in the public profile of the M77 struggle coincided with the moving on of the 'anti-professional' activist elite on to the Lancashire roads where their skills; public relations, tree-spiking, etc., would again be the media spotlight. Never mind the fact that another 'defeat' is left behind, another adventure leaving the locals to clean up the mess.

### Notes

- 1 See article in *Here and Now* No.2.
- 2 See article in *Here and Now* No.9
- 3 Other SML Councillors (defeated at Unitary Council elections in April '95) were elected under local labels.
- 4 See article in *Here and Now* No.10

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# The Challenge of Post-Humanism

*This article was written by an ex-member of the libertarian socialist group Solidarity. In his endorsement of eco-centrism and the need for limits on human aspirations, George Williamson reveals how far many have politically travelled during the 1980s.*

The activities of the protest movement against animal suffering has required us to consider a world normally excluded from our day-to-day thoughts. Our concern and confusion over the treatment of animals force us to investigate a realm of experience and existence beyond our own. That realm includes much more than the individual species which are receiving an empathetic response - it is, in fact, the totality of the planet's all-embracing and life-nurturing systems. We have to look at humanity's existence *within* this realm, rather than its relationship *to* it. By adding an understanding of this to our empathetic responses we can begin to comprehend how the philosophy of *post-humanism* relates to *the politics of ecology*.

Modern thinking, on the politics of ecology and its implied post-humanism, has an intellectual pedigree going back many decades through thinkers such as the American, Aldo Leopold and the Norwegian, Arne Naess. Despite books like David Ehrenfield's *The Arrogance of Humanism*, public awareness of this tradition has not been great. So has its time come?

Political ecology is not a back-to-nature movement, but it challenges the view that civilisation is humanity's triumph over the non-human world and that we are here primarily to whip nature into shape by being lord and master over all creation.

At a fundamental level is the belief that human experience and secular existence has to be seen within the context of the dynamic processes of the earth's ecosystems. This and other currents of thought in the political ecology movement point to a post-humanism which could eventually provide the philosophical basis for a profound shift in political values.

Ecological post-humanism contrasts with the spiritualism and new ageist religions which are often associated with strands of green politics. It is distinctly different from 'post-human' movements that seek escape for the human condition through artificial intelligence and technology; the 'post-human' futurist fantasies that deny the bonds we have with the planet and the limits it imposes on us. It also distances itself from *human-centred* notions of *rights* for animals and other parts of the natural world. It is philosophically distinct from the anti-ecological humanism with which most of us are familiar.

The flowering of rationalist thought from the Enlightenment may have led to the positive benefits found in agnostic neutrality and atheistic conviction. However, with this partial and total 'rejection' of God also came a scientific and technological imperative, which is now virtually free of any ethical restraint.

However the sidelining of God did not eliminate the dominant Judeo-Christian belief in man's dominion over the earth

and its other inhabitants. So scientific and technological rationalism encourages all kinds of unconstrained behaviour and practices - such as genetic engineering as it attempts the dangerous unravelling of the processes of life itself - which are severing humanity's umbilical cord with the planet. This, not its justified questioning of the existence of God, is the downside of the humanist project.

As individual lives are dependent on the survival of life itself, perhaps now is the time for us to replace our human-centred *illusions* with a planet-centred *reality*.



Stan Rowe, Professor of Plant Ecology at Saskatchewan University, writing in the ecopolitical journal *Real WORLD*, states:

*Does not ecology, the science of context, suggest - when planet Earth (humanity's context) is experiencing various life-threatening illnesses - that a worthy goal, a transcendent and unselfish purpose, is to use what skills we have to relieve those problems, to lighten the burden of ourselves on the world and its many other creatures and creations?*

He continues:

*A misconception - that organisms are the focal reality of this planet - blocks conscientious progress... Our secular faith is that organisms - things like us - are the ultimate achievement of the universe's evolutionary processes. Despite ecological knowledge that organisms without the context of the ecosphere are not only dead but logically unthinkable, we persist in making them the be-all and end-all of the universe.*

These observations and insights, with their strong sense of humility, point to post-humanist beliefs and values which could eventually be used to refute those who claim that political ecology is only a political instrument (means) with no ethical foundation (ends).

Another aspect of this debate is taking place within the green political movement between two contesting belief systems: *ecocentrism* and *anthropocentrism*. The differences between them could replace the, increasingly irrelevant, left-right polarity. Ecocentrism, which is planet centred, places humans 'within' the earth's ecosystems and ecosphere. It considers humanity to be a *part* of, not *apart* from, these systems. Anthropocentrism, in its human centredness, tries to put humans 'outside' these systems. This concept dominates mainstream politics and permeates much green politics in the form of *social-environmentalism*. Here the 'environment' is tacked on as just another aspect of human experience and existence, in order to align it with social concerns.

Anthropocentrism's more extreme representation - omnipotence - imagines humans to be almost 'independent' of ecosystems. It is behind the deluded wish to bring the world and nature under humanity's control; naively trying to deny nature its ecological role - which no amount of human endeavour can match. Delusions of omnipotence feed the 'demand politics' and the 'permissive economics' of, what the American social critic Christopher Lasch called the 'culture of narcissism'.

Allan Pond, a respected green theorist, criticises social-environmentalism this way:

*The social-environmentalist current with its concerns for human emancipation mistakenly believe that ecocentrism, unlike anthropocentrism, does not reflect these concerns. On the contrary human well-being is ultimately enriched by being embraced by the wider and more fundamental ecocentric perspective. The argument that ecocentrism ignores social issues or that a concern with ecology has to be supplemented by an equivalent concern with social issues is based on a false and unhelpful distinction between the natural and the social. Polarising the 'social' and the 'ecological' simply reinforces the anthropocentric viewpoint which is the root of the problem. The way to social justice lies through the search for ecological sustainability and equilibrium; not vice versa.*

As 'progressivist-humanist' politics searches around for a cause with which to sustain itself, it has taken on the mantle of social-environmentalism and in so doing, reinforced its principal contradiction. This is described by Sandy Irvine, the editor of the eco-political journal *Real WORLD* as, "the impossibility of seeking ever-increasing human entitlements for ever-increasing human numbers, at the same time as wanting to prevent resource depletion and pollution" (and of course animal suffering can be included in the downside of this contradiction). Then expecting these entitlements to be serviced by a state bureaucracy which is economically and ecologically incapable of sustaining them, and therefore politically unwilling to do.

The environmental circle cannot be politically squared. Especially as this current of thinking shows a marked reluctance to challenge peoples' unrealistic expectations of prosperity and affluence. Post-humanist philosophy in the way it relates to the politics of ecology, hopefully will help point the way out of this dilemma which social-environmentalism finds itself in.

Political ecology views the threat of ecological catastrophe as more than just another crisis to be added to the current political, social and economic ones. This distinguishes it from the prevalent thinking in mainstream politics. Rather, it views the ecological crisis as the thread that ties the others together. Such a perspective marries the present social and political fracturing to continuing ecological collapse.

At the core of ecological post-humanism would be the idea of *limits*; the absolute value behind the ecological imperative. This imperative requires that lives are lived, livelihoods are earned, and politics are conducted within constraints imposed on them by the earth's *carrying capacity*.

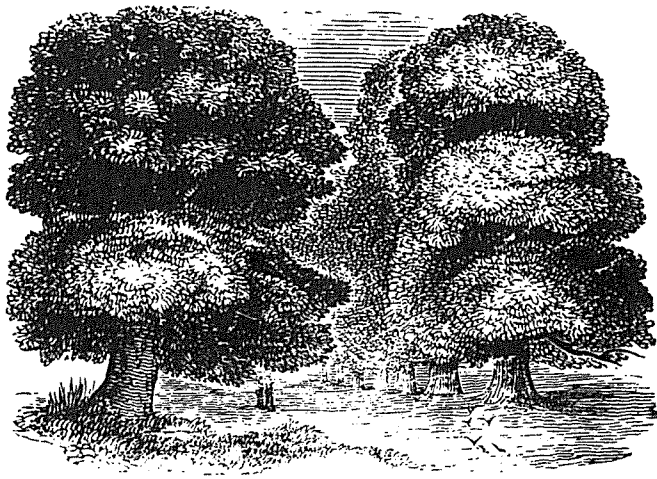
Carrying capacity used to be understood when referring to sustainable numbers in the farming of animals and of animals in the wild. Humans however don't appear to recognise it also applies to their numbers. Consequently we are ignoring at our peril the evidence that the carrying capacity of the earth's ecosystems determines the limits on human population growth and economic activity.

If we want to survive and have an acceptable quality of life for everyone, our politics have to become post-humanist without being anti-people. Political ecology can point the way.

George Williamson

The author is a member of The Campaign for Political Ecology (ECO)





### Comment on 'The Challenge of Post-Humanism'

The central idea behind the author's post-humanism is the idea of the 'eco-system' and its 'carrying capacity'. However the idea of the eco-system originated in the same science which developed the capitalist technology responsible for the irreversible simplification of the world - the root of the present ecological crisis. This raises problems because replacing God with Eco-system as the final arbiter of human desires fails to avoid the problems which led to religion's discrediting. The guardians of the Eco-system, can no more provide a guarantee that they will not disguise their own specific interests behind a spurious universalism than the priests of yesteryear.

This problem is compounded when the notion of 'carrying capacity' is presented as the yardstick by which constraints on human activity will be established. First of all such a notion retains a very 'humanist' faith in the ability of scientists to measure and predict nature. Furthermore, as nation states start to crumble (unmourned by me) under the twin threats of global capitalism and its consequent ethnic particularism, the idea of 'carrying capacity' could quite easily slip into the role of a new disciplinary ideology of the international ruling class. As a concept defined by experts in the pay of various states, corporations or 'voluntary' businesses the possibility that who pays the piper calls the tune cannot be ruled out.

In conclusion I would pose the 'human' against the various 'humanisms' which have and still are competing for our attention. The beginning of any sustainable revolt against the 'grow or die' economy is in the thoughts and feelings of the only sentient beings capable of social action. Furthermore I would argue that the kind of social action necessary to defeat the global economy and its reduction of all living things (including humans) to resources requiring management will not be inspired by dry scientific assessments (usually wrong) of resource depletion which compound the sense of powerlessness by which humans have been disabled, but rather by a strategy of re-enchantment with the world, which appeals to precisely the atrophied sense of awe which capitalism has done so much to put to sleep.

*So long as we regard a tree as an obvious thing, naturally and reasonably created for a giraffe to eat, we cannot properly wonder at it. It is when we consider it as a prodigious wave of the living soil sprawling up to the skies for no reason in particular that we take off our hats, to the astonishment of the park-keeper.*

G.K.Chesterton, *A Defence of Nonsense*

Steve Bushell

### Reply to Steve Bushell's Comment

To compare irrational belief in a non-existent God with an informed, rational awareness of the place of humans in the ecosphere is misleading. God is an invention of humans while humans are a creation of nature. Furthermore the essence of nature (which is pre-human and extra-human) is not a social construct amenable to differing and relativistic human perceptions. As political ecology starts with a 'hands off' and 'leave well alone' approach it reinforces the belief that no-one speaks for nature; suggesting instead that we 'go with the grain' rather than 'manage' it.

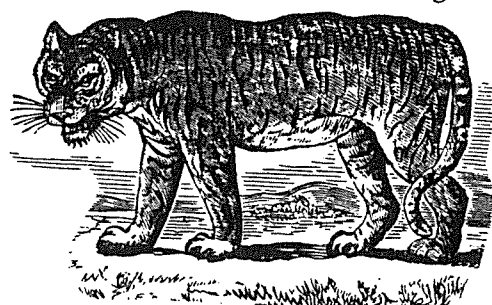
While it is true that a political movement cannot be founded on a set of scientific hypotheses, however likely they are to be proved correct, nevertheless there is a fundamental need to acknowledge that the finite resource base must run out whether it is maintaining ongoing capitalism or a future post-commodity anarcho-situationist society. People should not be sheltered from this fact just because it might contribute further to their feeling of powerlessness. What makes people feel powerless is the neo-situationist defeatism encouraged by an over-exaggeration of capitalism's recuperative powers, thereby discouraging many attempts to contest and defeat it.

Carrying capacity and resource limitation have always existed and the revolutionary movement reacts to them in the same way as capitalist managers do; it ignores them. Industrial, scientific and technological activity, whether capitalist or not, has undermined awareness of resource dependency and substituted dependency on economic growth (which ultimately fails us). Carrying capacity may not have been so critical in the past due to smaller human numbers and less economic activity but societies which ignored it paid the price. Carrying capacity does not have to be scientifically measured at nation state level; rather it has to be sensitively and politically gauged globally, regionally and parochially.

Progressivist-humanist politics tries to separate social injustice (and disenchantment) from ecological disintegration. Yet the greatest social injustice of all is this ongoing disintegration and the disenchantment that goes with it.

Humanist-individualism is based on survival at all costs; ultimately futile when the sun is going to explode and take us with it. Post-humanism seeks to move beyond that. Humanity may be nature in a state of awareness and consciousness. Humans are part of what may be the only sentient community in the whole universe: unprotected by God and with the planet's ecosystems (rather than heaven) as the only means of support, comfort, security and awe. A strategy for re-enchantment with the world by the only sentient beings capable of political action has to take that on board; if as all the indications suggest humans intend to 'go on' despite the big bang awaiting us. The revolutionary movement, if it is to remain so, needs a conserving radicalism which confronts the radical conservative politics that are threatening the ecological support system.

George Williamson



# Globalisation and Liberal Politics

*In an unpublished letter to The Observer, Alex Richards questions the confidence of intellectuals that communities can be preserved in the face of global capital.*

During the Conservative party leadership contest, several commentators argued that a broad inadequacy of politics to economic reality lay under the core issue of John Major's political competence. Anthony Giddens' article "Government's Last Gasp?" in *The Observer* (9th July 1995) may have been commissioned to fit that framework but was published after the immediate political crisis was resolved. Giddens' article then performed a different function – salvaging liberalism from political-economic crisis.

Giddens begins by acknowledging the impotence of government when faced with the forces of globalisation. If his manoeuvre of rescuing politics from the onslaught of economic change is to succeed, he must secure particular viewpoints on globalisation at the world and the local levels. Only then can he clear a safe haven within which politics can survive.

For Giddens, multi-national corporations form a global oligarchy to which government submits. There is an element of truth here, but it renders matters into the terms of discussion in the 1970s, when the tendency was still towards larger corporations practising economies of scale. But is that the economic focal point of our time? The current restructuring seems quite different. Instead of corporations expanding their administration and seeking economies of scale, globalisation involves intensive and extensive processes. The intensive process is "downsizing", where fewer employees are expected to do more work. Its extensive counterpart is contractual export of labour units. Often this involves casualising former employees. More recently, progress in telecommunications enables ever-wider work functions, whether in primary or service industries, to be exported to third world countries where they are performed by educated but lower-paid people. These are the processes which are destabilising our working conditions.

Can the resulting interdependence define a political space? It has long been predicted that market unification would bring a socialisation, but that has happened only in the most abstract sense. The current valorisation process involves a spatial dispersal rather than the sense of particular place which is needed for any meaningful "democratisation".

What is significant is that these changes emphasise capital as a social relation, not as a conspiracy. Seen in that way, it is missing the substance of globalisation to suggest that administrative institutions should be built to counter-balance the oligarchy. The politicians have been complementing the multi-nationals' expansion by building "rational" trading blocs (such as Europe), but these are increasingly irrelevant to the extensive space through which the economic bonds spread. More of the same will change nothing.

Giddens celebrates progress without distinguishing it from capital intensification. This is all the clearer when he focuses on the local. His strange optimism about "waves of democratisation" assumes that they are independent of the global forces. There is a recourse to faith in that affirmation of "democratisation". Giddens uses it to guarantee a politics of the moment, while leaving its substance beyond political discussion.

Liberal intellectuals in the 1980s applauded dubious "new social movements" and stage-managed events like "Live Aid". Similarly, Greenpeace's public relations battle with Shell and the resulting boycott campaign can be used to bolster the idea of some weakly defined "wave of democratisation". But such celebrations of "sub-politics" have a short shelf-life.

The family is Giddens' specific example. Here, he sees movement towards a society which "finds ways of reconciling equality and solidarity in family life". Now, that solidarity is being subverted as the forces of globalisation propel each person into the labour market. But by viewing that necessity as choice, liberal political debate restricts itself to technical questions of how to service that choice.

For example, the UK political parties agree that extension of nursery schooling is good, and differ only on the method of organisation and funding. But should children be decanted into age-banded institutions? Or is better (for child and community) to grow and learn skills informally in a particular inter-generational community? Technical politics takes the answer as read. Parents "chose" integration into the wage economy and politics must service their decision. Anything else is utopian and is placed outside political debate.

If the crisis of government is partly due to it being swept into irrelevance by globalisation, it is also due to the failures of the institutions of bureaucratic liberalism. (The current vogue for "communitarianism" results from some of these failings, but as long as it stays within the political class it will consist of little more than calls for authoritarian remedies.) Giddens concedes some of liberalism's malign effects. He nods towards Lasch's critique of the "rootless managerial and financial elites" but fails to build on the importance of recognition of a particular place. Too often, the radical has denigrated permanence of place and relationship in favour of the temporary dalliances of the managerial careerists.

A search for a "sub-politics" to counterbalance the forces of globalisation must draw a clear line between community and administrative politics. Economic imperative must not be mistaken for progress. Giddens' vision of a political palliative is trapped within administrative politics and the stratum whose interests it serves.

# Cyberdrivel

*Cyber theory: The Most Radical Gesture or even more post-modernism?*

*Mike Peters dissects the current vogue in technological utopianism.*

## Mundane 2000

It was bound to happen sooner or later: a precise inversion of the Society of the Spectacle. But only from California could the news have come saying that sitting in front of a VDU could be a kind of revolutionary action. Like the return of the repressed, that great hit show is repeated: Counterculture II: the Sequel, but this time the Revolution not only will be televised, it will *only* be happening on the screen. The streets and shopping malls, the city tower blocks, the cops, the armies, the banks, the cars, the forests and the seas and the wastelands of the ghetto, indeed the entire human and animal population will vanish at a keystroke into the ether as mind meets mind in the epiphany of cyberspace. The mystical metaphysics brought to you by new SciFi metaphors-taken-literally will achieve lift-off into a transubstantiated world of pure spirit.

Cyberculture has all the makings of the perfect religion for the current stage of capitalism. The dogma comes in handy-sized sound bytes, not occupying too much brain-space. You don't even have to 'believe' the phrases, as long as you know how to use the right words. You don't even (in fact this is the whole point) have to *think* about their implications, whether they 'refer' to anything actually happening, or whether they are (snigger here) 'true'.

It offers its members the smug self-satisfaction of being an elite at the cutting-edge, ahead of the pack, while mouthing ostensibly anti-elitist statements. It contains the distilled essence of classical modernist progressivism: a single formula positing a past/present/future according to which a technologically-determined super-reality is evolving itself, and us, into something wholly new, wholly amazing and wholly irresistible: something just too unpredictable, except of course, that the self-appointed cybergurus have had a privileged peek at it)

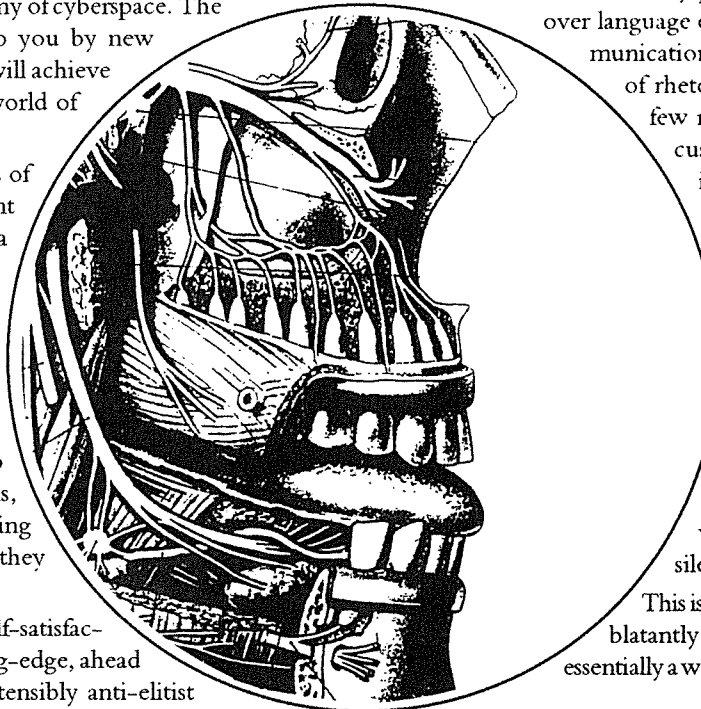
It can even offer 'subversive' pretensions too (as optional extras) for those who want to shock with (they hope) blood-curdling declarations of the *abolition of Humanity, Identity, Life as we know it* etc. and a (safely abstracted) aura of radicality -purporting to transgress, deconstruct, supersede, a supposedly traditional/hierarchical/centralised/patriarchal/western (but, NB, not a capitalist) order of things, whilst being exactly identical to where capital is driving to at the moment; nobody is going to ask you to specify

the difference between capitalism's programme and what cyberprophets are saying.

As a religion in every sense, the *tone* is all-important. Incantations uttered in entranced voices with uplifted hearts, and that cloyingly sanctimonious combination of in-group fellowship and pity bordering on contempt for gross heathens who haven't seen the light.

One of the social conditions making possible the diffusion of this religion is the disappearance of practical intelligence from social life. Because so many people no longer have any control over language or any means of autonomous communication, they are unable to resist the force of rhetoric or to hold their own in those few remaining farcical pockets of "discussion" in modern society. But there is a deeper contradiction at work - it isn't just that cybertheorists have become seduced, addicted or corrupted by language: driven to keep spinning slick catchphrases to keep up with what they need to believe is an irresistible imperative. There is a real fear of language at the heart of this whole spurious 'counterculture'; this fear of language unites those who speak with those who can only gawp in silence.

This is paradoxical because cybertheory is so blatantly an entirely *linguistic* phenomenon - essentially a way of writing and speaking.



## Sadie's Turn

For the last few years the academic music-halls have been entertained by the double-act of Sadie Plant and Nick Land. Like a kind of Beavis and Butthead of the radical milieu, they gaze at the screen muttering their cool infatuation with what is being shown. Student clones easily replicate the style; not everyone gets the chance to be taught by TV gurus, after all. Situating themselves, mouse in hand, as expert pontificators on the very latest media fads, they deserve to be challenged by people who know something about where they are coming from and who don't like where they are headed. If this polemic is impolite, that's because I think what they are saying is abysmal and that it needs to be contested as sharply as necessary rather than treated with the mindless adulation of fans or the skeptical condescension of ignoramuses. As it happens, I like Sadie very much and readers will



know that she's been part of the *Here and Now* matrix for some time, but that doesn't stop me feeling it's about time she was asked to respond publicly to criticisms of the positions she's taken up. There's no tabloidist urge to kick people off their fifteen-minute fame-pedestals (even if they've shown a disturbing lack of reluctance to being used as talking heads), but there is a desire to know what they think they are up to and an impatience with the evasive assertions and refusals to accept the validity of questioning of their assumptions. As for Nick Land, I've never met him in the "flesh" (obviously an irrelevant consideration in this instance) but my view of his "thought" is explicit below.

The following commentary is not, of course, a critique of Cybertheory as ideology, even less is it a critical analysis of the 'information-communication-technologies' on which this ideology has erected itself. It's an attack on the *language* (and the dubious 'ideas') of cybertheory, on what this language inadvertently tells us about the people who (re)produce it, and on what it *does*.

Historically, the relationship of technofetishist intellectuals towards their images of the "future" has always been essentially masochistic. As part of the very fixation with 'power' (what technology will supposedly enable "us" – the first person plural is always a lie) – there is at the same time a kind of yearning for some force larger than themselves to which they can exult in abject *submission* – what Vaneigem would describe as self-sacrifice– the elementary form of substitutionism; here what is evident in cybertheory (the addiction to 'intellectual' technologies) is a kind of voluntary sacrifice of the intelligence as well as the familiar self-abasement of intellectuals beneath the wave of 'Power'/'Progress' which Orwell already diagnosed so acutely in the 30s.

### Nick Land's Body

Nick Land is a fanatic for the most extreme forms of this submission. Behind his revulsion at the infuriating materiality of the everyday world is a desperate desire to escape his ordinariness. Going one beyond his role model the famous shit-eating librarian Bataille, Land extrudes from himself textual shit, and wallows ecstatically in his exteriorized abjection, working himself into a frenzy of surrender to the force that propels forth his own verbiage.

Some samples for those not familiar with the riffs:

*A cybernegative circuit is a loop in time, whereas cyberpositive circuitry loops time 'itself', integrating the actual and the virtual in a semi-closed collapse upon the future. Descendent influence is a consequence of ascendently emerging sophistication, a massive speed-up into apocalyptic phase-change. The circuits get hotter and denser as economics, scientific methodology, neo-evolutionary theory, and AI come together: terrestrial matter programming its own intelligence at impact upon the body without organs = 0. Futural infiltration is subtilizing itself as capital opens onto schizo-technics, with time accelerating into the cybernetic back-wash from its flip-over, a racing non-linear countdown to planetary switch.*

*('Circuitries', Deleuze & the Transcendental Unconscious, 1992)*

*In the final phase of human history, markets and technics cross into interactive runaway, triggering chaos culture as a rapid response unit and converging on designer drugs with increasing speed and sophistication. Sampling, remixing, anonymous and inhuman*

*sound, woman become cyborg and taken into insanity: wetware splices with techno... Sudden transition from ice to water, phase change, punctual anastrophe of the system, is impact on convergent rather than metric zero. The earth is becoming cyberpositive"*

*('Cyberpositive', Unnatural: Techno-theory for a contaminated culture, 1994)*

OK, it may sound better than it looks, and yes, Burroughs and Gibson did this too (but better), but contrary to those who say you don't need to try to read it word by word, just let it wash over you, it does –unfortunately – *mean* something; the message is only too clear.

It's the voice of the *Media*, made up of commanding barks, techno-noises (it needs the soundtrack to work), journalistic juxtapositions (how many trendy terms can you get into a single sentence?), and above all, and perfectly audible: the ever-authoritative sound of *Science*. This is a peculiarly anti-biotic poetry, redolent of 1920s-style constructivist machinespeak, with the singular difference that it now endorses an existing unconscious system logic rather than artistically metaphorising a possible one.

Like some latter-day eschatoholic he can't wait to be dissolved into the coming chaos. Everything is underpinned by an emphatic inevitability: "it can't be stopped"... "we haven't seen anything yet"...etc.

*Life is being phased out into something new, and if we think this can be stopped we are even more stupid than we seem.*

But such inevitabilities are secretly willful. Every "historical necessity" discloses an unacknowledged volition: Land's impatience with the messy business of being alive.

His linguistic style arouses the same revulsion I have always felt for the fascist mentality, as expressed in its futurist thrill at the sheer destructiveness of technology and its glamourization of movement and speed as such. It's now exactly 60 years since Benjamin grasped how humanity's self-alienation had "reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order".

Land's barely-concealed death wish makes me feel more than a little queasy. For such people 'liberation' always means dissolution, the form taken by aggression among males who, through physical weakness or infirmity, have had to displace their drives into cerebral channels. Normally such cod-psychoanalysis is hardly relevant but some people are so obviously acting-out their fantasies that these things seem inescapable. The clues are all there in Land's vocabulary, sentence-structures, even the stress-patterns in his speech and the physical gestures while speaking. (You see something similar among callow Trots whose hectoring speeches and power-fantasies are so blatantly phallic.) Land's impatience to be rid of his shameful body is typical of the *ressentiment* of the academic whose violent language and theoretical rigour are proportionate to their physical (and moral) cowardice. Radical politics has always had more than its fair supply of people whose blood-curdling 'radicality' (in words) goes hand in hand with the most abject conformity and craven submissiveness (in personal behaviour). Current academic fashion for "discourse on the body" is noticeable for this inability to deal with the most obviously bodily things: sensuality and pain. Land's heart cries against the strangulated anti-humanism of his own rhetoric, but

he can't even hear his own meaning. And all the impatience, the hatred and bitterness condensed in the word "human" goes beyond anything explicable in terms of mere critique of the accumulated ideological heritage of "humanism". The more he ferociously closes off the possibility of return from this avant-gardist supranormality, the higher the penalty his mundanely human body must pay.



And Land is not so postpolitical: good old "market dynamics" are a big part of the wonderful fluidifying turbularity, and he swallows current management baloney about "competition-compelled institutional flattening and fluidification". There's no sucker like a trendy sucker.

Nor, when it comes down to it, is the Land/Plant message quite so different as it would claim from American soggy hippy cyberpie-in-the-sky techno-utopianism. The mysticism (ever the B-side of scientism) is unashamedly evangelical: in these end times only the new edge elect will undergo the rapture. They really think they are picking up signals from the future. That's all right then, fellow-believers. Amazing grace is at hand. The old slanders against religion were never quite fair: no actually-existing religion ever so literally deferred salvation to an after-life or so blatantly refused to address the here and now so much as this breathtakingly smug digital death-wish doctrine. Those who babble about cyber revelation in a language *designed explicitly to abstract away everyday life* obviously find the taste of the corpse in their own mouths preferable to the thought of the suffering bodies whose absence from their discourse indicates their irrelevance in their grand scheme of things.

The "subversive" pretensions of this pseudo-anarchist technofascism lie only in the by-now-hackneyed rhetorical glamourization of supposedly negatively-loaded words like "viruses", "jungle", "chaos", "schizophrenia" etc. It's pathetic that they think they are being dangerous to celebrate gibberish as revolt. You have to be deeply academic to get turned on by deviant syntax. But the semantics are utterly conventional, and even the ontology is binary. 'Positive' is a "good" term (just as it is in management psychobabble), along with "integration", "convergence", "warm", "liquid" etc.

The "bad" terms are the usual suspects. Chief among them the "stable security structures" (turn in your grave, Reich) which stupidly conflates the State and the Self at such a safe level of abstraction that to fight against oppression is identical to the state defending itself. Resistance is itself a "paranoid" category, obviously.

Yet they can't hide the glaring contradiction between the chaos theory they invoke and their mechanical, modernist use of it: the 'anarchist' message they are claiming to read into all this comes down to nothing less than the old depressingly crass equation of

'chaos' with 'disorder', (willfully overlooking the very theory of chaos). Even after those nasty "stable security structures" have dissolved, there will still be zones of Order. The 'control' they declare to be impossible can still, and most likely will, be intolerably oppressive. With chaoticians like this one hardly needs cybernetics.

The difference between Sadie Plant and Nick Land is that the former confuses philosophy with technology, treating ideas as if they were the same as the things they are about, while the latter confuses writing with biology, imagining that his own literary assemblages are evidence of something new and wonderful happening in nature. She may be trying to convince herself that cybertechnology will bring a new life. He doesn't seem to consider that all his verbiage might just decode into a recognition that it will bring about his own disappearance. For their own sakes they'd better both be wrong.

### Posthumanism - the new consensus

Donna Haraway's now-classic provocation "I'd rather be a cyborg than a goddess" posed the typical false alternatives on which all this trendoid pseudo-radicalism depends. For a start, the cyborg option is just as phoney as the goddess one and is, from the point of view of desire, indistinguishable from it. And secondly, the suppressed choice really being refused is that despicable third option of being *human*, the objections to which are the most interesting to disentangle. All the ideological blather accumulated over two centuries by the word human has been fixed fast by the hardening spray of academicism, so that 'human' is the one thing *all* intellectuals are united in despising, even though most of them have forgotten which particular reason led them to the refusal in the first place.

"Human" is, surprisingly, one of the few demonstrably nonproblematic intellectual categories. It takes an extremely academicized mind to be able to train oneself to *not* understand what everyone else cannot fail to know, and what academics themselves, with breathtaking hypocrisy, know full well in their everyday practice. But "academic" practices, by definition, exclude the very possibilities of correction by "common sense" ... so, for example, one can blithely get away increasingly with shit like this, since you don't have to prove it on equal terms. And handpicked cronies can surround you in the bar to echo back your self-inflated ego. Step outside into the night for just a moment, and it all collapses.

The negative connotations associated with the vocabulary of "humanism" derive ultimately from the *structuralist* ideology which captured academic theory in the seventies and was *retained* intact in the post-structuralist turn of the eighties. These connotations have now passed, by a familiar idiotic recursivity, onto the word "human" itself which (again contrary to the precepts of the ideology itself) has nevertheless been accepted as "referring" to "real" humans. The upshot is that human beings are now understood by those who think of themselves as the most radical, subversive thinkers around, in all seriousness, to be defunct.

One begins to understand *why* these cybertheorists refuse, on point of principle, to engage in debate and discussion: these inept fallacies might get spotted. No problem: the disappearance of education and knowledge in the postmodern corporate university will protect them from exposure: if the publications continue to fill the CV nobody will ask to read them.

So, the human body is just too boring for words. So desperate is this vanguard for something *new* that it is forced to recycle the shopworn clichés of modernism:

Deitch, in a typical, if only moderate, instance of this, says:

*Our transition to the post-human world of cyberspace...is occurring gradually. Many of the new attitudes towards the body and the new modes of social behaviour...demonstrate a decided trend towards a radically new model of the self and of social behaviour...that is likely to make society...ready...for the truly radical technologies that are soon to come.*

(*'Post Human'* in Fetherstone & Burrows (eds) *Cyberpunk/Cyberspace/Cyberbodies*. 1995)

Rucker, more pompously, says:

*Genetic engineering and nanotechnology...offer us the possibility of literally being able to change our bodies into new and different forms...a form of postbiological humanity can be achieved within the next fifty years.*

(*Mondo 2000: User's Guide to the New Edge*, 1993)

This statement, whilst more 'extreme' than the preceding (and more reified -in positing changes in 'real' bodies, rather than changing ideas about the body), is typically American in its touchingly naive and unreflective faith that change is always 'progress' (i.e. always more of the same old triumphal frontierism, in other words no change at all) and in its imprisonment within the very 'humanist' conception that technology is simply about enhancing, extending and empowering the human subject. So he refers to 'post-biological humanity' while others talk of a 'post-human' world. Unlike the great utopian Fourier who declared that people in the future could grow tails (the notorious *archibras* for which he was ridiculed by his literal-minded critics), today's bio-futurists only demonstrate the atrophy of their own organs of imagination - they want different bodies but assume the same kind of society.

### Brave New Flesh

The human body is evidently unbearable, especially to intellectuals and artists, whose social ambitions, now that "society" has been deemed out of bounds, are directed to restructuring it. How physiology might be re-engineered has exercised utopians for centuries. Biotechnology may soon be able to give our descendants wings, horns and tentacles, or as yet unimaginable organs and capabilities, but there are no such proposals forthcoming from cybertheory, which, true to its radical pedigree, can only envisage *abstraction, reduction, simplification*, and clearly think the body has too many organs already. They may talk about new possibilities but all they can come up with is even further impoverishment.

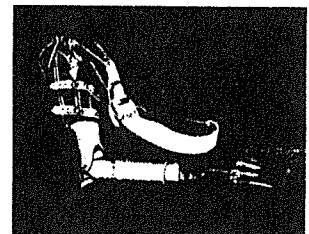
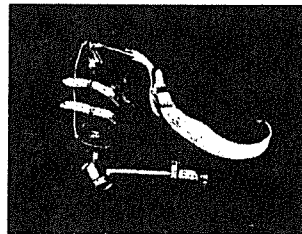
The much-sought-after complete abolition of the body as we know it is going to be much harder to achieve than many cultural theorists have acknowledged. Technology has hardly yet begun to tackle it. Fusion of biochemical and electronic processes with no other aim than to explore what it is possible to do with enough financial investment and scientific ambition will not be inhibited by embarrassment over past follies or ethical prejudices about whose interests are served by progress.

Current prospects go far beyond the crudities of yesterday's science fiction. Earlier collectivist visions of surgically-interconnected organisms -socialised respiratory, circulatory and nervous systems, centralising the limbs and other organs, belong to the Fordist epoch. Soviet scientists working along these lines, were, however, the first to graft an extra head on a dog. It is issues like this surgical joining of bodies that really separates the social forces today: the nay-saying sheep all cry halt, while the progressivist goats, seeing further, can only scorn their timidity. And yet it's the same old story. Modernism yearning to go beyond modernity forever.

No doubt present-day cyborgs will in their turn be ridiculed in the future, but who really cares about the future? Certainly not futurism.

*The wireless body? That is the floating body, drifting around in the debris of technotopia: encrypted flesh in a sea of data. The perfect evolutionary successor to twentieth century flesh, the wireless body fuses the speed of virtualized exchange into its cellular structure. DNA-coated data is inserted directly through spinal taps into dedicated flesh for better navigation through the treacherous shoals of the electronic galaxy.*

(Arthur Kroker/Michael Weinstein *'The Hyper-texted Body, or Nietzsche Gets a Modem'*, in: **Data Trash**, St. Martin's Press, 1994)



Favorable news from the Fourth Reich: "The rota-arm (from Engineer Meyer of the Rotaworks in Aachen) is somewhat lighter and more agreeable than the Jagendberg arm. In its flexibility, it far exceeds that of the human arm." Here, the workaday arm with the adjustable working claw is juxtaposed with the Sunday arm with its attractive imitation hand.

Creating the body without organs requires abolishing that most recalcitrant organ: the mind. If, as critics of Artificial Intelligence insist, minds need bodies, then the reverse is true too.

*Human brains are to thinking what medieval villages were to engineering: antechambers to experimentation, cramped and parochial places to be.*

(Land, *'Circuitries'* op. cit.)

Flickering in the background of this post-human cybernetic millennialism we can hear the echoes of a familiar optimism of "forces of production" evolving themselves behind our backs, like the old providence working in mysterious ways. What this tired old technolatriy forgets, however, is that exterminism requires *effort*. If you want to annihilate yourself you have to *work* at it, and there, I'm afraid, is where I must part company with cybertheory. The zeal of the "expert", the "manager" is only too clearly discernable behind the vanguardist, countercultural gloss, and yet another silicon cage beckons ... if I wanted to top myself I would never be short of pre-electronic means already, so if you really want this way to go, what's to stop you switching your own fucking machinery off?

# How to write cyberbabble. Impress your readers! Sound trendy. Cut that edge.

The rules are simple -  
just follow these instructions and you too can be a

## **Cybertheorist!**

Select any word from list A or B in combination with any word from one or more of the other lists and give that extra *post-futurist* gloss to your language.

### **A**

#### **Techno or Computer**

*digitally remastered*  
*cyber-gigabyte*  
*high velocity*

### **B**

#### **Medical or Biological**

*surgical*  
*viral*  
*mucilaginous*  
*mutation*  
*immune system*

### **C**

#### **Theological or metaphysical**

*truth*  
*soul*  
*sublime*  
*transubstantiation*

### **D**

#### **Pop Culture**

*Elvis*  
*soap operas*  
*comix*

### **E**

#### **Political**

*activism*  
*war*  
*feminism*  
*disinformation*  
*security systems*

### **Examples**

*digitally remastered feminism • imploding activism • metastatic truth*  
*mucilaginous soap operas • high velocity disinformation*  
*transubstantiation of technologies • surgical security systems*  
*imploding cannibalism*

**This easy to use system can generate titles for all your  
future conference papers and publications!**

# CONTRACT FOR HEALTH

(Specimen only)

World Health Organisation Recommended Agreement between Health Provisioning Authority and Citizen (hereafter Client)

N° \_\_\_\_\_

Between Her Majesty's Government and

\_\_\_\_\_ (Enter Client's name)

**The Following Contract will be binding.**

1.a) \_\_\_\_\_ (Client's Name) residing at \_\_\_\_\_ acknowledges that Her Majesty's Government is under an obligation to defray the costs of the health maintenance of all clients under its care. Furthermore the Client accepts that, as a member of Society individual rights are secondary to the rights of Society to the use of a fully productive, participating and responsible human resource.

In recognition thereof \_\_\_\_\_ (Client's Name) accepts the obligation to do all within his or her powers, notwithstanding means, circumstances or disposition, to maintain a fit and healthy mind and body for such time as this contract is binding.

b) Furthermore \_\_\_\_\_ (Client's Name) accepts that inadequate self-maintenance forfeits said client's rights to all health services provided by the provisioning authority, including Accident and Emergency, acute care, long term and terminal care. In accordance with The Children's Act (1991) the provisioning authority agrees to the maintenance [subject to the provisos outlined in note 1 (See below)] of all and every offspring of the Client to a sum of £20,000, providing that such treatment does not extend beyond 90 days.

c) The Health Provisioning Authority undertakes to provide all care in a community setting, including short-term hospital care, at its own expense, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or disability (see note 2 below), providing such care is assessed, evaluated and priced by a recognised Group of Health Accountants (hereafter The Group).

d) \_\_\_\_\_ (Client's name) agrees to the following conditions:

That he or she, shall, to the satisfaction of a Case Conference of appropriately ratified experts (hereafter The Panel), refrain from all acts and behaviours which could jeopardise the well-being of the Client, either physically or mentally, for as long as the Contract shall be binding.

That in the event of such acts and behaviours committed by the client being ascertained by the provisioning authority, the costs to the Provisioning Authority shall on calculation by The Group, be paid by said Client in instalments of no less than 10 percent of said client's income per month until such a time as the debt is discharged or for the duration of the client's life.

That he or she shall agree to provide a yearly Certificate of Health authorised by a recognised Inspector of Health under the Regulations of the Health Maintenance Act (1997) to the nearest Office of Social Care. Failure to submit a Certificate within 30 days of the expiry date of the last certificate shall be regarded as a breach of contract, unless the following conditions apply:

*That the Client has a recognised health deficit under the terms of this Contract\**

*That the Client is undergoing treatment in an approved environment in order to fulfill the terms of this contract.*

e) The Health Provisioning Authority undertakes to provide all care (providing it fulfils such conditions as may be laid down by The Panel) from the incubator to the organ harvest for as long as the above conditions of the Health Maintenance Scheme are adhered to.

2 If, in the event of physical or mental illness on the part of the contracting party or for some other reason, his or her continued participation in the Health Maintenance Scheme becomes impossible and care in some other place appears desirable, Her Majesty's government reserves the right to take the appropriate action. Similar powers may be exercised in cases of serious breaches of Health Maintenance guidelines.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Client)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (for the Provisioning Authority)

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Notes.

1. In the light of expanding scientific knowledge regarding the genetic origin of specific health deficits the Purchasing Authority reserves the right to exclude from its care programme those newborn exhibiting a congenital disposition to at-risk behaviours.

2. Disability shall be defined as a permanent health deficit of unknown origin, or of origin which cannot be attributed to any party, either living or dead, from whom financial redress may be sought. Disabilities excluded from the provisions of this contract comprise of all those incurred due to at-risk behaviour (whether or not this was subject to another contract, such as an employment contract) including sports injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, drug misuse etc. for which separate insurance is recommended.

\* A Health Deficit under the terms of this contract shall be recognised as any disorder, disease or injury for which the Client has no responsibility, either directly or indirectly, as ascertained by the Panel.

# FEUDS CORNER

## WHO NEEDS ENEMIES?

*As accusations of treachery and worse fly about the anarchist movement, Frank Dexter offers a guide to the players.*

This feature will annoy quite a few people, including some of our good friends. But in line with our time-honoured policy of deciphering clues to the future of modern society from its garbage, *Here and Now* offers this handy guide to some of the latest dirty wars in the radical milieu. The battles are undoubtedly about real issues, but reality goes in the bin as soon as the dirt starts flying and the main business is to rubbish your opponents.

The characters listed here are all, in their own ways, specialists in "investigation", and investigation implies hostility (finding out what someone doesn't want to be known). Some of those involved in information-wars try to suppress or censor others or even produce disinformation and false documents either to slander or parody their opponents. When these games get too serious they become silly, and vice versa. Sometimes the winning strategy is not to play. In at least one case this move is long overdue.

### Larry's Game

The old adage that just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they are *not* trying to get you, needs reversing in the case of Larry O'Hara: just because he *has* been the victim of atrocious persecution (by Searchlight) doesn't mean that he *isn't* by now certifiably paranoid. A charitable view (and *Here and Now* will always look for the best in people) is that immersion in the world of spooking and dirty tricks has warped his mind. The phrase "mad as a hatter" supposedly derives from the days when top hats were manufactured using mercury and daily exposure to this toxic chemical left the workers brain-damaged. There seems to be a similar hazard for those who routinely handle smears, detournements, dirty-tricks, black propaganda and other social intoxicants. Larry O'Hara's recent declared intention to "get" (and I'm quoting) the late Stewart Home has all the hallmarks of the victim-turned-persecutor syndrome.

Stewart Home certainly doesn't need defending from mad hatters now. He gave as good as he got. In his time he gave amusement to many, but his total contempt for concepts of truth, justice and beauty (and his infantile grasp of the nature of capitalist society) made his attempts to claim that he was the victim of false, unfair accusations and that the violence in his porn novels are just "artworks" not to be taken seriously can seem like poetic justice to those malicious observers who still believe in both poetry and justice. He began as a wind-up artist and ended up calling for rationality. The spectacle of the indignant prankster is, frankly, undignified and Home's lengthy lectures on the nature of humour are beyond a joke.

Anyone wanting to smear *Here and Now*, by the way, should note that we are already on record as having publicly offered our services to MI5. We have still not received a reply (so much for citizen's charters and "open government"). Maybe our price was

too high. As for fascists, we've received letters (see letters page) but anyone wanting to manufacture evidence of an "association" will find that our definition of fascists would include many anti-fascists too. Not having a "platform" to stand on we can't be accused of giving one to anybody else.

When we last reported on the first stage of these micropolitical pathologies in *Here & Now* it looked very much like a London phenomenon centred on the moral fanaticism of a Left at one another's throats in the fierce search for a common enemy. Viewed from what the inhabitants of London call (using their quaint Roman-Imperial terminology) "the provinces", the hot-house climate of that city can seem to implode the mind. The name "London" derives from an ancient word "Loon-dom" suggesting that madness has been endemic there for millenia. Here in Leeds, somewhat cruder customs prevail but no less intense. This has been the site for a particularly nasty episode in the fascist/anti-fascist game into which both Gable and O'Hara have been active. Contact addresses are given here for those interested in getting behind the lies and rumours to yet more lies and rumours.

As Groucho said, when told that the garbage-men were at the door, "Tell them we don't want any."

#### Credibility ratings

- Y** usually reliable
- Y/N** your guess is as good as mine
- N** don't believe a word of it

#### Style

- ☺ Worth a look
- ☹ could do better
- ⊗ Shouldn't bother

#### Humour

- ☺ OK
- ☹ Deadpan
- ⊗ Deadly

### Guide to the Players

#### CHIP BERLET

US investigator, runs Political Research Associates. Author of notorious 'Right Woos Left' warning Leftists against contamination by fascist conspiracy theories. **Y☺☹**

#### DAVID BLACK

Little-known investigative writer. May well be an O'Hara pseudonym since he supports his line. **Y/N☹⊗**

#### DANIEL BRANDT

US conspiracy researcher, runs NameBase Newslite. In opposition to Berlet (qv) is prepared to use information from Right Wing sources if it is correct. Opposes academic fetish for political correctness and sees this being promoted by global ruling class. **Y☺☹**

## DUNCAN CAMPBELL

Investigative journalist and petulant litigator (his lawsuit helped ruin gay *Pink Paper*). Ex-chair of *New Statesman*. Recently involved in long and bitter feud with Martin Walker (whom he sees as spokesman of New Age cultists) over alternative health care, a feud in which he's used covert methods. Long summary of this saga in *Open Eye* No. 3. Y/N⊗Ⓢ

## STEPHEN DORRIL

Not the Tory minister but may be one day. Former associate of conspiracy buff Ramsay before the acrimonious split (see *Here & Now* No.15). Runs his own pseudo-*Lobster*. Y/N⊗Ⓢ

## GERRY GABLE

Runs *Searchlight*, aims to control all 'anti-fascist' research. Co-operates closely with the secret police. Uses long-term infiltrators in fascist groups, some of whom (Hill, Hepple etc) perpetrate racist atrocities. Practices the whole repertoire of dirty tricks: lies, forgery, violence etc because, in the holy war against nazis, the end justifies the means. N⊗Ⓢ

## PATRICK HARRINGTON

Third Position post-(oh yeah?)-fascist. Made his name by single-handedly paralysing a London poly. Now runs Third Way and has been reduced to writing letters to *Here and Now*. N⊗Ⓢ

## STEWART HOME

Ex/post/anti-situationist anti-art artist and "Cultural agent provocateur" (*Idler* No. 10) Neoist Alliance, in alliance with LPA (see Tompsett) Most recent target: *Green Anarchist* (Home-produced *Green & Brown Anarchist* meant to expose GA primitivism as similar to Nazi ideas). Now himself victim of O'Hara slanders for alleged fascist connections. Y⊗Ⓢ

## RICHARD HUNT

Dodgy founder of *Green Anarchist*, kicked out for fascist tendencies now runs *Alternative Green* ("Green Anarchism for the Politically Incorrect") which advertises in *Perspectives*. N⊗Ⓢ

## MATTHEW KALMAN

Runs *Open Eye* magazine: attacked the 'New Age Nazism' of Rainbow Ark in *New Statesman*. Y⊗Ⓢ

## RICHARD LAWSON

One of the Transeuropa Collective running far-Right *Perspectives* magazine. According to O'Hara, he is an ex-National Party fascist. Others involved in *Perspectives* include: Mark Wegierski, Richard Norris (ex-Militant). Has been involved in debates with Socialist Party of GB. See reviews section of this issue of *Here & Now*. N⊗Ⓢ

## LARRY O'HARA

Independent researcher on fascism and amateur one-man investigator/spook-dirty-trickster. Victim of slander & persecution by *Searchlight* (see Gable) who have insinuated he is political ally of Harrington. Currently involved in a no-holds barred scrap with Home. N⊗Ⓢ

## MICHEL PRIGENT

Veteran situationist, apostle of Debord. Virulent enemy of Home. Specialises in scrappily produced leaflets. N⊗Ⓢ

## ROBIN RAMSAY

Runs and writes for *Lobster*, Britain's premier (only) journal of parapolitics (conspiracy analysis). The only place where O'Hara's detailed historical research on British fascists appears. Y⊗Ⓢ

## PAUL ROGERS

*Green Anarchist*. Opposes founder Hunt. Attacked in press for 'eco-terrorism' and accused of quasi-nazi ideas by Home & Tompsett. Y/N⊗Ⓢ

## FABIAN TOMPSETT

*Red Menace*, writes obscurantist pseudo-occultist historical articles on the royal-masonic conspiracy for his outfit, the *London Psychogeographical Association*. Also *Despite TV* co-operative, aka Luther Blisset aka Jacopo Belbo. Y/N⊗Ⓢ

## MARTIN WALKER

Leftist writer and investigator. Author of books on police violence. Wrote *Dirty Medicine* exposing the 'Campaign Against Health Fraud' as a front for pharmaceutical companies. Involved in feud with Campbell, who has tried to have his book suppressed. For an account see *Open Eye* No.3 article by Kalinan. Y⊗Ⓢ

## TONY WHITE

Leeds market-trader, accused by Leeds fascists (sorry 'Nationalists') of being an MI5 infiltrator/agent provocateur. This charge supported by O'Hara. N⊗Ⓢ

To join this league, you must publish a letter or pamphlet purporting to come from one of the above, attacking one or more of the others. The winner will be whoever succeeds in producing a situation in which there are no more than TWO teams left, by taking sides with ONE member from each of the following pairs:

CAMPBELL v WALKER

GABLE v O'HARA

HOME v PRIGENT

DORRIL v RAMSAY

## Rules

There are no rules in this game.

## Addresses

Anyone interested in all this should *not* write to us. Make up your own minds who the goodies and baddies are and who, if anyone, is telling the truth about what. Readers wanting updated bulk supplies of garbage can get it from the following:

**Alternative Green**, 20 Upper Barr, Cowley Centre, Oxford, OX4 3UX.

**Green Anarchist**, Box ZZ, 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RQ.

**Larry O'Hara**, BM 4769, London, WC1N 3XX.

**London Psychogeographical Association**, Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street, London, E8 2NS.

**Leeds 'Patriot'**, PO Box BR10, Bramley, Leeds 13.

**Michel Prigent**, BM Chronos, London, WC1N 3XX.

**Stewart Home/Neoist Alliance**, BM Senior, London, WC1N 3XX.

**Open Eye**, BM Open Eye, London, WC1N 3XX.

**Namebase Newslines**, POB 680635, San Antonio, Texas 78268, USA.

**Political Research Associates**, 678 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 205, Cambridge, Mass 02139, USA.

**Perspectives**, BM 6682, London, WC1N 3XX.



SI — PRANK CARDS

SET UP A PHONEY ORGANISATION TO TAKE THE PISS OUT OF YOUR OPPONENTS

PRODUCE SPOOF LEAFLET ATTACKING YOURSELF

INVENT A BOARD GAME TO TAKE THE PISS OUT OF PARAPOLITICS  
- SUBMIT IT AS AN ENTRY FOR THE TURNER PRIZE

STEAL YOUR OPPONENT'S ADDRESS BOOK & SEND IT TO FASCISTS

FORGE A LETTER FROM YOUR OPPONENT SUBSCRIBING TO CHILD PORN MAGS

TRASH YOUR OWN OFFICE & DAUB FASCIST SLOGANS ON THE WALL TO SHOW WHAT A GOOD ANTI-FASCIST YOU ARE

**START HERE & END HERE**

GO TO HELL  
GO DIRECTLY TO HELL  
- DO NOT COLLECT YOUR PO BOX MAIL



1

JOIN A NEWAGE CULT RUN BY DAVID ICKE - THROW A SIX SIX SIX -  
- TO START AGAIN - (ONLY IF THE PLANETS ARE FAVOURABLE)


3

4

**RED CORNER**

**A**

IF YOU LAND HERE TAKE A PRANK CARD




17

FASCISTS ACCUSE YOU OF BEING AN MI5 AGENT.  
- GO INTO HIDING & MISS 2 TURNS

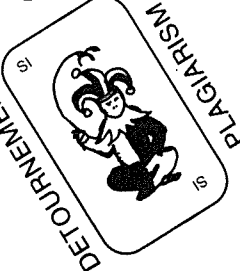
16

MISS A TURN WHILE YOU GO THROUGH YOUR OPPONENTS GARBAGE CAN




**PRANK CARDS**

**DETOURNMENT**

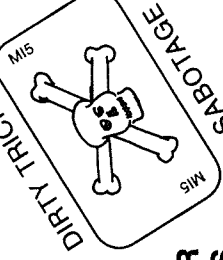


**PLAGIARISM**



**SMEAR CARDS**

**DIRTY TRICKS**



**SABOTAGE**

6

YOU ARE Outed AS A CLOSET QUEEN BY PETER TATCHELL  
- MISS A TURN



7

YOU START TO BELIEVE YOUR OWN FABRICATIONS  
- MISS 2 TURNS FOR THERAPY

8

**CORNER BROWN**

IF YOU LAND HERE TAKE A SMEAR CARD

13

OPONENTS ACCUSE YOU OF BEING A FASCIST  
- GO TO BROWN CORNER & THROW A SIX TO START AGAIN


12

YOU ARE ASKED 10 TO WRITE A FEATURE FOR THE INDEPENDENT  
- MISS A TURN TO REGAIN YOUR CREDIBILITY

11

**CORNER GREEN**

IF YOU LAND HERE YOU MUST GO ROUND THE BOARD IN REVERSE



**ALF**



# PARAPOLY

- THE GAME OF TRIVIAL PERSECUTIONS & WILD GOOSE CHASES

# What a tangled web we weave, when we venture to deceive

*An anonymous contributor disputes the value of conspiracy theories currently fashionable amongst certain radicals.*

One of the most frustrating things about conspiracy theories is that they could, possibly be correct. They set into motion certain thinking processes which can be appealing; especially to boys who grew up watching spy films. James Bond, reading detective novels etcetera.

For people involved in political groups, the idea that one or more conspiracies might be at play creates a climate of self importance. If you believe that the state or other forces are using espionage tactics against you, then the 'logic' follows that the state must take you seriously as a threat - lucky you - you're important.

For some folks this is a nice ego boost and they reinforce the whole thing by behaving like spies or private investigators themselves.

It is against this background that the saga involving Larry O'Hara, MI5, Searchlight, fascists, anti-fascists etc. is played. Is this whole scenario evidence of a UK COINTELPRO\* operation or is it just boy's rumour mongering getting out of hand? It does seem likely that both scenarios amount to pretty much the same thing anyway.

What is worrying is not so much the secret state but the creation of allegations without any apparent basis in fact. Such rumours (e.g. so and so is actually agent x for MI5) are flying around Leeds like crazy at the moment. But for those actually involved in Leeds, none of them make any sense at all.

In particular Larry O'Hara is alleging in the pages of Green Anarchist that there is an MI5 agent in Leeds AFA and Leeds Class War.

This is because:

(1) an article written by this person in Class War's internal bulletin criticised Larry's politics.

(2) the fascist publication *White Lies* alleges that the state asset took charge (sic) of Leeds Class War and within months it "was finished" (sic). Many things can be said about Leeds Class War, that they don't exist is not one though.

(3) the same publication says "he was working alongside the very police and establishment figures he once threatened" and

(4) that another fascist publication (with apparently the same author) reckons that "the local AFA leadership were working hand in glove with White (another alleged MI5 agent and known local fascist) and the local Special Branch at least up to and including setting up attacks on 'innocent' parties."

So the only evidence for the allegation of this person being an MI5 agent is that this person has written critical articles about O'Hara and because a fascist says so. Other fascists say that the author of *White Lies* is an MI5 agent!!

These are the only facts O'Hara presents to support his case. They are very inadequate given the seriousness of his allegation.

To someone who knows the person O'Hara is referring to, his allegations don't fit in with my personal experience. In other O'Hara documents he refers to things I have had direct involvement in and his conclusions just don't fit in with what actually happened.

Larry goes on to say that he would, "respectfully suggest that they (Class War) put their own house in order as soon as possible, by any means necessary." To me, this is a recommendation that this person get their head kicked in. Pretty serious stuff - so serious that Larry is going out of his way to get involved and participate in the battering of this state agent himself? Unlikely. One of O'Hara's fans did try to kick this person in though... and failed.

So much of this conspiracy theory stuff is tenuous jumping to conclusions. It is, to say the least, very unclear - what is clear is that for those involved, it doesn't fit in with what actually goes on.

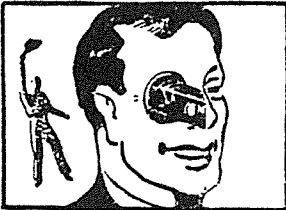
## Always tell the truth - it's the easiest thing to remember

Spies and secret states may amuse little boys, but the truth is that the state is not a secret. It exists openly. Its economy functions by blatantly forcing people to work or starve. Its police force beat up and imprison people candidly and, in full view of everyone, its culture and institutions reproduce class society everyday.

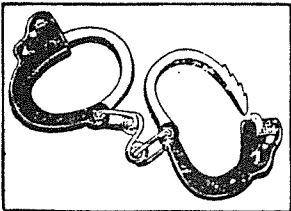
\* COINTELPRO was a FBI operation carried out against, in particular the Black Panther Party, in the early 1970's using undercover agents and informers to spread rumours and false information, thus sabotaging the movement. It must be remembered though that alongside this tactic, the FBI also used imprisonment and murder.

**DETECTION AND DISGUISE**

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This wonderful little instrument fits into the eye and enables you to see directly at the back of you. A wonderful help if you are shadowing or being shadowed.  
3 Quaker figures or 2 Quaker figures and 4d. in stamps.



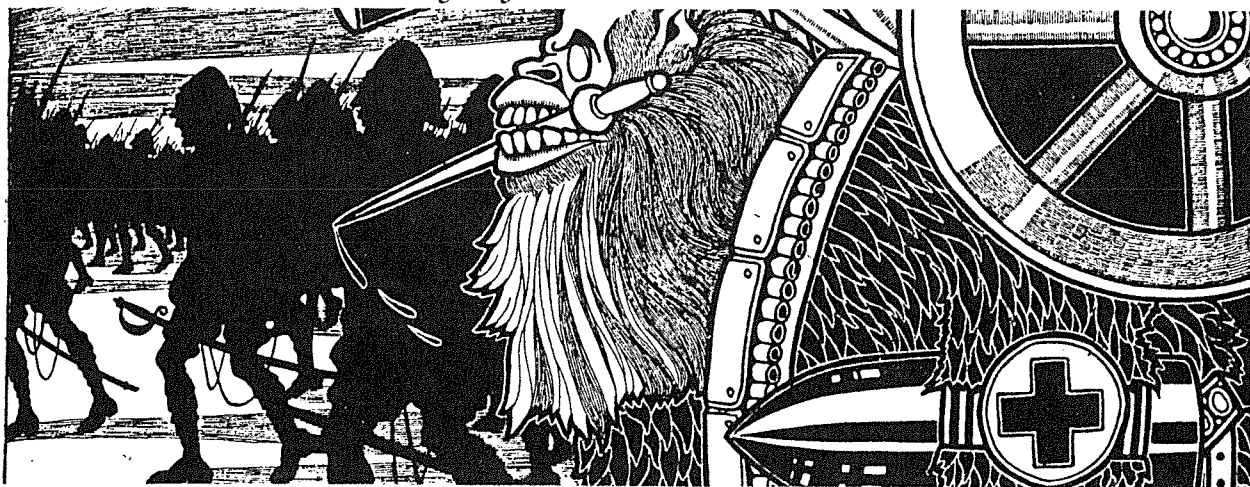
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# The Post Modern Feud

## A Personal Account

*Martin Walker describes what its like to be on the wrong end of a journalist's vendetta*



My name is Martin J Walker and I have been a party to a post-modern feud.

I was attacked by Duncan Campbell, first during my investigation into the Campaign Against Health Fraud and later on the publication of my book *Dirty Medicine*.<sup>1</sup> Only those who have been engulfed by a personal feud can understand the soul pitting oppression of suddenly finding yourself branded and accused. Instead of the finger of the lottery, sparking with the magical energy of instant riches, the skies open to reveal an enormous arse which releases a flood of excrement upon you. All you have believed about yourself is traduced. While you try to cling to your history and identity in the storm, you are accused of being in essence the opposite of everything which you know you are. If you were an anti-fascist you are a fascist; and honest person a thief; a kind person a cruel charlatan.

Whether or not the assault has real objective effect, is of no consequence, you will believe that it does have. In a letter to a highly respected firm of civil rights lawyers, with whom I had been connected, Campbell accused me of stealing documents from the offices of the *New Statesman and Society*; spreading rumours about people's sex lives and drinking habits and sorting through dustbins to obtain dirt on people. Later the accusations were to get more serious, from the beginning however, I never felt able to laugh at his histrionics. I had, after all no control over how Campbells' insinuations were perceived by those who read his material.

While the waves of stinging water crashed around me I kept repeating, mantra like, to myself, 'Duncan Campbell and I have travelled similar paths on the left, Duncan Campbell is a socialist'. Not only that, but we had collided with similar political pillars. It took me some time to understand that the feud in which I had become involved had nothing at all to do with politics as I

understood them. If it had, no doubt I would have been able to run my eyes over a comparative list of symbolic ideological locations; belief in a united Ireland, trade unionism, the National Health Service, gender and sexual orientation issues, the miners strike, anti-racism and anti-statism. I could have diagnosed where the conflict had arisen.

In the past perhaps such a check list would have given me a rough guide as to the ideology that Campbell and I had in common. Admittedly there were always submerged contradictions; a member of SWP accused of violence against his partner, a homophobe accused of hiding a gay relationship. On the whole however, the different and personal was usually obscured by the ideological. To get to the personal you had to wade through the stagnant and brackish waters of cliché. Now, everything has changed, individual identity is becoming the very essence of politics, and not longer a by-product of it.

With the end of ideology came the beginning of a politics based upon identity. A politics of ego-vested interest originally based upon nationhood, ethnicity, culture and social grouping but which has now focused down, in those societies which can afford the luxury, into the anarchy of identity politics. Instead of belonging to a party or a class, it is now more fashionable to fall in line behind an individual whose world view and whose presentation can be mimicked.

Post-industrialism and the politics beyond ideology have shredded the comforting lists of common ideological assumptions and then woven them together like mats made by the disabled at a lunch club. The political terrain now comes to resemble the badlands of urban america where the traveller is likely to be mugged in his or her own back yard, subject to random ideological assault or become the victim of abstract psychopathic

political violence. The old politics of class and ideology, of common cause and group solidarity, did not equip the older political journeyman for this fairground ride on the post-modern roundabouts.

A set of cigarette cards, which I have left over from childhood, consisted of fronts, middles and backs of various animals. Nonsensical animals could be created by joining incorrect cards together. The political animal or the post modern period is this kind of monster, a vegetarian fascist, a green racist, a pro-nuclear trade unionist, a feminist supporter of multi-national banking. Such is the grab-bag which makes up the politics of personal identity, all the previous appellations, labels and description now appear to be without meaning.

Accompanying the politics of the personality, is the feud. The cover of the class or the broader ideological perspective allowed the individual to seek refuge behind the objectivity of the mass. Once that mass broke down we were all thrown back upon our subjectivity and debates quickly turned into feuds.

I spent unproductive weeks which drifted into months, trying to re-arrange my check list and re-orientate myself within the strategy of feuding used by Campbell. I eventually found what I thought was the point of fission which had led to his assault, and the feud which had settled uncomfortably, cuckoo-like in my life,



pushing everything else from the nest. Campbell believed in science, medicine and rationalism and as I did not believe in him, it was determined that I did not believe in science, medicine or rationalism.

There is a goblet of truth in this reductivist assumption, Campbell received a first in physics from Oxford and, developing into a high class computer nerd with a diabolical lack of self criticism, being middle-class and well connected, he quickly became famous and financially secure. I was expelled from Hornsey College of Art in 1968, I have avoided computer nerdhood, not become famous or financially secure but have drifted through later life, failing at locally based political endeavours while searching for some inner understanding.

I had however, never even considered this deep nascent conflict, between rationalism, science and technology and emotionalism, creativity and culture, which runs through the left and the rest of society, in political terms. Previously I would always have assessed a person on straightforward and cliched ideological grounds; whether they were an artist or a scientist was of less concern than whether we shared a vision of a more equal society. When I examined the cacophony of criticisms which Campbell had of me I realised that rather than being political, and despite often being dressed in the costumes of politics, these criticisms were entirely personal. It was irrelevant to Campbell whether those he attacked were socialists, capitalists or fascists, what was important was whether or not they agree with his most personal world view; his ideology of one. Was this because he was a scientist and a rationalist, was it that he had never really been a socialist?

Oddly enough, I found that at a pitch I could identify with many of his criticisms of me and those I defended in the book. I am not a rationalist, I do side with lay people against professionals. I have no faith in scientists as social saviours. I will side with the dispossessed rather than the State. I still hold views of small scale community activism even if it means a fall in levels of professionalism and standards of living. I would choose to spend my time with the outlaw rather than the law enforcer, perhaps most importantly I retain as if by some imprint of ancient memory a desire to touch people rather than machines. Understanding the aetiology of Campbell's criticisms did not of course make it any easier to bear when they were amplified in public and embellished with his *Carry On* style.

When I finally deconstructed Campbell's politics and came to terms with his post-modern personal assaults upon me, I came to understand that his politics had always been more demagogic and personal than popular. His political activism had often been based upon technological issues and rarely involve 'peoples' movements. In his writing about AIDS, he showed a profound belief and empathy with scientists, professional doctors and State aided organisations. Most disconcerting of all, despite being gay, he appeared hell-bent upon destroying *the stranger* and those who took pleasure in their differences.

Yet there was an even bigger difference between Campbell and I. This difference is crucial to an understanding of the post modern personal feud. In the early eighties, during the period of ideological splits and schisms even the most disreputable splinter of an argument could rally a following and issues could still be fought out by collective debate. The debate now is a debate of talking heads. Battles are measured in newspaper column inches and TV sound-bites, the politics of the 'mass' debate and the social dialectic have gone (forever?). How can protagonists raise a following if they have no collective ideology? How do feudsters create believers if there is no social dialectic? The politics of personal feuds inevitably depend upon propaganda; the issuing of illusory stories, the ideology of fiction. In the absence of ideology, tall stories create disciples and in the absence of a social dialectic, a slap across the face with a gauntlet creates a furore.

In the *Observer* 'Censorship'<sup>2</sup> supplement article, Campbell attacked me and those I defended in *Dirty Medicine*, by suggesting that irrational (to him) beliefs in healing - such as the use of nutritional therapy - led inexorably to Johnstown and Waco. Who would not rise to Campbell's side against nutritional therapy armed with such a shibboleth? In this Campbell showed himself to be an exemplary propagandist. But if truth ends where

propaganda begins, dirty tricks and subterfuge are only round the corner in front of propaganda. Feuds of personality can, within moments, degenerate into cumbersome and baroque guerilla wars in which history, cause and integrity are lost forever.

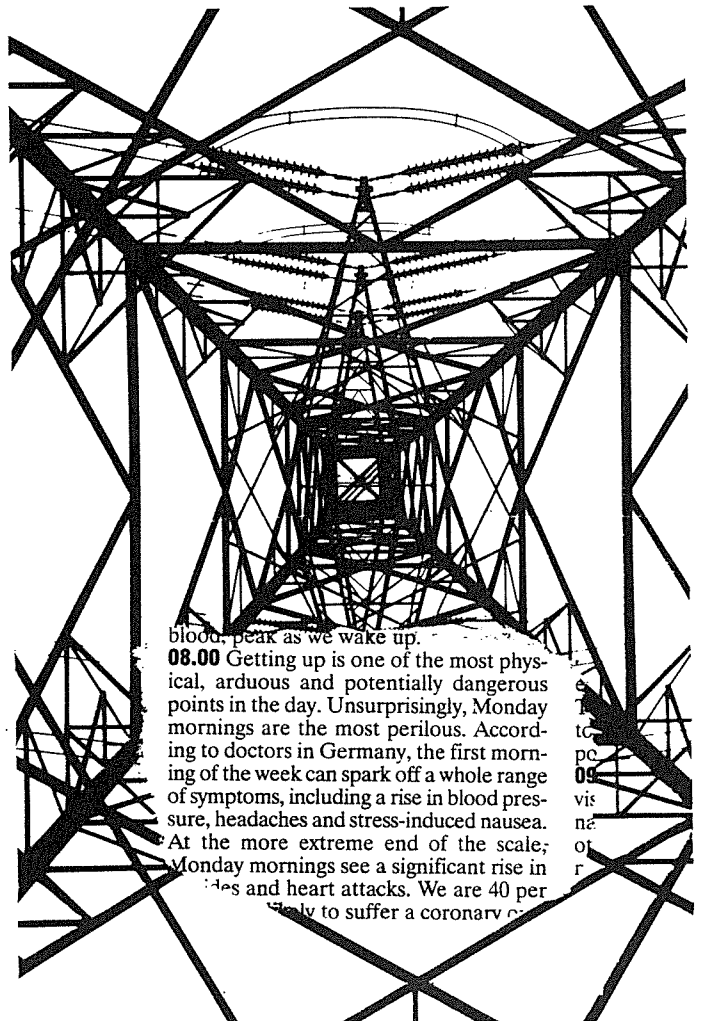
It is only by reference to a deeper sub-rosa schema of political belief, quite different from that superficial one which still dominates the political groupings of the left, that we can begin to make sense of the new ideological map. The feud represents the terrorist faction of the new anarchy of individualism. But although all the signposts have changed, the landscape is fundamentally the same, and the combatants, the have's and the have nots', eternal. Those who support the State or any of its professional buttresses support the oppression of those without power.

Finally, a word to those who have personal feuds thrust upon them. Don't engage, for that way madness lies. such feuds are unwinnable because they are battles in which individuals try to bend others to their will or, failing that, destroy them. Just like the random assault of the psychopath in the dark urban landscape, the outcome depends only upon superior strength and fire power, you will find yourself cranking up the propaganda machine, stoking the boiler of dirty tricks, all in the cause of a pyrrhic victory. You will be tossed by the sleeplessness of many nights imagining projects which will need casts of thousands and budgets well beyond your resources. You will become nauseous with gnawing at your own imagination, febrile with constant mental masturbation. Undoubtedly, if you are drawn into this state the other side will eventually win by default when the men in white coats, previously your friends and confidants come to take you to the asylum, or re-cycle you for community care.

If it sounds too Christian to simply walk away, then reassure yourself that battle is joined each time you set your heart on the consistent re-statement of your own beliefs and commit yourself again to your principles. If others want to obliterate their politics with vendettas, you might take some pleasure in the thought that in the long run, there is always the slight chance that at least one bullet may ricochet and kill its shooter.

#### Notes

1. Walker M. J. (1993) *Dirty Medicine*, London: Slingshot Publications, BM BOX 8314, London WC1 3XX. See also Kallman, M and Murray, J (1995) 'Duncan Campbell and Heretical Medicine'. *Open Eye* Issue 3. London: May 1995.
2. Campbell, D. (1995) Health and Safety. 'Uncensored supplement'. *Observer*, 17 April 1994.



blood. peak as we wake up.  
**08.00** Getting up is one of the most physical, arduous and potentially dangerous points in the day. Unsurprisingly, Monday mornings are the most perilous. According to doctors in Germany, the first morning of the week can spark off a whole range of symptoms, including a rise in blood pressure, headaches and stress-induced nausea. At the more extreme end of the scale; Monday mornings see a significant rise in strokes and heart attacks. We are 40 per cent more likely to suffer a coronary

# The Truth about the Vehm

*Phil Edwards is sleeping better.*

"Then you know in your brain,  
You know in your brain"

Mark Smith

## 1. The Vehm has returned

This is the most important fact: THE VEHM HAS RETURNED. Think about what that means - for your friends, your relations, yourself. Are you ready? Are you strong enough? Is your conscience clear?

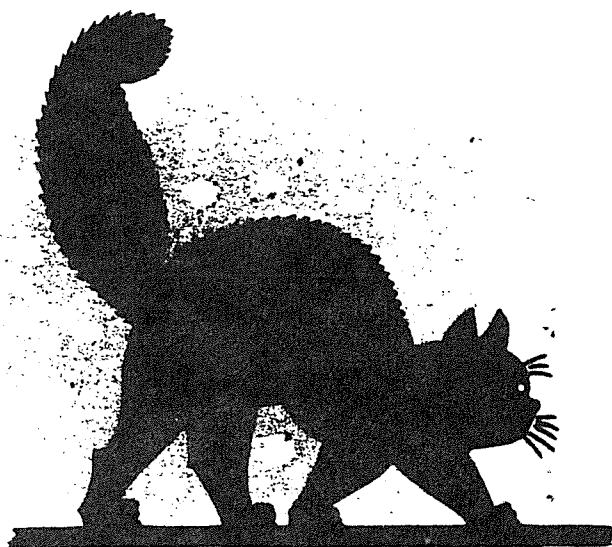
I know mine is.

## 2. Fourteenth Century sky

Seekers of the truth about the Vehm - and there will be many more of us in the weeks and years to come - could do worse than look at the work of Leo Just: specifically, Just's *Handbuch der deutsche Geschichte*, which contains three pages on the Vehm. Just's most valuable contribution is his rebuttal of a number of myths which were put about by a certain Goethe. According to this Goethe, the Vehm met at night and wearing hoods. These allegations were as false then as they are now: this isn't the Ku Klux Klan we're talking about. Nor did the Vehm use their intricately carved daggers on their victims. The daggers - carved with the mysterious letters "S S G G" - were used solely for identification purposes. (The Vehm's executions were by hanging, of course).

As we can see, facts about the Vehm's historical operations are thin on the ground. Moreover, what facts we do have are riddled with omissions, contradictions and, one must suspect, disinformation. One example must suffice. One supposedly reputable source has it that the Vehm lingered on into the nineteenth century, to be suppressed in 1816 by a certain Jerome Bonaparte. Yet the murder of Weimar Economics Minister Walter Rathenau in the early 1920s was widely referred to as "Fememorde" - Vehm murder. One of my sources here is being liberal with the falsehood, and I tend to suspect the former - "Jerome Bonaparte", indeed!

At all events, the heyday of the Vehm was the Middle Ages. In origin it was a society whose members did not openly avow their membership - much like many of today's professional bodies - and whose main pursuit was the administration of justice. Summons to a Vehmic court took the form of a written document, which would be affixed to the miscreant's door - those daggers again! Once summoned, the accused would be found either guilty or not guilty, very much as in a conventional courtroom. There would be a presumption of guilt, however, which the accused could counter by calling character witnesses; twenty-one witnesses were considered adequate in cases of murder. Naturally, only witnesses who were themselves members of the Vehm would be admitted. If the accused was found guilty the sentence would be hanging;



the body would be left beside a public thoroughfare, with a Vehmic dagger lying alongside by way of explanation (hence the confusion over the means of execution).

Little was heard of the Vehm after the sixteenth century; it did survive, however as the Rathenau incident demonstrates. (Truth to tell, few if any of the Vehm hallmarks were observed in the Rathenau case; it was, perhaps, the work of hotheads within the organisation). It was in the Weimar period that the Vehm began to operate publicly, once again: we can assume that this was when the "Jerome Bonaparte" cover story was originated. The Hitler years, without doubt, were relatively good for the Vehm, although inevitably the Nazis' ban on political organisation prevented the organisation from operating under its own name: the absence of written evidence of Vehmic activity in this period should not surprise us. Certainly, the stress which the regime placed on the execution of justice in accordance with the "will of the people" must have resonated with Vehmic themes of long standing. By contrast the years of a divided Germany would have proved difficult, especially in the East: dissidents were not the only people who had trouble finding private meeting places!

## 3. Enter the house of weariness

I haven't slept well since 1989. It was in that year that I saw my first Vehmic markings, scrawled on a wall in Hamburg. Or it may have been Munich, or Bremen, or some dark British town, littered with chicken bones and milk-shape cups, sad beyond redemption; it's not clear to me now. "S S G G": the inscription meant nothing to me at the time, but the letters were unmistakable. (Curiously,

my travelling companion at the time argued that the first 'G' was a 'C' and claimed not be able to see the 'S' at all; and yet my faith was never shaken).

The best explanation I could come up with was "SS: gruss Gott!" - a quasi-Christian inscription rejoicing in the revival of Nazism. This, however, was unsatisfactory, given the pagan orientation of the SS. That was when my sleepless nights began. It was only this year, wading through the maze of volumes and sub-volumes which make up Just's absurdly misnamed *Handbuch* - most handbooks, historical or otherwise, can at least be held in the hand - that I happened on the Vehm.

Confirmation that I was on the right rack was not slow in coming. Nor, indeed are the contemporary operations of the Vehm confined to Germany. Of course, information on the contemporary Vehm is hard to come by and tantalisingly thin. This is only to be expected - indeed if information were readily available this in itself would cast doubt on its authenticity - but it is a source of frustration for the practising historian. However, I can lay claim to one primary source: a Vehmic *Blatt* (leaf, page, sheet of paper) which came into my hands in 1990.

I forget now (if I ever knew) what the demonstration aimed to achieve (if anything). A demonstration there was, however, leaving in its wake the usual debris: leaflets advertising this event itself, leaflets advertising others; broken and discarded placards with blurred and meaningless slogans; rain, echoes of rhythmic shouting and a distant silence. Among those leaflets one, its printed message identical to many others, somehow caught my eye. *The Vehmic inscription S S G G could clearly be made out.* (Attentive readers will have realised that the *Blatt* had been left beside a public thoroughfare!).

Closer inspection of the *Blatt* over the following years has revealed that certain letters in the body of the text have been systematically emphasised, being printed to appear either darker or fainter than the remainder of the text. The effect is to pick out a series of words or parts of words, reading either left to right or top to bottom. Naturally, the message is not 'en clair'. Some words are in English, some in German; some are in medieval German dialects, others in languages as yet unidentified. All this is to be expected. Having devoted many days and nights to study of the *Blatt* I can now suggest some tentative conclusions regarding the present-day Vehm.

The words 'justice', 'people', 'dagger' and 'rope' come through quite clearly, as might have been expected. (Interestingly, the word "rope" appears only in German and is generally mis-spelt). There are three direct or implicit references to Britain, two to Germany and one to France - witness the international scope of the modern Vehm. The words 'rat', 'Copt' and 'moon' can also be made out, the last-mentioned appearing in at least three languages. These do not suggest any known Vehmic characteristics; we must assume that they are motifs of the Vehm in its modern form. While one may assume that the punishment of wrongdoers is the primary concern of the modern Vehm as of its precursors, the hypothesis that additional or more specific goals exist, which may not be committed to paper, cannot be excluded.

#### 4. Freedom is free of the need to be free

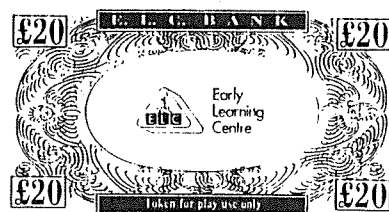
What is now entirely clear is that the Vehm is now operating publicly, in Western Europe if not more widely, for the first time in several hundred years. This is momentous news, and good news

to boot. This latter point should be stressed in view of the aversion to clandestine forms of organisation which is currently widespread. While these feelings are understandable in some cases, qualms of this sort are entirely misplaced in relation to a genuine organ of popular justice such as the Vehm, and should be firmly suppressed.

In short, it should be emphasised that the return of the Vehm is in no way to be feared! True, the Vehm's justice can seem harsh by modern standards, but it should be remembered that the Vehmic penalties apply *only to the guilty*. We should welcome the Vehm as they roam among us, carrying out their mysterious and necessary work for all of our sakes. Each of us should be proud to stand before our community, unashamed and free from guilt. Each of us should stand willing, should the need arise, to execute the will of the people: willing to serve the Vehm!

#### 5. Afterword

Last night after finishing the above I slept soundly, as I knew I would. Waking at dawn I went for a walk. On returning I saw three children in the street (*three?*); when I looked again they had gone. When I reached my house I noticed fine chalk markings on the gateposts which I had not seen before: both the Rat and the Crescent Moon. The Vehm is now nearer than ever, thank God!



This graphic is taken from *Communist Headache: Notes for Living and Working Vol.2*. Three volumes in all cover *New Struggles*, the Anarchist Movement, *Community Struggles*, Animal Rights, Violence and Militancy, critique of LETS schemes, the Music Business. Produced with an attitude less concerned with delivering purity of thought, more bothered by the reluctance of revolutionaries to acknowledge the complexities both of the system and the resistance to it.

Send large S.A.E. to C.H. c/o Black Star, P.O.Box 446 Sheffield S1 1NY

## Reviews

# Machine Music in An Age of Sweat

*As strange machines hurtle by in disturbing flight patterns, Fishtoe engages in some unchained thought about rave culture, techno-music and computerisation*

### Introduction

This is an attempt to establish the historical moment in terms of economy and technology, without falling into the jargon of political economy. The piece concerns itself with the possibilities of raves and techno music. It is written in a style that is defiantly anti-academic but shamelessly intellectual. There is also an attempt to shy away from conclusions or to resolve divergences into party-lines.

The corrupt platonism which separates theory and action, a sliding scale placing violence at the extreme end of reality and thought as its (inauthentic) opposite, is just so much filthy religion.

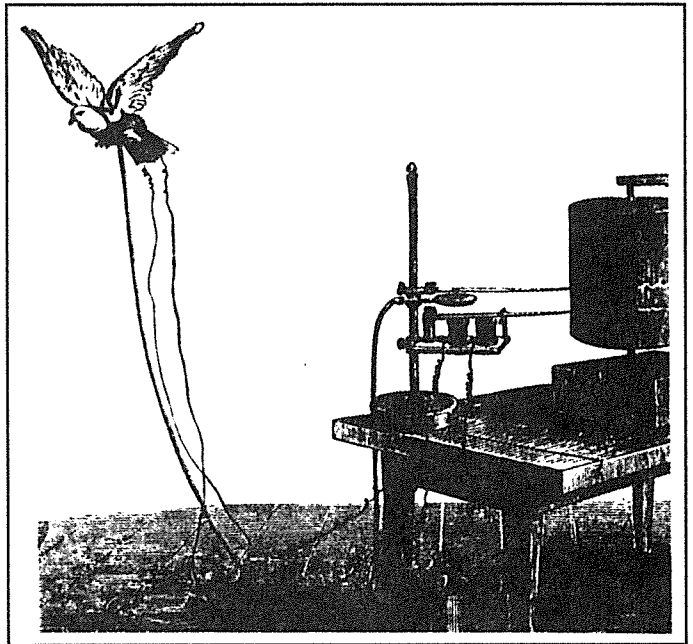
Violence as zealotry is, still, only the connection of disparate objects by means of force, reducing those objects to the sum only of this simple connection; violence is always vulgarly conditioned by situation – it is unreflexive, it has no *idea* what it is doing. Violence as politics seeks nothing more than the proliferation of itself as the only solution. Of course not all violence fulfils the wishes of its adherents, but that it is straining to achieve authenticity remains an article of faith amongst believers. Anarchism has retreated to this point – of being merely religious in that it must believe.

Only the simplicity of the singular is unconditioned and even that is open to subversion. Nothing is simple, especially not the simple.

Thought should not be chained to purpose, even though it is often protested in *Here and Now's* Letters' page; on the contrary thought de-rails purpose. At some stage on the rocky path to utopia, the revolutionary must take the philosopher to the shadowy edge of the track and slit his throat: revolutionaries are committed to one thing, disengaging the revolution and legislating. The religious urge is to believe; at some point thought is abandoned in order that the Party may stand above the masses and, in the name of purity, it ceases to act but institutes the *belief in action* as a transcendent. Thought never believes, it is immanent.

It is not a matter of de-lineating possibilities, rather to *undo* impossibility – to start from the prison cell and to find a crack. Thought's task is to outrage belief, demolishing gods, bringing them down from their lawgiver pedestals. Belief is the social form in which micro-fascist viruses lurk: at those points of resistance which say "thus far..." are the cops checking passports. Revolutionaries (and why not parody Mao) must first engage their diseases (perhaps this is their only task), for two reasons:

1. Revolutionaries are, invariably, enemies of the revolution; agents of puritanical containment, just as atheists in an age of apathy can't let god go without listing their disbelief's one last time, and deploying their obsessive daggers into the long-dead corpse.
2. Disjunction is probably the most productive activity open to



them. By monitoring the ragings of their own structure's urges to control they at least can trace out the delicate and beautiful forms advanced capital can take.

The following is difficult to read. Think on past proletarian illiteracy and its reverence for the difficulties of the text, and its struggle for interpretation. One is bound to feel contempt for those who want thought served up on a plate decapitated, who insist on purposefulness and commitment; stream-lined propaganda that may be easily digested and used to affirm their simplistic protest culture. The meaning of reading lies with the diggers and levellers who, squeezing their eyes, scanned for the first sail of communism on the horizons of the bible, without even knowing what they were looking for.

Writing is easy. Any control-agent can list the affirmations of his prejudices, to position himself and sign his name. The poverty of current writing is chained directly to the inadequacy of reading strategies. Reading must be of the group, it is social, a struggle and exhilarating. Looking up from the book, for a moment everything is transformed into new terms. as if written into your perception. You see the echoes of what as been read imposed on every surface of the world. This aura which slowly fades is the mark of the possible on the actual; it is an x-ray vision of the revolution which sees in every object the unfolding of a re-routing.

Writing attempts to engage its own engine, to bring out its own pre-conditions so that the reader may move on from mere



affirmations into the negative. Difficulty or negativity is formal and this is the crucial difference between writing and propaganda. The propagandistic makes complex things simple, writing complicates the easily digested immediacy of the unthought. The former requires the reader to swallow and follow its straight lines of purpose, the latter demands engagement and commitment on a scale entirely different to simply believing. The form of writing is what relates it to society, in that its difficulty negates the apparent and demands to see shadowy other things. The resistance encountered by the reader of the text, the difficulty occurs at exactly the point at which the smooth contours of power recede from ordinary vision; in other words, writing exposes the pre-conditions of seeing simply and thus also the blindness of it.

### **Movement One**

FSOL, *Lifeforms*, Virgin records

VA, *Chill Out or Die 2*, Rising High records

David Toop and Max, *Eastley Buried Dreams*, Beyond records

Reload, *a collection of short stories*, infonet records

VA, *Renegade Selector*, Re-animate Recordings

The extent to which the object is determined by the way the hand reaches out and grasps is always forgotten in critical practice, and is only called into question when confronted by an irrefutable force contrary to the un-thinking moments in its thought. The extent to which the hand is determined by the field of objects it operates in is remembered in nostalgia, a simple route which traces over and over past powerlessness; the familiar is hidden at the back of the drawer, its power is to appear after being mislaid as an emotional return and thus a substitute for the new. It is difficult to touch what lies outside the forces that have produced the shape of the hand and avoid the objects which hover within easy reach. The task is to touch touching itself, in this way the familiar which is only forgotten will not always be mistaken for the new, the revolutionary. Change always comes from the outside. The plane on which objects share their commonality is occasionally disturbed by meteor-like entities which invade the dark far borders and quietly change everything, a pre-condition for nostalgia is the increased velocity and the complexity of change in the present. The ability to hold on to anything now seems ever more difficult, strange machines hurtle by in disturbing flight patterns.

Others, however, are already conversant, adept at springing up, arching supple backs and reaching out, they pluck technologies from the air as if they were not moving at all. How do they do that? Where do they come from? How is it that they are proficient before these machines have become historically important? The hand occasionally snatches something from the outside, brings it in and holding it up, changes everything. Change this time is from the foreground. Every moment of change is capitalised on by the investment in the technology of change by those with easiest access in order to achieve a formal domination over all object relations; occasionally it happens, and often only for a brief moment, that the technology which changes everything, somehow becomes change itself; its signal power is not to re-organise everything in its name but to de-organise everything by blocking unifying codes. Its domination takes a form in which the commonality of

objects is denied and everything strains against form and dominance of any kind. A hand touches touching, when it is not determined, when the object changes in its grasp, when change itself is changing, when there is no underlying grid to which all objects and all movements between them may be pinned. This is power when it is anti-power, formlessness in formality, a dominance over domination.

### **Movement Two**

The age of the car is one of a literal imperialism. A geographical encroachment. The car penetrates. It splits open the world like a fruit, to display the new, the unspoilt. The relation of cinema to the car has already been well documented. It is necessary to emphasise only that special form of alienation permitted by the car; it is connected to speed and the distance between an apparently neutral enclosed subject position and an external world which can only be passively experienced. Tourism is an instant forgetting of experience in the face of experience. Freedom as movement in the age of the motor car is most completely demonstrated in the traffic jam; limits, blockages, malfunctions thwart the easy passage of the car. The driver is forced to engage; frustration at having to remedy the broken flow; violence is the easiest route by which the two ends of a journey may be melded together again, swearing, the horn, a fist against the dashboard, the engine revved, cutting them up on the next bend. Then the smooth flow of the open road, a flood of scenery washing by.

In the final scene of *Reservoir Dogs*, the jam occurs as the climax of a freedom that appears only as speeding away from the restrictions of city enclosure, those left must eat the wake of exhaust fumes. Four gangsters point their guns at each other. Resolution to the tension occurs either as implosion or explosion. Explosion is a simple abandonment, a walking away in acknowledgement of the failure of the rules of the game. Implosion is the simple determined consequence of the jam; the tension built up in traffic jams, without free stretches of road to escape into can only be internalised. The logic of flight would, when denied geography, seek container technology. Mechanisms by which the dangerous are stored, disused deep mines for waste. A logic of filling up, filling out, land-fill. Appliances are filled beyond their function with features, lights, buttons, gadgets. Furniture is heavy and over-stuffed. To get more for your money, quantity is the first requirement. The obsession with filling the body, of hoarding may be seen as the guilty storage of fat by lite-people in the bodies of their surroundings, the slow-heavy-stupid, vulgar weightiness of T.V. sets, stereos, sofas, fridge-freezers, cars, bank accounts, are all held at bay by the force of the corresponding Keep-Fit twice a week, Lo-Fat food, the easy joke, the stupid music is all so much constipation, a release of the pressure. To fill up with bulk is an adequate enough mark of impoverishment.

Containerism is always structured as an aesthetic of disappearances; the vessel itself must shrink, if only because access to the stock is restricted to specialised retrieval technologies. The amateur handyman cannot fix household appliances when component parts are stored on micro-chips.

The metaphor for computer technology is grafted from the time of the motor car. In these times we talk of the flow of information, of the information highway. This is entirely false. Information is stored, piled up; the miracle of computers is their implosive strength in containing vast amounts of stuff in tiny spaces.

Information does not flow, the metaphor of movement is an illusion: where does information come from, where would it go to? Everywhere is the same, distanceless, immediate, only security codes create difference: and everything has the status of information only. There is no virtual reality, only a cyber-stasis from which information is accessed, squeezed out like a royal jelly. Networks, information exchanges are the techniques of homogenisation, the reduction of all techniques to a compatibility, an abstraction/conversion to a base category: information, which is the purest form of commodity-capital. Computerisation is the final corporate colonisation of the unconscious. It is in tableau a mouth and throat eternally trapped in a forced swallowing without any conception at all of passage of movement.

The internet is much less than the patternless circulation of free thought or a reconstitution of consciousness. It is too positivist, too enamoured of itself as the *end*, for these claims to be taken seriously. It lacks a necessary negative moment in its relationship to the world, it slips a little too easily into the way things are. For all its capability, it lacks reflexivity and, non-identity thinking. The inability to continually problematise its relation with the world marks the internet's technique of proliferating as a mechanism by which the same is constantly generated. The sameness is a trivialisation by which a system of writing, that is information, converts or translates all experience to itself. We are not dissuaded by the information revolution in our privileging of reading over writing as a revolutionary activity.

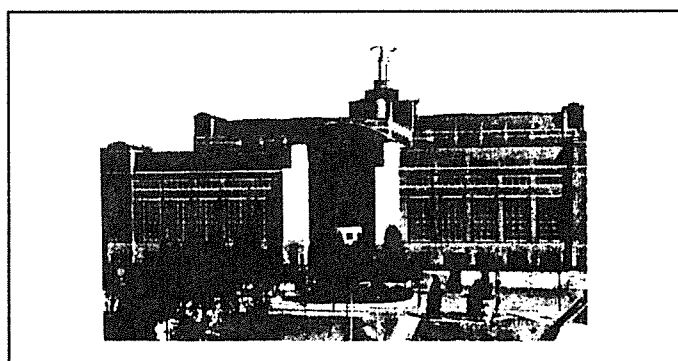
Is it not possible to imagine an alternative history by which the book is born from computer technology. A child would come home from school and say: "Look, Mum, at this fantastic machine, it really speaks to you, interacts with you like it knew you. Like it was a world itself, no matter how many times you use it, there's always something new." A wonder?

Commodification is that by which the object is made desirable within a discourse of lack. Traditionally this production of a certain image for an object operates on a sliding scale of delivery; advertising implants dissatisfaction but throws a line for rescue, the first unthinking encounter with the object in the shop display is made with this initial imagery in mind, through purchase which is a climax but perhaps never complete to getting the object home and seeing it for the first time in a natural environment. From this point the object begins to decay, not only does it lose monetary value, second hand, but it is open to critiques which immediately seize on it, emphasising faults; advertising is the main route of such critiques. The object turns against you, now ugly and old-fashioned, it decays and mutates. No longer pride of place but an expensive monument to thoughtless consumerism and to its own stout resistance, it murmurs, "You never really owned me. I do not belong here and never did. You could never really afford the price." The only response is to throw this moody piece on the dump and buy a nice, new, passive, shiny replacement. Computer technology has capitalised on this decay of objects and has regulated the rate by which the object becomes obsolete. The difficulty of computer games is the degree of use which can be had from them, which is exactly the rate whereby the object turns against the owner. Difficulty or depth is regulated and becomes the chief selling point of computer products, rates of decay are precisely those of used-up difficulty such objects may be thrown away without guilt as they are used up or become superseded.

The resistance of the object is measured in terms of a thing's inertia pitched against human satisfaction (as generated through lack), the

less it delivers on the latter the more it becomes the former. When this decay is irregular the passing of one to the other is a matter of rupture and flood. This permits the possibility of non-commodity form object relations - desires not borne of lack can lead to irrational behaviour (i.e. liberation, eg. the found objects of the Surrealists). The decay of computer objects is a controlled bleeding, it provides the opportunity for humans to prepare themselves for its passing and thus never to be left bereaved. This triumph over the obsolescence of objects is couched in terms of possession, of a computer game one must say, "I have defeated you, it is I who has chosen the moment to sever relations". Also, it gives the chance for one to engage difficulty without the danger of it ever overwhelming the situation which made that particular relation possible, as opposed to the way art can.

The introduction of human ends occurs at other moments. The idea of the internet is grafted onto ideas of knowledge, consciousness, movement. But in truth, these are the entities being systematically wiped out by the encroachment of info-encodement. As with all machinery, computers seek to connect in a way apposite to themselves. This has very little to do with any human ends which are simply obstructions to clean couplings. Rather such machines seek the production of a cyber reality complete and independent in itself, without need of human input. The human purpose, then, if it seeks to protect its own connections, is not to serve the machines with whom they share no common interest, but to resist them as if humans themselves were commodities rebelling. Becoming useless, operating against their owner-machines and going on to thwart the machines' vision and eventually to bend them back to the plain that renders all machinery mere tools to a masterful will. But this is impossible, machinery in one form or another is assured victory: The Shape



Of Things To Come.

### **Movement Three**

Information is the fragrance of capital, an extract that wafts the suggestion of a far from neutral presence about the place. Those positivist elements who argue the proliferation of information as a means of paralysing security apparatuses by sheer overload are mistaken on two points.

1. The model of the panopticon does not require the surveillance at all times of the subjected, only the possibility of that surveillance. Order is maintained through the self policing of the subjected, who have no idea of the probability of themselves turning up in a random check for minor past indiscretions. The thrill of this lies both in the brazen perversity of strict adherence to the appearance

of the law, circling upon routes of blamelessness, despite rationality, and also the rebellious thrill of infringing irrelevant codes. If they haven't got anything to hide, why are they complaining?

2. Strangely, security systems are not concerned with their punitive by-product so much as with a transcendent obsession for perfection, an infection caught from religion. Spirituality for all repressive systems is a mechanism by which difference is reduced to abstract unities, concentration is focused at the interface of that feature of commonality by which all individuals are observable by the machine devised to contemplate just that feature. Surveillance most fiercely contemplates its own limits, the possibility of failure. It proliferates fail-safes, trip-switches, system sweeps in its restless pursuit of infallibility. The spirit is a transcendent abstraction, both pressed from the various techniques, fingerprints, signatures, face recognitions, passwords, palm-prints, iris readings, each signalling a substitution of the body with a more real, permanent, more authentic sign of presence and beyond this the millenarian desire for the impossibly present spirit as a pure end. The spiritual existence of instant presence, access to everything without the mediation of bodies.

Security systems aspire to extract an essence from the circulation of bodies and amplify it, project it on to screens and point to it as the final condition, the only important element. DNA that's all there is. For Security, crime has already happened. Each specific instance of witnessed transgression is mere affirmation of the process; that which slips through the net indicates structural faults and thus requires modification, another layer of safety mechanisms. Mobilised security is the accumulation of eccentric structures for containment, each a novel conceit on how to capture the fleeting moment of crime and to set it exquisitely for display. And preserve it accurately for storage.

In surveillance the pleasure lies in the successful completion of the infinitely reproduced figure of empowered watcher/dispossessed watched. Why this should give pleasure is a mystery of the death instinct. It is enough to say that the minor pay-off of local voyeurism weakens resistance to the generalised realisation of it.

#### **Movement Four**

Techno is re-routed machinery. It is not metaphoric. It does not show us what could be achieved in the real world. It is a practical example of the seizure of the means of production, in this case weapons technology and found sounds; and the transformation of intended purposes through a technique of melting juxtapositions. The reality produced by techno machines is radically different and the vistas of possibility opened up are far wider than that envisioned by those who advocate the seizure of state power, or workers' control. The shaping of mass behaviour through the generation of aural ambiances is of greater significance for free desiring production than anything dreamed of through imposed political directives.

Techno is hardness. It forbids the seepage of humanity into its impervious structure. It is pure grounding, without mediated spirits disguising its nature. It is without representation, there are no mirrors. Movement must always be away from it. It is an architecture, shaping the possible movements and consciousness of those who skate its grooves. Techno is a surface.

However a certain slackness has appeared at the centre of the techno project, a contentment that reduces it to less than shopping

mall muzak (a form that at least fulfils its own function, causing distraction from itself and attracting attention to its visual perception). For music to be negative it was usually enough to rely on loudness and speed, flooding received behaviour with temporary excitations which would override the reality principle. Any other formula must be considered affirmative in its relation to social production, only extremity is true. The F.S.O.L. are most prominent in the unreserved positivity felt by techno-groups towards the technology used. This is compounded by a seepage of good vibes generally into ambient; New Age affirmations of spirituality strain upwards towards the light, severing all awareness of anal capital, such anti-materialisms are the essence of cringing vulgarity.

That dance culture which is entirely celebratory in structure should reconstitute negativity is an unforeseen perversity that certainly has nothing to do with intent, or the political opinions of the people participating. In fact the dawning political consciousness of techno may be taken to be its formal capitulation into affirmative culture; in adopting political discourse it finds itself subject to the forces that generate it.

Amongst the harsh landscapes of junglist drums and bass, the wistful post-war drone of synths, the fragments of sound after the humans have left. Machined ambience, always melancholic, feels the absence of swarming human proliferation over its structures and can only connect to the dancing as those who are entirely alien to each other can, in a kind of mutual excited colonisation. Like all art-forms it intuitively recognises its connection to a post-apocalypse; formalism is a process of exclusion and refinement - it denies the excess of the real world through clear lines, holding it back behind temporary artificial limits. The faculties of perception are tuned to engage more fully with the world as it floods back in and engulfs.

Language, the human presence does not belong in techno, only snatched, disembodied phrases which remind us that we are always in crowds, that our reality is always socially generated. Voices may swirl up from the depths of machine drums but they say nothing, their randomness is their effect. It is a music that does not participate in ideologies or representations but is a generating ground, literally a background. Human action occurs entirely in the foreground, across the surfaces which stretch out, against a backdrop of noise which determines movement in the simplest of base and superstructure models. Dancers connect into the architectural ambience of pure function in an unmediated reality. This is an economy of sweat; what was once a demeaning sign of labour, the mark of a limit to the possession of the means of production and thus the time to enjoy the products of that labour, is now a free currency spent in a relation of pleasure. So many signs are dissolved in the reversal, supersession and forgetting of mediated object/subject relations that it's possible to observe a fleeting body which in shorting sign-systems becomes a thing itself.

The weakness of techno lies in the adoption of a formulaic criteria for the reproduction of this intensity, attempting to hold on to it, and not continue to alter its boundaries. Extremity lapses into this year's melody. The wholesale embrace of technology, of spurious New Age spiritualisms, marks the loss of the thing for itself, and the return of producing for the ear. Its the re-penetration of the human in terms of quality, a rigid formulation of easily digested clichés, and the collapse back into the arena of art. What does not occur is the rigorous dispersal of the discoveries of techno, of the relations of aural ambient architecture and unmediated behaviour, into everyday life.

## Reviews

# Twilight of the Proletariat?

*Review of Ken Smith, The Survival of the Weakest (John Ball Press 1994)*

In these days of political blur when it is hard to distinguish the Right hand from the Left and vice versa, established commentators are beginning to complain about the torpor and conformism of the political scene. Calls have gone out to the political class to scour the world for 'new ideas' in order to revive the comatose form of the body politic. Genuine malcontents should be wary. The bureaucratic co-option of protest and discontent is an old game which people are beginning to wise up to. Resistance to the Criminal Justice Act has not just occurred outside the TUC and Labour Party, but often outside the new 'ad hoc' leadership of The Freedom Network etc. The absence of popular causes to perk up the institutions of the State is only a disaster for those for whom the State is the be-all and end-all of political activity. What appears as apathy to some could just as easily be disengagement from a pointless and harmful charade. Maybe people are just getting on with it, and fact that this doesn't register on the Richter Scale of political tremors may say more about what the political boffins are looking for than about what is actually happening.

An analysis of what these politics outside the State, and economics outside the market, might look like has been provided by Ken Smith, especially in his very readable book *Free is Cheaper*. In his latest work Smith attempts to engage with deeper scientific and philosophical ideas in order to make his contention in *Free is Cheaper* compatible with the latest in knowledge.

*The Survival of the Weakest* is a broad and generous survey of the ideas and tendencies that inform the contemporary world. Done not just to debate the rights and wrongs of particular positions, Smith intends to use the latest scientific and philosophical developments to confirm his central thesis that human beings

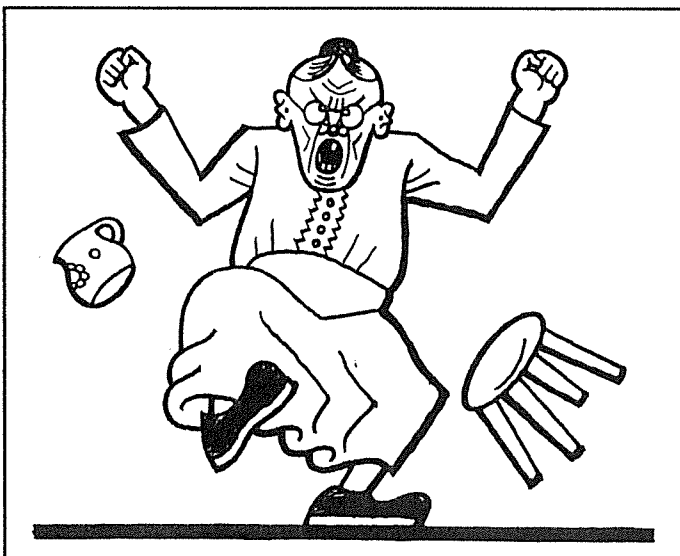
would benefit from being outside a money-based market economy. Some may find the didacticism unsubtle and unfashionable, but Smith wants to convince rather than fascinate, and if that makes him seem old-fashioned so much the worse for being up to date.

Smith warns right from the beginning not to expect a seamless development of a coherent argument. He acknowledges that the book is still messy and incomplete, and (something which *Here and Now* can hardly complain about) the proof-reading leaves something to be desired. The book is an amalgam of sources, authorities and quotes from all sorts of spheres which nowadays are supposed to be separate. He is trying to define the 'social moment'. After the collapse of State Socialism in 1989, the failure of Thatcherite economics on Black Wednesday, the drift to the centre by social democracy, Smith is looking at present day capitalism to see where its strengths and weaknesses lie. And it is these parts of the book which are going to make up the majority of this review. Smith has moved on from his systematic demolition of the pretensions of industries to efficiently meet need (see *Free is Cheaper*) to a more speculative enquiry into the exact nature of contemporary capitalism.

In his analysis of modern capitalism Smith holds that the nature of capital ownership has changed, and has therefore dramatically altered, if not abolished, the idea of class struggle. In the contentious chapter 'Goodbye to the Capitalist Class' Smith argues that capital ownership no longer chiefly resides in private hands:

*The boards of directors who replaced the top hatted capitalists in the 19th century are now coming under the purview of managers, that is to say, the salaried bureaucrats who invest the enormous capital of pension funds, insurance premiums, building society deposits, and to a lesser extent unit and investment trusts.*

According to Smith these monies constitute more than 4/5ths of all capital in Britain. In this sense 82% of the means of production is already owned by the workers (which Smith defines as those whose capital is not enough to permit them to give up work or searching for work). Smith argues that a movement which insists on an image of class struggle as being between those who own the means of production and those who work them to is dated. He sees other sorts of struggle emerging. For example, there is a struggle between bureaucrats and workers over the distribution of the social product. Or there is the battle between boards of directors and the pension fund managers who oversee the funding of companies. Increasingly, according to Smith, pension fund managers are seeking operational powers in companies, no longer are they prepared to simply shift their funds to more profitable outfits. They want managerial influence as the price of their



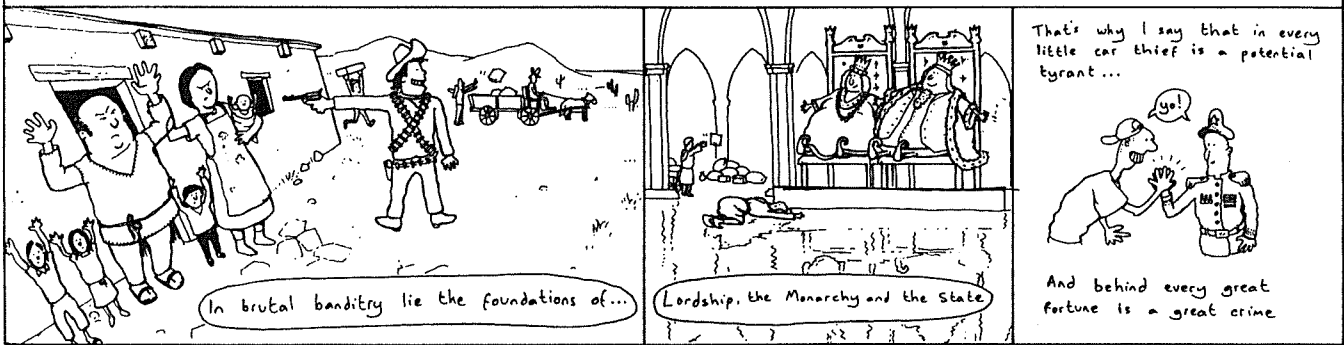
# LETTER TO MRS. IRONSIDE

Malcolm G. Stroud



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investment. Smith cites the following dismissals of chairmen of major companies as the result of fund manager intervention: Lewis (Granada), Hardman (Asda), Halpern (Burton), Fletcher (Budgens), McMahon (Midland Bank). Smith sees these developments as an indicator of the road capitalism could go down. The fund manager could become the representative of the worker whose deferred wages he administers. He quotes Frank Field (Labour Party Social Affairs spokesman) to show what new improved social democratic politics is now thinking about:

*A crucial move is to compel pension funds to issue annually to each of its members a statement detailing the transfer value of their holding. Next, members of each scheme should also have an annual right to transfer the full value of their holdings into a government-approved investment scheme. Pension stakes would overnight begin to carry the share-value.*

*At a stroke the medieval barons would lose the power of deciding the future of quoted companies like ICI. You and me, who have more than an eye to our pensions are likely to take a longer term view of Britain's industrial future. Setting free us pension serfs will have a bigger political effect than the similar policy of liberating council tenants. There are simply more of us.'*

Letter to The Guardian 3/6/91 (quoted by Smith)

If capitalism goes down this road then Smith feels we are faced with a unique situation:

*Critical theory faces the formidable task of unveiling structures of domination where no-one is dominating, nothing is being dominated, and no ground exists for a principle of liberation from domination.*

Mark Poster (quoted by Smith).

However, far from dumping the idea of revolution (as many post-modernists would like to do) Smith argues that it is never more necessary. The 'grow or die' economy which threatens both human and planetary life would still be in place:

*The real argument never was about capitalists and private capital but... about buying and selling.*

Smith is right to point out this tendency towards the 'democratisation of capital' but I would like to add a few reservations. A lot of the professional manipulators of capital, merchants banks and the like, are private companies and therefore not publicly quoted. Smith's figures (as far as I can gather) only deal with publicly quoted capital and therefore do not include the total amount of capital in circulation. Whereas he does draw attention to the power of networks of patronage and influence in the financial classes he doesn't draw the obvious conclusion that the exercise of power can exist separately from formal ownership of capital. I doubt whether the parvenu status of pension fund managers will keep them out of the cosy arrangements of the financial classes for long. The British upper classes have a long tradition of admitting to their rank anyone with enough money and power, whatever their social origin. The democratisation of capital (a la Frank Field) will not necessarily mean a disempowerment of the financial classes. The whole point about money is that it is a religion which needs a caste of High Priests to administer it. If there is to be a reformation of financial practices it is unlikely to threaten the status of this hierarchy - any reforms will be conducted on their terms, and be judged through their interpretations. Much like parliamentary democracy, a democracy of small pension holders etc. is likely to become utterly dependent on the advice of experts and utterly subservient to the dictates of The Market - a thing which increasingly is presented as independent of human will (despite the fact that in essence it is only human activity).

Structures of domination may change, they may well operate under the rubric of 'democracy', 'empowerment', even 'openness' but managers will still manage, directors will still take home hefty pay-packets and investment will continue to be determined by cabals of bankers 'in the know'. The danger is that this reality will be obscured by 'discourses' of bureaucratic anti-authoritarianism, diverting struggles from assaults on the capitalist class to word-games played out in Quality Circles and 'Team Meetings'.

No doubt they will tell us that since we 'own' the company we must work harder for our own benefit.

I don't think any of the above is unknown to Smith. He certainly has no desire to prop up the capitalist system by cheer-leading its latest public-relations gimmicks. But ignoring the specific and pivotal role particular elites have in the economy is to court disaster. Capital may well have escaped the control of national governments, it has not escaped the control of gangs whose allegiance is to nobody but themselves. The idea of a *central* division in society – the division between those who own the means of production and those who work them – may have disappeared under the wave of new divisions and antagonisms, but that should not obscure the prevailing and powerful networks of influence and violence which still call the shots at the highest level. The ability of these elites to hide from the consequences of their actions, and to insulate themselves from responsibility by asserting that they are as much driven by the global economy as anyone else should not blind us to the conscious withdrawal they have made from the well-being of the whole, based on a calculation that new techniques of surveillance and repression will shelter them. Whether this shelter will protect them from the *ecological* consequences of their activities is perhaps less certain.

I suspect that Smith wishes to deconstruct the idea of the capitalist class in order to prepare the ground for his other challenge to conventional revolutionary theory – that it is to be the comparatively well-off who will initiate the required revolutionary change in society. Smith contends that only those whose energies and time are not totally devoted to the business of survival will take the necessary steps to build alternatives to the money economy.

While they may still fit into the worker category by not having enough capital to avoid work, anyone who has lived in the UK cannot fail to be aware that this class (the middle class) constitutes itself as a distinct body, with its own culture, networks, influences and interests. Nor is it without power. Despite the imperatives which force it to work, it has enough clout in the agencies of meaning-production to ensure that its values are the dominant ones in the country. In the light of such dominance we are justified in asking: 'What have they done with it?' Have they begun the process of subverting the 'grow-or-die' economy, which Smith expects them to do? I can think of only two areas where a case can be made for this.

One, middle class people do engage in the kind of voluntary networking and mutual aid which Smith would like to see replace the money economy. Two, they have often provided the leadership for ecological, animal rights-type movements which question the subservience of ethical values to the logic of economic ones. However in the first case this mutual aid is by and large restricted to fellow class members, and often is used as a means of securing careers and promotion. In the second case it is precisely because those movements are led by people who have little suspicion of the media, the police or the State that they remain locked into a single-issue movement that usually orients itself towards a change in the law, rather than a change in society.

The case against them is more tenable. It has been the middle classes who have occupied the positions, staffed the think-tanks, and implemented the policies which have speeded up the economy, destroyed custom and practice, instituted cuts in welfare and undermined the common interests of communities in favour of dependence on professional and expert systems. While I have no alternative revolutionary social subject to offer, the actions of the

middle classes have been so consistently opposed to real liberty and profound social change that I am tempted to think that Smith is pulling our legs. Amelioration of existing hierarchies and systems has been the best the middle classes have managed throughout history. Their record as leaders of revolts and revolutions has been, quite frankly, disastrous for all concerned.

It seems to me that revolt can come from almost anywhere. It certainly isn't within the power of revolutionary activists nor armchair theorists to designate the origin of a revolution before it has happened. But it also needs saying that any future revolution which is led by, or ideologically dominated by, the middle classes will not be worth a candle. It will simply be a rearrangement of the same old shit. The cause of the dramatic change which Smith is looking for may not call itself 'working class', perhaps to avoid the assumptions which that categorisation means for individuals. But it *will* be those who desire: not to be treated like a commodity, not to be bossed about, not to have their labour stolen, not to be managed and indoctrinated, not to have their sense of themselves determined and denigrated by others, not to have their nature reduced to a resource, who will have a decisive effect on the course of such a revolution. Either their spirit will win out or the suffocating world of 'man-management' pseudo-'empowerment', good taste, success and conspicuous consumption will reassert itself – values which, for all their seductiveness, are the values which best support the 'grow-or-die' economy which Smith seeks to destroy.

All sorts of strange alliances have been forged over capitalism's treatment of Nature, which defy a purely 'social class' definition. There *are* other forces which bring people together. No one, especially in England, can ignore social class, but as with all essentially *administrative* categories the designated categories are forever changing themselves from their bureaucratic stereotype. In the light of this 'corruption' of categories, it bodes no good for a revolutionary project to transfer the old schemata to a different class. Smith's scepticism needs to be applied more thoroughly – not only to the actual role the middle class plays in society but also to the privileging of social categories as the essential repository of revolutionary hopes. This does not mean dumping social analysis altogether, but it does mean removing revolutionary attributions from them.

There is so much more in this book that it does seem carping to have seized upon this question for the majority of the review. Smith has plenty of interesting things to say, including defending modern science against charges of Mechanism while condemning most of what capitalist technology has managed to achieve. The book is unique in its attempt to include everything in its remit, even at the expense of coherence. This is important when the latest rumblings in the political class are considered. As Blairites home in on the most feeble version of communitarianism as an answer to the failure of both the market and state socialism, Smith's lesson in the complex interlocking of economics, science, ethics, history, social policy and community is salutary. While modern communitarians seem to be advancing a defence of the community as if its existence in the world is a purely moral question separate from the States and Economies which have shaped it, Smith reminds us that in this world nothing is autonomous and everything is connected. Whether it should stay like that is another question.

**Steve Bushell**

# Natural Ethics

*Review of Which Way for the Ecology Movement?,  
essays by Murray Bookchin, AK Press, Edinburgh, 1994.*

This is a collection of essays published by Murray Bookchin between 1982 and 1991, with an introduction written in 1993. If what is wanted is a short restatement of the original social ecology of the 1960s in response to the developing issues of recent decades, the reader could do no better than to buy this book.

The essays are published in exact reverse order to in which they were written, and some of the conclusions seem to come before more detailed arguments. The earliest essay - 'Sociobiology or Social Ecology' (1982-4) - is a discussion of the relationship between society and nature and an attack on the sociobiology of E.O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins, as well as a more general discussion of the potentiality of substance for life and the nature of life as containing mutualism, freedom and subjectivity.

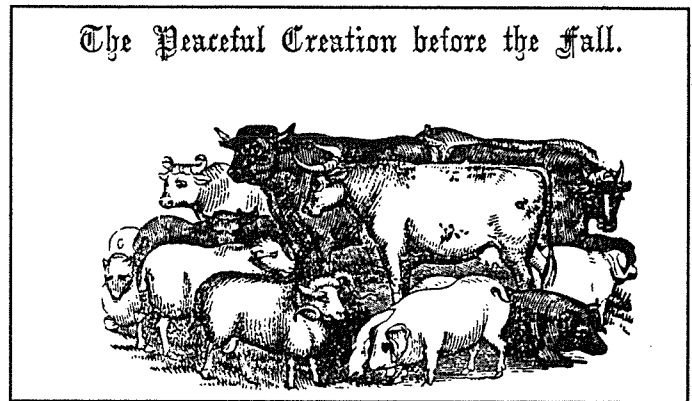
The next essay chronologically is 'The Population Myth' (1988-9), a critique of the idea of the 'Population Bomb' from such as Paul Erlich. Bookchin questions the idea of the 'carrying capacity' of the planet, as well as that of animal 'rights' and 'wilderness'. His point is that so-called 'overpopulation' is determined by changeable institutions such as land use, tenure, and the relative importance we give to humans and animals, and that populations stabilise given the right social conditions.

In "Will Ecology Become 'the Dismal Science'?" (1991), Bookchin questions the emphasis on scarcity and austerity on the part of deep ecologists. He also attacks the anti-rationalism and the lack of respect for humanity's potential for moral acts, social action and creativity which he sees in deep ecology. He views some ecology as denying humanity's place in natural evolution. The pride and faith which Bookchin so obviously has in humanity seems to hark back to a more optimistic, humanistic modern age; the Social Ecology movement of 1964/5 was not anti-technological, he points out, and blamed capitalism rather than reason, science, technology or the individual for degrading the environment.

'The Future of the Ecology Movement' (1993) describes the material denial favoured by the 'Ecomystics' as Calvinist. He is a great believer in the power of reason and human progress (p.9), not a believer in deep ecology's surrender of human freedom to what are said by some to be Nature's imperatives (p.10). A new ethics is needed, one which later in the collection is derived from a Nature which gives us examples of mutualism, subjectivity and freedom. He does not want to reduce social ills to biologicistic and personalistic causes (p.15). Bookchin believes that it is vitally important to understand that the conflict is between the present social order - ie. 'grow or die' capitalism - and the natural world. He says that deep ecology is a denial of human potential because, to paraphrase, it indicts humanity itself, not the social order.

Bookchin calls for a return to a natural ethics of mutualism, freedom and subjectivity along the 'grain' of natural evolution (p.73). There appears to be a contradiction between his belief in the capacity of human beings for moral action and his reluctance

to blame the individual driver for acid rain, but this is because he does not believe in 'privatistic' ethics. Reduced consumption is "an ineffective exercise in charity, not social mobilisation" (p.26). Means-end rationalism, not the individual, is in conflict with the natural world.



Bookchin is ultimately warning the ecological movement that to locate the source of the incompatibility between some human societies and the rest of nature in civilization and reason themselves plays into the hands of a prevailing anti-ecological social order. He is surely right in looking forward to a rational, moral, ecological and (appropriately) technological future, and his faith in human beings is salutary and valuable. He believes that self-organisation is the innermost property of being and that this renders a true natural *history* possible (p. 62). Realisation of this would restore to the world a meaning that is lacking.

There are two apparent contradictions with which I am uneasy. The first is that having rejected a narrow and deterministic sociobiological view of human nature as ideologically prejudiced, Bookchin seems to be proposing another 'naturalistic' ethics, but this time open-ended. The point seems to be that although humanity is part of nature, we should not feel constrained by it, as we are essentially free. It would be interesting to know how the manipulation of genes fits into Bookchin's self-conscious 'natural history'.

The second thing I am unsure about is Bookchin's use of words like 'ethical' (p. 74 - 5), whilst rejecting the "privatistic and epistemological approach to ethics" (p. 63) which presumably blames the individual for driving their car, as James Lovelock is quoted as doing. Bookchin has a social approach to ethics in which actions count for nothing if they are not part of a social movement directed at powerful institutions. I can't help feeling that this idea is so comforting it can't be right, and that personal blame and responsibility has to come in somewhere as well.

**Malcolm Stroud**

## Reviews

# NATURAL BORN CULTURES

*Review of Natural Born Killers (Director: Oliver Stone).*

The notion of culture has been a problem for radical politics. Socialists and Stalinists, the PC, ultra-lefts and liberals all tend to narrow the concept to elite producers, whose quality validates a status quo possessing standards of taste to appreciate it. Anything else may be scorned as imperfect, less than fully human, to be ignored, transcended or educated away. Radicals stand outside received culture, presenting alternatives of rationalist criticism, avant garde art, lifestyle posing or simply a cynical distaste for popular pleasures. Such self-marginalisation coincides with the Left's disarray, the right's appropriation of public agendas, the resurgence of a purportedly mute, rebellious underclass, and rampant consumerism.

Marxist critics tend to discuss these phenomena in terms of their interests as leaders and theorists. Communist Party intellectuals affiliating to Media Studies and identity politics gave us the hilarious spectacle of Filofax Lefties dissecting the corpse of authoritarian communism, on behalf of whole catalogues of oppressed groups. Careers were built in a democratic pluralism that finally, if surreptitiously, could admit its class-specific position. Blairism is the political consequence – tight-lipped censorious Christian snobs allied with respectable folk wishing to 'better' themselves and partake of expanded cultural markets. Liberals are outflanked on the right on social and moral issues, exposing fear and hatred for the vulgar, informal, spontaneous, dangerous, ambivalent passions of the masses.

More generally unable to come to terms with absorption in elite hierarchies since the 1950s, with interests opposed to substantial social change, 'political practice' has become 'political good taste' (how to be right-on) for bureaucrats, teachers, cultural 'workers' and scholars. The hidden agenda of leaving their privileged positions intact permeates the new cultural theory. Criticism of the functions of leaders, intellectuals and theorists may risk leaving the new middle classes bereft of progressive roles – so it is avoided.<sup>1</sup>

### Common Creations

Conversely, oppositional politics can be grounded in the experiences of ordinary people – the cultures that surround and suffuse our everyday lives and what we make of them. As practices producing meanings with emotional resonance in groups of people, culture expresses how we make sense of life, identify and position ourselves with respect to internal and external forces and to our material and social surroundings. Seen from below the focus of culture shifts to hopes, fears, fantasies and expectations as much as beliefs and feelings about the past and present. Our inherently social nature is evident, from community and collectivity, language and discourse. The material basis of culture is clear from the sites of its operation – 'oral' cultures rooted in the structures of schools, workplaces, streets or communities, elite institutions of the arts and academies, and products of the mass culture entertainment industries.

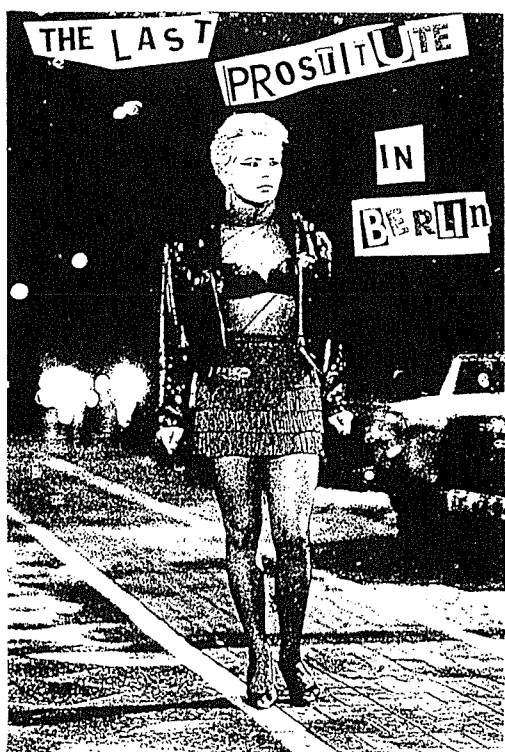
The culture sold by capitalism may seem impoverished and imperialistic when compared to the diversity of human life and its persistent impulses for self-determination. Worse, the trajectory of media market development relies on military and security-led technological determinism, bringing corporate and state control and class-based hierarchies of choice.<sup>2</sup> But global marketing is leading to such a saturation of mediated images, stories and symbols, that officially sanctioned public forums and channels of communication cannot connect with the masses' expressions of feeling. This distrust of the forms of knowing, being or aspiration that experts and politicians trade in doesn't inevitably lead us to cynicism, apathy, quietism or a celebration of consumerism.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of culture lies in its open-endedness, its continual re-creation and reproduction within lived experience, where cultural materials are present at every level.<sup>4</sup> Efforts to contain it within restricted discourses – to imprison culture in the imperialism of theory – mirror existing systems of control and oppression. These justify themselves in explaining the world via regimes of knowledge which themselves developed in support of coercive and exploitative structures and processes.





Irrespective of the intrinsic value of the cultural commodities we are immersed in, their use entails creating meanings and feelings that resound and echo in social networks, and that don't map directly onto the supposed intentions of the producers or financiers. Not only may meanings produced oppose those intentions, but the very success of cultural products as commodities may depend on consumers creating excess meanings tailored to their desires. Possibilities for radical propaganda may open for those who accept their part in the culture and its aftermath,<sup>5</sup> but not for those posing as distanced observers bemoaning the alien horrors of the cultures of others.



### Big Screen Distraction

Cinema films are the most expensive, elaborate and spectacular cultural commodities, and are the organising centre for much of our relationship with the mass media. Going to the cinema is a public, social act where we physically separate ourselves from the everyday world in dream like or festive states, attracted by overwhelming sounds and images. At home special efforts are made to view films and videos on television, compared to the visual wallpaper of most TV output. Films live on thanks to the commodification of stars, symbols and spin-offs. But characters, elements of narratives or film styles may become markers of experience and identity, incorporated into everyday life like, say, soap operas, but with a special quality due to the strength of their impact. Film cults and fan hobbyism are extreme examples of this. But for millions of others not investing such immense personal significance, films are as prominent as sport or music, and are as thoroughly woven into social and cultural life.

Contemporary cinema is dominated by outrageously expensive Hollywood blockbusters which profit from merchandising and globalising hype. Smaller studios, independent producers and (usually government sponsored) non-US film industries break even on a combination of cinema attendance, video and television rights. Increasingly, as viewers become used to differentiated

media, film producers minimise risk by combining styles and genres, appealing to multiple groups of viewers at once and playing havoc with established critical categories.<sup>6</sup> So *Natural Born Killers* mixes conventions from action and crime thrillers, romances, road movies, documentary, melodrama and social satire; plus exploiting assorted avant garde film devices and state of the art computer graphic, video and television techniques.

### Realism In Fantasy

Engagement with films furnishes fantasy experiences for viewers that may enhance their own potential competence in understanding and embracing their own agency. Only to the extent, crucially, that they read into (and explode out of) the narratives salient elements of their own lives – and such processes, of course, the producers of cultural commodities have relatively little power over. The capacity of cultural products to inspire their audiences may have unequivocally negative effects, which conventional wisdom exaggerates and agonises over if it works contrary to or exposes accepted dominations (such as children assaulting each other as opposed to adults doing it). Ironically, the resulting censorship neutralises the power of cultural products to be used for those resistive strategies which would render policing and interpretation by experts as well as moral guardians redundant.<sup>7</sup>

Cinema's attraction to new middle classes seeking cultural distinction has developed in tension with the vulgarities of Hollywood, especially in dealing with social conflict. Not so much the lifestyle dilemmas that a tradition of safe bourgeois film and television dramas has milked; but in the collective untidiness and mass tragedies of the lives of the oppressed. Social realism appeals to those insulated from it, but it's difficult to sell the masses films *about* our suffering because it implies some kind of exotic uniqueness of the problem treated – as opposed to the everyday connotations, for us, of crime, exploitation, misery and drudgery.

Popular cinema narratives portraying the unpredictability of large scale social discord have to appeal to powerful groups in order to be financed and produced, but also need to convince a popular audience that the cards are not all stacked in advance, and that whatever levels of realism are employed have any integrity. In navigating this uneasy path, pleasure must still be afforded to viewers with agendas of hope, fear and expectation, and patterns of desires, likely to diverge wildly from the educated taste of the film makers.

The static cinematic viewpoint leaves watchers distanced from the seething film spectacles of diffuse and sublime social or community processes. Passively connected to events on-screen, one person's voyeur can be someone else's carer, and another's gaoler. Treating one extreme of suffering as the be-all and end-all of a story is the classic strategy of 'social realism' genres of cultural production, with the intimate lives of a few standing as exemplars of the many. This resolution of systemic social and political conflict into a multitude of individual problems reproduces the discursive intersection of the middle class charitable gaze with the ministrations of a benevolent liberal State. Thus the film maker's task, rendering onto the screen the chaos of the social world, helplessly follows a similar logic.

### Crime and Punishment

The enduring archetypal social issue is crime, where the cumulative weight of cultural material produced to try and explain what

is wrong with society is conveniently funnelled into separate working class bodies. This fragmentation of collective reality, a narrowing of focus onto 'the problem' of the lone working class object forces the development and resolution of processes into a rut of heroic voluntarism. Implacably opposing moral forces are divided arbitrarily and simplistically so that no-one can doubt where guilt lies - inside the bad individuals (as opposed to the more general intuition that institutions are far less trustworthy).

Given global, divisive and corporate barbarisms, it is ironic that the banality of a diametrically opposed evil is celebrated instead: that of the serial killer.<sup>8</sup> Popular novel and film treatments have experimented with every conceivable fiction and media convention, even interrogating the cultural significance of the serial killer genre's popularity itself. The disasters of capitalism have very definite purposes - in consolidating the power to profit - whereas the actions of serial killers seem utterly pointless in any social sense. Thus the nihilism of the political world is displaced into the moral vacuum of the ultimate criminals. Now, when Hollywood gloss meets TV soap, tabloid news sensationalism, social issue movie, MTV editing and video diary 'realism', the scoop has to be serial killers. And if we're really supposed to think *Natural Born Killers* is serious, then the director must be Oliver Stone.

### Tablets of Stone

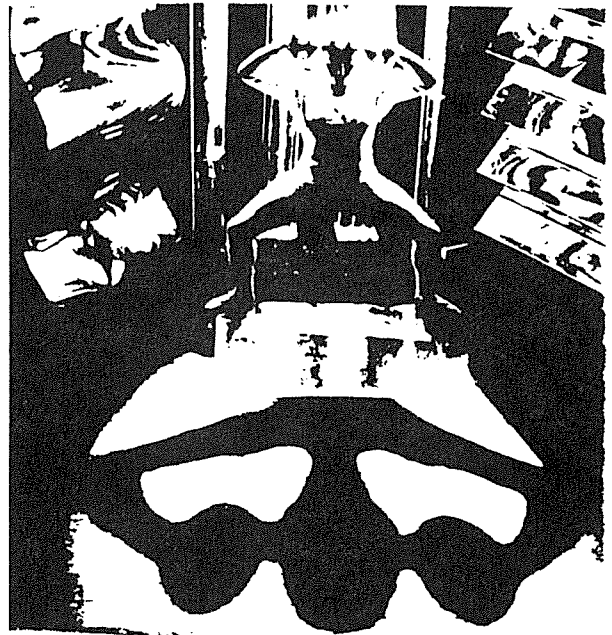
Stone has consistently tried to achieve popular Hollywood expressions of contemporary history, abusing in cavalier fashion the conventions of social issue and social realism genres in his 'state of the nation' stories.<sup>9</sup> But despite his avowed intention to radically criticise existing institutions, viewers are usually left mystified about the social and political scenario portrayed. Crippling liberties are also taken with the historical record, so precipitating fatalism about the prospects for effective political agency.

This is compounded by gross narrative oversimplification, supposedly in the interests of populism, but in practice going so far as to evacuate the complexity of situations down to a comic book shorthand. Viewers have to do their own work in transcending the indiscriminately childish pattern of motivations Stone's characters have to operate with. But by that stage, such a large proportion of any recognisably social context has been eviscerated that few strategies remain for imagining how the fictional problematic might relate to our real lives.

### Noddy and Big Ears Go Psycho

Renewed child violence and copycat scares gave *Natural Born Killers* free hype - the calibre of 'evidence' being more laughable than usual (eg *Panorama* BBC1, 27/2/95). Sure enough its characters seem indiscriminately deranged grown-up babies, even if their personalities and development are hidden from us. Backgrounds of horrific abuse and random misfortune would be convincing precursors of this killing spree only if the action took place *inside* the psychopaths' vengeful unconscious fantasy-lives. In that case the moral - *it was the telly wot did it* - would be a provocative comment on media zombification. We could speculate on how destroying the tissues of community enhances, as it cuts adrift, violent infantile impulses which otherwise get woven back into intersubjective creative experience.

But we learn nothing about how any real world phenomena are generated, overdetermined, conditioned, articulated and driven.



If the media bewitch us exactly so that we do remain ignorant, that can't account for the *desperation* of liberals like Stone trying to recuperate disenchantment with the information age and its media, while striving to maintain coherent positions for themselves (where all those 60s gurus failed?). Worse, such familiar leftist elitism would concur with *Natural Born Killers*' implicit argument that *specifics* don't matter: of cultural connection, social context, or how viewers' experiences are woven into our lives. Since the media turn it into a glossy celebrity distraction; it is, in effect, distracting us in precisely that way; *and* that's all it does. Or has someone read too much Baudrillard?

The film's main innovation is its constant background visual noise of distorted, agitated fragments of film, hand-held, home video, black and white, TV, animation, pop video, computer simulation and other visual styles infesting walls, skies or any surface that holds still long enough. Now and again one of these techniques infiltrates the main action for sustained moments, profoundly enthralling and unsettling the viewer, forcing even closer attention.

This breathtaking strategy of montage serves as multiple analogy: TV segmentation and random juxtaposition (channel-hopping, succession of images etc); the jumbled chaos of symbolic, social, and urban environments; and the crazy work of the id, here magically materialised. A mythical media junkie's unconscious is filtered through the director's ego and projected (cinematically and psychologically) within a cinema screen. Despite these layers of processing, artifice and distanciation it is a marvellous metaphor for media saturated culture.

Action films are utterly (unwittingly) spoofed. The irony and subtlety of a Tarantino script is sacrificed for pompous seriousness, so the actors have no choice but to caricature infantility. Formal pyrotechnics replace pulp devices of affectionate banter and wry humour amidst humdrum horror. Clumsy, staged references to other films are paradoxically *more* comical amid the ad hoc existentialism and romantic fatalism which show no sign of the reflexiveness that might give them integrity. And in the prison riot, the police, media and governor's decadence, the execution of the media pundit, and the outlaw woman's bodily refusal of victimhood, middle class America's nightmare of underclasses out

of control comes into sharp focus.

As usual Stone can't handle the complexities of politics plus media in the face of social forces beyond a superficial individual level. Like its woeful TV predecessor *Wild Palms*, this film poses as a serious cultural object by neurotically hamming up the technological wizardry. It falsifies and trivialises the way the media deal with crime and violence, and is irrelevant to their real contemporary expressions. It is transparently parasitic on its cultural context - usually commercial products parade social conscience as niche marketing, not hiding behind it as a crusading principle.

Stone will convince those whose grasp of structures of power, and capacity for agency in the world are as shallow, cynical and narcissistic as he is. *Natural Born Killers* and its ilk only have corrosive effects on those whose smugness and jaded tastes are relatively untouched by the material immediacy of 1990s impoverishment and brutality. We can interpret it (and the panic-hype reception) as a display of intense hysterical anxiety by the elite middle classes at the predicament their ethics, technology and aesthetics are bringing their children to; and at the same time abject fear as they see their brave old world beginning to slip away, threatened with ease by the demons of their own creation. *That they hate themselves so much, and know us so little...*

### Blood From A Stone

Stone's films unwittingly reproduce the alienating social effects of the media and government operations he claims to want to change. This banal grandiosity contributes to their success as films - but in the ambivalent pleasures they evoke, we glimpse the tragically robust persistence of government-by-capitalism. More optimistically, his films demonstrate that conventional wisdom about possible paths to personal, social or political change (as expressed by the film maker or his leading characters) are definitely not going to be useful as such in our lives. They are the social and political opiates of the enemy - *their* weakness, not ours, and crying out to be travestied as such.

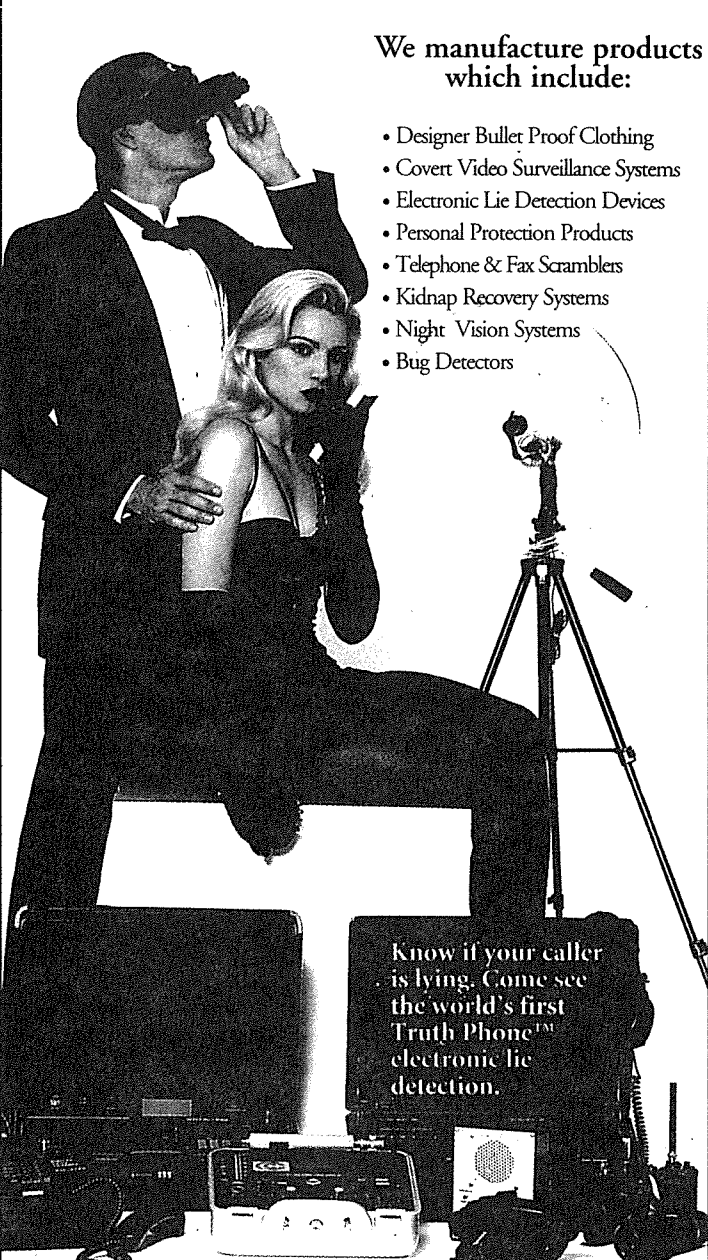
The cinema audience may use the power of film images to resonate with our fantasy lives - which is another way of saying, the exploration of possibilities; catalysts and raw materials for thought and intention, dream and action. And if we fantasise what we don't have, those in control fear what they may lose. Given their contemporary cinematic visions of the world and its people, their confidence seems to be at a surprisingly low ebb, balancing subversion and containment more hysterically than ever. Even if we can't take that much heart from their discomfiture, surely we can at least take every opportunity to expose it publicly.

### Notes

1. Main sources for the left on culture: Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction*; Callinicos, A. (1989) *Against Postmodernism*; Featherstone, M. (1991) *Consumer Culture & Postmodernism*; Jameson, F. (1991) *Postmodernism*; McGuigan, J. (1992) *Cultural Populism*; Ross, A. (1989) *No Respect*; Szczelkun, S. (1993) *Conspiracy of Good Taste*. My contributions to *Here & Now* 11, 14 & 15 also cover some of this ground.
2. see Ian Tillium, 'Technological Despotism', *Here & Now* 15; and Bonnano, A. (1988) *From Riot to Insurrection*.
3. Some examples of pessimism, cynicism, quietism etc: Lash, S. & J. Urry (1994) *Economies of Signs and Space*; Poster, M. (Ed) (1988) *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*; Fiske, J. (1989) *Understanding the Popular and Reading the Popular*.
4. For culture and the grass-roots, I used: Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*; de Certeau, M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*; McGuigan (1992); Willis, P. (1990) *Common Culture*; and E.P. Thompson's studies.

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5. Sadly this seems to exclude most of the libertarian left.
6. Books on cinema I found useful are: Collins, J. et al (1993) *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*; Corrigan, T. (1991) *A Cinema Without Walls*; Kuhn, A. (1990) *Alien Zone*; Tasker, Y. (1993) *Spectacular Bodies*; Turner, G. (1993) *Film As Social Practice*.
7. Seen most clearly in exploitation genres like horror and porn. See for example: Clover, C.J. (1992) *Men, Women and Chainsaws*; Newman, K. (1988) *Nightmare Movies*; Segal, L. & M. McIntosh (Eds) (1992) *Sex Exposed*; Williams, L.R. (1993) 'Erotic Thrillers & Rude Women', *Sight & Sound*, July, pp12-14.
8. see Frank Dexter, *Seriality Kills*, *Here & Now* Issue 12, and the ensuing debate in *Here & Now* Issue 13.
9. including: a Vietnam War trilogy - *Platoon*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Heaven and Earth*; the parapolitics of *JFK*; a biopic of *The Doors*; gangster stories in *Wall Street* and the script for *Scarface*; and accounts of the media and US politics, from *Salvador* and *Talk Radio* to *Wild Palms* (TV series) and *Natural Born Killers*.

# Letters.

Dear Here & Now

I was most impressed by your attempt to come to terms with the complexities of the issues raised in the controversy between *Searchlight* and myself/others (*Here & Now* No.14). As is my wont, however, there are a few points I would like to make. For a start, I noticed a difference of emphasis between the general introduction, which seemed to take it as more or less read that *Searchlight* does collaborate with the state, and D.Keoghty's article, which seemed to sidestep it. Happily, further evidence has been produced in recent times - from Gable's admission in *New Statesman* (22/10/93) that the 'Gable Memo' was genuine, to *Searchlight's* evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, culminating in a call for investigation of Combat 18 to be given over to...MI5 (see January Editorial)! This was exactly the line I had predicted *Searchlight* would take, as outlined in Appendix 3 to 'At War With the Truth' published in November. There I outline the career of *Searchlight*/MI5 agent Tim Hepple in final, damning, detail.

I must take slight issue with the reference on p.37 to people "involved...full time in...organisations". Neither I (so far!), Robin Ramsay of *Lobster*, or *Green Anarchist* are paid any money for what we write, and it is that (I suggest) which distinguishes us (and yourselves at *Here & Now*) from *Searchlight* and indeed the ARA/ANL (Anti-Racist Alliance/Anti-Nazi League) leadership. On a personal note, despite knowing myriad details about the *Searchlight* 'team', I have never communicated any of such to anyone on the Right, this despite *Searchlight's* disgraceful harassment of myself at my workplace in particular, culminating in the taking of my photograph. I see in a slightly different light, meriting a more proactive course, the fact that a current *Searchlight* agent inside the BNP (British National Party) is, I firmly believe, encouraging fascists to beat me up - and as such I feel no sympathy whatsoever towards him, and am at present accumulating a dossier on him, from a wide variety of sources, for possible exposure at a future date. Two disgusting things I suspect this particular *Searchlight*/state agent of, is the co-production of both an anti-semitic magazine (*Einherjar*) and a bogus 'Black Power' poster leading back to a (real) BNP post-box in Blackburn. Sick or what??

The introduction speaks of a "disturbing feature of anti-fascism" paralleling the language/practice of the "intelligence community". This is in part, I would submit, because the secret state has sought/is seeking to mount operations in both the anti-fascist and fascist camps. The exposure of such is necessary to, but not a **substitute for** broader anti-fascist strategies. However it must

be a matter of concern that a secret state asset - *Searchlight* magazine - appears to be heavily influencing elements in the leadership of both Leeds AFA (Anti-Fascist Action) (eg. their 'Security Alert' of Summer 1993 concerning me/Scargill) and Tyne & Wear AFA, as well as providing 'intelligence input' into the ANL, thereby seeking to both **monitor** the ANL/local AFA groups and use them to gather information on behalf of the state (even if it may not seem this way at the time to those so directed). This would come as a shock to the vast majority of Leeds/Tyne & Wear AFA/ANL members, but is, I submit, both eminently possible - and very disturbing.

Turning to D.Keoghty's article, I disagree somewhat with the writing off of the far Right implicit therein. As he says, I am concerned to examine the output of 'thinking fascists' however small, because I believe them to be a greater threat than the likes of the BNP in the medium to long term, strategically. It is most definitely not the case in some of these sophisticated publications that the image of fascism is of "tattooed thugs and sinister paranoids" (p.42) - far from it. I fully agree with his critique of the cynical Left view (at times) that sees anti-fascism as merely another recruitment opportunity, to be dropped when that task is achieved, irrespective of the level of fascist threat. I too remember well, and was impressed by, the Martin Thom articles in *Wedge* (1978) criticising the use of disease/contamination metaphors to describe fascists. Where at all possible, I try to avoid such language, and am pleased the only example you quoted from 'my' side (on *Searchlight* as a "poisonous parasite") wasn't actually by me - though I'm sure I must have made some such slip somewhere!!

More generally, your article raises a series of questions about fascism/anti-fascism I hope to dwell on elsewhere, I would however take issue to an extent with the occasional tendency (present in Barrot earlier to a degree) to draw too simplistic an equation between fascists and anti-fascists **at times** in the article. I don't see the two as moral equivalents, and in any event *Searchlight* are (in my book) not **really** anti-fascists - that's just a sideline for their other operations, as I hope *At War With The Truth* illustrates. I sense that you don't **really** see anti-fascists and fascists as equivalent - hence your forthright (and most welcome) defence of myself at the end of the article.

And now we get to **that** quiz. I was in real pain, I cried so much with laughter as I read it. My (humble) answers are as follows : 1=B, 2=C, 3=A, 4=C (as well as being a state asset) 5=B, C & D, 6=E, 8 is a question I won't try to answer (too easy) but 7 is (of course) the trick one - the



**real** answer is (perhaps?) that Wombat 92 was (maybe?) produced by MI6 as a shot across the bows of all those involved, to remind us of their knowledge, expertise and close observing interest ... To conclude (and the above comments notwithstanding), I really liked the article, & found the chronology an inspired method of approaching the subject,

Yours sincerely,

Larry O'Hara

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Dear Here & Now,

## **Armchair Angst And The Agonies Of Alternative Academics**

Alan Cohen's letter (*Here & Now* 15,p.33) focused on several points I tried to get over in the article about Class War and 'revolutionary purism' ('The Hidden Injuries of Theory', *Here & Now* 14,p.18-22), but he consistently reverses or misreads my intention or position. My untrained, clumsy style of writing may be to blame, but I suspect the aforementioned purism looms large. He states that I "seem to think that marxism is obsolete;" that I'm "searching for some new social theory;" that I "deny the validity of any unifying theory of historical and social movement;" and that I scorn "the notion of an international working class". He goes on to align me and those ideas to the bourgeoisie and its hired thinkers, alternative academics etc.

Alan's main reason for writing was to stress the "gap between the idea of historical progress as a bourgeois myth justifying all the iniquities of capitalism", and the view that capitalism was "a step forward for humanity". But while there is a gap, both are surely accurate; and anyway, what's far more important than their truth or proof is who uses the ideas, in what ways, for what purposes, and how this relates to other existing institutions, practices and discourses. Honouring ideas per se, in marxism or any other candidate for ultimate theoretical god-head, is historically consistent with the privileges and tasks of aspiring middle class fractions (see 'Corrupting Left Intellectual Culture' *Here & Now* 15 pp.22-24). Here this turns out to be the "alternative academia" that Alan identifies with (in his Preface to *Decadence of the Shamans*,

Unpopular Books 1991) but which he now projects onto and attributes to me instead.

Having, and desiring, no investment or involvement in academic disciplines or institutions, I don't get to junket at international academic conferences - but good luck to you, pal! Also when trying to understand my own and others' experiences - for political purposes rather than seeking perfect knowledge - I may try to apply sets of ideas, even theories, that can do justice to the levels of complexity encountered. Sometimes this criterion gets priority over others more concerned with philosophical provenance, political family descent, or the subcultural 'done thing'. So I simply *do not know* whether an 'international working class', as a *singular*, active, embodied entity, is something that can be achieved or should be aimed at.

What I am fairly sure of is that if your totalising theory characterises the bulk of managers, planners, scientists, bureaucrats, and 'professionals' as 'working class' because they sell their labour - if this is the 'proletariat' you see yourself as part of - then you can't be trusted to know the answer either. That's the point I was trying to make, not whether this notion is accurate, or that approach is valid, or the other theory is true, but *how it can be said to be true, by who, what those people gain by making such claims, and what further effects this has*. From this angle, "consciously taking the side of the revolutionary movement" is not enough to transcend class background and current position. The result in this case is to misperceive in others what you don't acknowledge in yourself. Indeed, as Alan ends his letter, "that will require a thorough discussion of what the revolutionary movement is today - and what it isn't".

Incidentally, *Decadence of the Shamans* is a fascinating analysis of tribal spiritualism, giving much food for thought despite its outdated depth psychology. Alan Cohen's book could be a starting point for examining and re-articulating processes and functions in modern groups and communities inherited from shamanistic practices (or at the very least, their remnants or traces) which may serve important purposes again as part of revolutionary struggle: such as working class intellect, charisma, leadership and other so-called 'personal' attributes. Witness also the persistence of the Wise Woman role in self-determination struggles and native people's movements. In the west too, the sheer exuberance and determined sexual self-expression of various women's networks, along with the activism of sex industry workers, might yet unlock the impasse between petit bourgeois pornographers and censorious state apologists. The Queer refusal to read gender from biological sex, being downright vulgar, public and loud about it into the bargain, might similarly help avoid the private career/identity/individual/PC focus of much of what has passed for sexual politics recently. Organic connections with lower class (ie: working class as *opposed* to middle class) cultures and struggles might be key factors.

If all this makes my murmurings anti-feminist (Lucy Forsyth, 'The Power and the Glory', *Here & Now* 15, p.34), well, it seems to me that we are in the midst of *multiple* classes, feminisms, theories, practices and all sorts of other diversities - the potential of which could easily be denied, ignored or suppressed, as in the inane SWP (and other) celebrations of the same old mistakes. but Lucy's claim that the best practitioners are also the best theorists surely implies that Debord's Situationism must be one of the worst theories ever. But then the proposition was a situationist one...?! ...Leaving armchair angst to alternative academics means the rest of us can continue muddling confusedly through our practice and theory. What Alan Cohen describes as Decadence, I prefer to interpret as Corruption. Nurtured differently, corruption can lead in pleasurable and fearsome new directions, not to a distant past or a future of singular, unified, sterile purity. It still depends on who is doing it, how and why.

Tom Jennings

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Dear Here & Now,

#### SURREALISM AGAIN

Alex Richard's review of the pamphlet **Surrealism Always For The First Time** by Kenneth Cox and Sarah Metcalf was welcome in as much as it advertised its existence and seemed essentially well meant, but it also bears witness to a fundamental misunderstanding of Surrealism that I am reluctant to see uncorrected. Taking the points one at a time and starting with the title:

1. *Escaping the Gallery* Surrealism has never been so situated in the gallery that it has needed to escape. At the most one could say that its popular image, as reflected in the media, in ignorant art histories etc. is trapped there, but this is nothing to do with Surrealism itself. Although Surrealism is not an art movement it is, however, true that there are a great number of surrealists who are artists. For us the gallery is as good an arena as any to manifest surrealist activity. The only questions really are which gallery, what concessions they demand, how to avoid the sad grubby equation of art and money as the sole criterion of the worth of creativity.

2. *Surrealism always present (sic) itself as a clean break with what exists* This is hardly accurate, although it does have some point. Surrealism dissociates itself from the dominant ideologies of our time, and all conventions of thought and behaviour, including its own, but at the same time it seeks precedents for its own perspectives (remember Breton's list of predecessors in the **Manifesto of Surrealism**; Sade, Swift, Young, Hugo, Vache etc.). What becomes redundant must always be jettisoned, what remains relevant must be kept. This is so for any movement or school of thought. Surrealism does indeed "tangle with own history" (sic) but this need not be problematic, and unless one has accurate knowl-

edge of the subject it is not correct to pontificate on the matter.

3. *What is more dubious if any revived surrealism is to avoid past faults, is their rejection of the view that Surrealism had its origin in an organisational recuperation of Dada*: But the Surrealist Movement has its roots in the period before the emergence of Paris Dada, in the Litterature group. Surrealists do not, can not, deny the powerful formative influence of Dada, but it was one of several influences, mostly predating that of Dada. Dada was an important phase that the first surrealists went through. However, the specific orientation of Surrealism as it emerged fully in the 20's was one of reaction against Dada's nihilism and a clarification of its own perspectives as distinct from that movement. It could be said that the Surrealist Movement was an organisational recuperation of the embryonic Surrealism of the Litterature group after the impact of Dada, in which Dada also played the part of a kind of midwife.

From this point of view, how is it possible to speak of Surrealism avoiding its past faults? There is no account at all of what these faults may be.

4. *As ever, it remains to be seen how the rhetorical intensity of such avant-gardism can root itself in particular activity*: Something that Surrealism does announce itself as breaking from is the notion of the avant-garde. I think I am right in thinking that Peter Burger believes Surrealism is the ultimate avant-gard, but his views have no sanction from Surrealism itself. If we are to discuss Surrealism in relation to the avant-garde we must define our terms, something that Alex Richards fails to do.

5. *This is especially so at the end of the century during which capitalism fed from avant-gardism to realise its own peculiar mundane "intensification of everyday life" in pursuit of the purchase of the marvellous*. But as this is specifically what Surrealism sets its face against, where's the beef?

I would not wish to suggest that the continuation (rather than the revival) of the surrealist adventure is not without its problems, nor that Surrealism itself does not contain certain contradictions, as one might expect from any movement or system, but I regret to say that Alex Richards generally fails to put his finger on them. Also, I am far from equivocally defending **Surrealism Always For The First Time** as an exposition of surrealist theory. It is a single sheet pamphlet intended to stimulate interest and inevitably it employs a rhetorical style. But although it can not bear the weight of accounting for the entirety of surrealist theory, it does accurately reflect the perspectives of the Surrealist Movement. It is probable that a short piece such as Alex Richards' review can similarly not fully account for his critique of Surrealism, but given the extent of his misconception apparent in three short paragraphs I have to doubt that greater length would do anything towards making it more incisive.

Stuart Inman

Dear Here & Now,

I was interested in to read the references in issue fourteen to the dispute between Searchlight and Larry O'Hara amongst many others.

I have certain comments to make on your Chronology.

1. July 1986 - You ignore the influence of the Distributists (Chesterton, Belloc etc.) and Catholic Social teaching on the development of ONF policy in favour of more outlandish (and in my opinion less influential) figures.
2. 1989 - Greenwave was never taken over by the Flag - their members could not sustain an interest in Green issues. Greenwave was linked first to the ONF and then Third Way.
3. Jan. 1990 - The ONF was disbanded as a political organisation in December 1990.
4. March 17 1991 - The Third Way did not split from the ONF. That organisation was no longer active.
5. May 1991 - It was not a march by the League of St. George which was attacked but a private ticket only meeting held in a hall in Kensington.
6. July 1992 - Larry O'Hara was described by Searchlight as my "errand boy". I communicate with anyone who asks serious questions as numerous journalists and students could testify. I have even in the past communicated with Searchlight associate Andrew Bell. The only relevant difference between O'Hara and others I have communicated with is his sustained interest and level of background knowledge. I respect him as an independent researcher.

I would also like to make two general points regarding your coverage.

(1) Fascism is characterised by its infatuation with authoritarianism and militarism. As a de-centralist movement advocating a system of direct democracy and neutrality in foreign affairs the Third Way cannot sensibly be labelled "fascist". The reason some opponents do this is in my view due to two factors:-

(A) Because a number (though by no means the majority) of Third Way members were once in the ONF and

(B) Because any group organised against Capitalism which is not Anarchist or Marxist in orientation is viewed by many Marxists as "fascist", "neo-fascist", or "crypto-fascist". One cannot help feeling that the desire for a political monopoly is an influence here.

(2) If as you state different political tendencies are reading each others' material this may be no bad thing. A more informed debate may be the result: even a dialogue? With this thought in mind I enclose some of our publications and a cheque for £3 as a subscription from issue fifteen.

Patrick Harrington

PS. I wouldn't even attempt your Readers' Quiz!

Dear **Here & Now**,

As one of those published in **Liberation** (Issue 4) I assume that my work ("Re-writing Scottish education") is amongst that which Jim McFarlane condemns as "rubbish" and "lamentable...delusions" (sic - one 'I' Jim) ("Headbutts": **Here & Now**, Issue 15). While saddened I am not especially surprised. It is a common misunderstanding that there can be no reconciliation between anarchist and nationalist aspirations.

Contrary to the popular belief, which I assume he shares, nationalism is not now nor has it ever been synonymous with either nazism or fascism - Mussolini himself acknowledged (in **The Doctrines of Fascism**) that "national pride has no need of the delirium of race". But that is by way of a minor point. What concerns many anarchists when they encounter nationalism is that it appears to give primacy to the imagined end-in-itself of freeing the nation over the cause of individual liberation. There is a variety of nationalism which takes as its starting point the supposed rights of mythical entities such as 'the land' or the 'volk' and this pernicious because it involves reification which allows for the possibility of the elimination of all members of a nation in the suicidal pursuit of a transcendent end. That is: the end of seeing that the land/volk gets what is its by right. Fortunately it need not be so.

There is a second variety of nationalism in which the aspiration is to achieve some good end(s) for each individual person identified collectively through the most convenient unit - the nation. I hold no brief to speak for **Liberation** nor any other of its readers or contributors but I know that I cleave to just such an idea and imagine that many others do so as well. That is to say: I identify the people of Scotland as the Scottish nation and all talk of working or caring for *it* is simply a short-hand expression of aspiration for *them*.

Further, liberation of the nation is not any sort of end in itself for most 'nationalists' in Scotland today but it is a useful proving ground. once people have won a significant victory on that level how much more willing and able will they be to seek liberation in all the other departments of their lives? As the highland Land League motto had it "The people are mightier than any laird"; the only problem is they don't necessarily know it yet.

Finally, those who are indeed committed to the ideal of the parallel existential and institutional revolutions must realise that the crucial lack in the lives of most people in Greater Europe (that is: Europe and the Europeanised countries) today is neither health nor wealth but self-belief. This is attested to by any number of phenomena from graffiti to millennialist religion to anti-social violence - empty vessels do indeed make the most noise. This being the case it follows that ways and means must be found to instil in people the sense that they are themselves valuable and capable. one way of doing just that is to let them see that they come from a tradition of achievement; that they have a national heritage.

However, if he still wants to, Jim McFarlane is welcome to carry on keeping company with the landowners, capitalists, militarists, blood 'sports' enthusiasts and English cultural supremacists who are the only people whose interests are served by the Union. But as it has often been said, those who lie down with dogs are likely to catch any one of a number of awkward social diseases.

I am, and remain, yours faithfully

DAVID LIMOND

## Reply to Harrington

Patrick Harrington and his outfit call themselves nationalists to eschew the fascist label. Fair enough. Our disgust at his politics is in no way diminished by accepting this terminology. We oppose nationalism precisely because it demonstrates the reversibility of the tactical move: nationalists say they are not fascists; fascists say they are really nationalists. Tweedle-dum.

Harrington wishes to bind Distributism to his curious pot-pori of Italian fascist thinking, trendy Greenery, and post-modern ethnic purism which he would like to pass off as a new political tendency. Distributism - the idea that productive property should be widely distributed throughout the population - perhaps deserves such a fate given its flirtation with far Right ideology and anti-semitism in the 1930s, but like other subterranean economic heresies (such as the ideas of Henry George, J.A. Hobson and Social Credit) we are not going to be put off examining it for fruitful anti-capitalist possibilities because of its historical associations. Harrington's relation to distributism is like the Trotskyists relation to Marxism writ small: yes, there is a direct genealogical connection, but there are so many other directions of possible development...

As for the 'dialogue' he craves: well, it is quite clear he's not looking for any new ideas but is into the business of sandcastle building. This activity involves kicking over other people's sandcastles. He just wants an audience like any other political gangster. We have nothing to learn from him. He will get no more from reading our mag than the SWP hacks would, and since we're obviously not interested in 'dialogue' with them, it is certainly not possible to have one with Third Way.

How's about 'dialogues' between Scottish nationalists, Irish Republicans, and National Fronters (Official, New, Flag or Third Way)? They at least talk a common language: they all want a State for their Nation, just different notions of what their Nation is. Any 'national' traditions we may be made to admit an affection for depends on leaving 'politics' and especially states out of it.

Finally his complaint about being labelled fascist might be taken more seriously if it was accompanied by a forthright rejection of racism. There are a number of individuals on the fringes of the fascist movement who have made overtures to revolutionaries critical of the Left. Their 'disillusion' with the various neo-Nazi outfits they have been a part of always seem somewhat mealy-mouthed. Before they can be expected to be listened to, an account of how they were attracted to such gangs in the first place would be in order, together with a rejection of the nationalist politics they espoused. Since Harrington seems to believe that labelling him a fascist is all a terrible mistake, or a conspiracy of anarchists and Marxists, perhaps he might care to repudiate his genteel plans for the repatriation of non-Europeans as outlined in Third Way's aims and principles. The point about fascism is that it is never just about militarism, storm-troopers and swastikas - it also has to have a respectable side. In the current period that includes a commitment to Greenery, decentralisation and 'small is beautiful' - tendencies which can all be found on the horizon of present-day capitalism.

John Barrett

## Reply to Limond

Thank you for your letter exploring what you take to be Here & Now's attitude to nationalism, extrapolated from the "Headbutts" column in no. 15.

Your second paragraph addressed the assumption that Nationalism was being equated with Nazism or Fascism. I see nothing in Jim MacFarlane's column to support that assumption. However, I am curious at your use of a quotation from Mussolini ("national pride has no need of the delirium of race"), which I would take to support analysis of Fascism without prejudices carried over from Nazism. And such an analysis of Mussolini would raise the issue of his transformation from syndicalist to nationalist. I have not read deeply on Mussolini, but what I have read has made me view his Fascism not as a volkische doctrine but as a pernicious blend wherein Nationalism acted as a catalyst to "liberate" the worst aspects of Syndicalism. Which, I would have thought, is something which anyone seeking to utilise Nationalism needs to face and explore.

You propose the old progressivist argument whereby "the people" seek one particular liberation and then go forward to each other in turn. This is a timeworn model which seems to appeal to common sense. (It is even one for which some of us had sympathy in the mid 1970s.) However, doubt can be cast on it. Firstly, can you point to any real example of this having occurred? Even staying with national liberation movements, surely what has been seen (in Ireland, Algeria, etc.) could, at the kindest, be described as a retrenchment around the national ideal rather than a going forward. Emergence of any further liberation movement, for example a feminist movement, can be perceived as an attempt to split the nation and hence as anti-national.

What form does the retrenchment take? Sometimes it is manoeuvred by an emerging Great Leader wrapping himself in the flag, demanding sacrifices for the nation, invoking emergency legislation against a strike, etc., etc. But it is as likely to be well-meaning, involving "ventriloquism" by professional-managerial elites speaking for the nation. This possibility seems to be present when you say "I identify the people of Scotland as the Scottish nation and all talk of working or caring for it is simply a shorthand expression of aspiration for them". The people seem to have slipped away from subject to object - a "they" in whom selected values must be instilled.

For what is missing from your suggested reconciliation of anarchist and nationalist aspirations is a sense of what a movement towards "liberation" would be. How would it manifest itself? On the separate terrain of politics? Or activity within everyday life? Here we are in danger of slipping into counterposing rival mythical movements. But it is not self-evident that the most convenient unit of identification is the nation, nor that the nation is the level at which we experience the difference between what we are and what we would be. It has been to anarchism's credit that (except in its more bolshevised moments) it has rejected the illusion of a separate political sphere whose agents can be trusted with bringing social change. The movement which you propose seems closer to a Sorelian inspiration-through-myth.

Most disturbingly, your final paragraph drops the pretence at analysis when it slumps into the orthodox enmity model. Those who don't follow my line must

follow that of my enemy, firstly caricatured as "landowners, capitalists, militarists, blood sports enthusiasts and English cultural supremacists", then finally dismissed as "dogs". And this thin stream of bile came on university headed paper! The standards of state-subsidised thought are indeed high.

But, with effort, let us try to pass that by, as a momentary aberration. It may be worth pointing out that Here & Now has previously published several articles on the nationalist illusions of the Scottish political-managerial class (e.g. on the Constitutional Convention, leading up to the April 1992 electoral debacle); unfortunately nobody wrote to dispute these articles.

Alex Richards

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**Proletarian Gob** with articles on Desmond Morris, Democracy and Anti-Social Crime. Unfortunately appears to have ceased publication following merger with **Subversion**. Folder 19,30 Silver Street, Reading RG1.

**Real WORLD** organ of ECO Campaign for political ecology. Journal of eco-centric politics. Recent issues include stuff on genetic engineering, cyber-drive, steady-state economics plus usual obsessions with population control etc. Sub. £6.00 to Real WORLD, 18 Sunnyhill Terrace, Greenside. Tyne and Wear NE40 4LE.

**The Realization and Suppression of the Situationist International: An Annotated Bibliography 1972-1992** by Simon Ford (AK Press) 1995

As the introduction admits, this bibliography represents something like a shopping list.

Responses to this book range from astonishment that anyone in their right mind could want to devote themselves to compiling such a work to a nitpicking spot-the-omissions pedantry. I had both reactions at the same time. Beyond despair at the unstoppable tide of academicisation one can only plead for a more systematic construction and defence of new zones of shadow safe from the mind-sapping glare of journalist-cops, historian-cops, novelist-cops...and bibliographer-cops.

This review itself would naturally become an item in a future updated edition of the book -and that's how it works.

**Remarks on the Dole**. Mr. social control presents polemic disguised as a Michael Portillo speech on social security. Reveals that both Dole and 'Training' are primarily disciplinary institutions. £1 inc.p&p from Mr.Social Control, Sexually Re Press,P.O.Box 275 London SE6 2UB.

**Scottish Anarchist No.2**. Includes resistance to Edinburgh Unemployed Centre closure, Free Pollock, Anarchy and the Internet, History of Anarchism in Glasgow. £1.00 from c/o GAG,P.O.Box 1008,Glasgow G428AA.

**Towards 2012 journal of millennial mutation**, a Leeds based mag based on the premise that history's zero-point will be 6am. December 21st 2012 AD, when 'an influx of novelty will burst open an entirely new dimension'. Invites contributions. Available from the Unlimited Dream Company PO Box HP94, Leeds LS6 1YJ. UK.

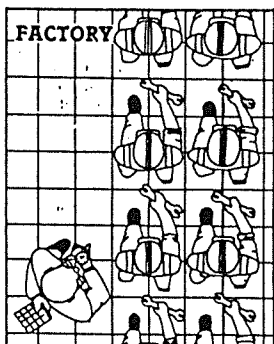
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**Hands Up: Four Anarchists and an Armed Robbery**. Dossier of the arrest and trial of four anarchists in Italy: Carlo Tesseri, Jean Weir, Antonio Budini

and Christos Stratigopoulos on charges of armed robbery.

Unapologetic account of their motives without any of the political self-aggrandisement which usually accompanies such events. The four, plus another anarchist, are now facing a frameup of several other unsolved robberies. Please send money to post office current account in the name of Mario Anzoino, no. 14385108, via Baretto 9, 10125 Torino, Italy. Dossier available from BM Elephant, London, WC1N 3XX.

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**Little Tenement On The Volga**. Claudia surpasses herself in this account of a year in the formerly closed city of Samara in Russia. She tells how the population survive despite the economy and its new capitalists/gangsters. Women feature in this society as both the source of stability and as agents reproducing their own oppression. Claudia's account, based on personal experience, concurs with the view of Russians as a people lurching between a sort of natural anarchism and a desire for authoritarian order. For an honest and sometimes inspiring portrayal of people striving to remain human in inhuman conditions this book could hardly be bettered. While Claudia sees mainly dangers in the future the remarkable tenacity of the non-money economy in a rapidly capitalising system could prove to be a source of hope. In the wings however are the old devils of nationalism and racism waiting to fill the political vacuum created by the marketisation of the old state capitalist economy. Available from C.S.Walton Claudia Press BM Claudia London WC1N 3XX

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**Green Fascism**  
The perspective of *Perspectives* is a thinking person's Green Fascism: behind the user-friendly 'E' words (ecology, european) is the unstated but perfectly audible 'R' word (racism). It says *Green* but means *White*; its fashionable pluralism ("identities, autonomies and initiatives") is a recycled volkisch federalism.  
Why should we bother with this obscure publication? Firstly, *Here and Now* should recognise its own mirror-image (*Perspectives* has been called the *Here and Now* of the Far Right) and what they

have in common is more than the fellow-obscurety in which all cats are black: their project similarly seeks to take on nothing less than the totality of modern culture and call into question head-on all the received wisdom of 'radicalism'. Any magazine that can review Stewart Home, E.P. Thompson, Tarantino and John Gray has a prima facie case to be considered 'interesting'.

Secondly, it is a small sign of the larger realignments consequent of the restructuring of political space in which 'Left' and 'Right' have lost their earlier meaning.

But beyond this, there is no denying the intrinsic curiosity of another radical magazine fishing in the same waters: the attraction of common interests mix with the horror of its political difference, or is it the other way round? Mark Wegierski, one of their intellectual bright-sparks, writing in *Telos* last year, describes their ideology in terms which read almost like an advertisement targeted personally at the *Here and Now* writers:

"...it may become the ideology of choice for those intellectuals still opposed to capitalism - that intellectually-honest part of the Left attempting to come to terms both with the collapse of "really-existing socialism" and a triumphant Western consumerist society predicated on managerial-therapeutic capitalism" (*Telos* 98-99 Spring 1994 p. 55)

These seductions prove to be disappointing, however, when one recognises the basis of *Perspectives*' theory: its 'anti-capitalism' is confined to an all-too-vague anti-finance rhetoric; its anti-consumerism is just facile anti-Americanism (aren't we all against Disney & MacDonalds?), and its standpoint for a critique of the "managerial-therapeutic" class (there is actually no critique) is exactly the same cultural-nationalist/racist jargon of authenticity on which that class currently thrives: "ethnicities", "identities" etc against which *Here and Now* has polemicalised for the last 10 years. In other words, it's not as radical as it pretends. It's yet another postmodern recycling job, jumping shamelessly onto every anti-modernist, anti-rational bandwagon going in the same direction.

If anyone from this magazine is reading this, here is a challenge: what do you actually mean by *Capitalism*?

The idea that 'Left' and 'Right' have ceased to be relevant or that this polarity has been superseded is itself often expressed in a self-contradictory way. If one considers real political forces and what they are actually doing rather than the abstract metaphorical geometry superimposed on them (and remember the Left/Right idea is not itself a point of view: it can be seen from the Left, the Right or a self-appointed 'Centre'), then the Left and the Right are pretty much alive and kicking. People have changed sides, developed new goals, are seeking

new supporters etc, but the Left/Right schema still operates, alongside others. It was in fact ever thus: the Left/Right schema was just as false when it was apparently hegemonic.

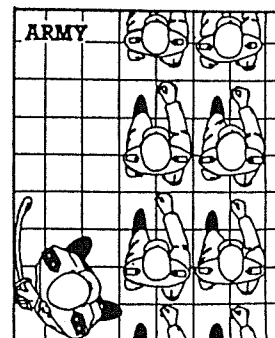
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### LARRY'S GAME

**Turning Up the Heat: MI5 After the Cold War** by Larry O'Hara (Phoenix Press) 1994, £5 from BCM 4769, London WC1N 3XX

This book could be strongly recommended for the detailed information it provides about recent spook activities, particularly in the fascist/anti-fascist field and the anarchist-animal rights milieu, were it not for the fact that the author's reasoning is sometimes narrowly single-minded to the point of myopia, so that 'connections' are strung together by the dubious method of using his own suspicions as if they were proven facts when it suits the argument in hand. This is the danger to which all conspiracy analysis is prone: finding a 'link' of one kind between two named individuals being treated as evidence of common political purpose in all kinds of other respects. You know the kind of thing: organisation X has served as a conduit for MI5 disinformation; individual Y has worked for organisation X; individual Z had his book published by company A, which also published a book by individual Y; therefore individual Z works for MI5.

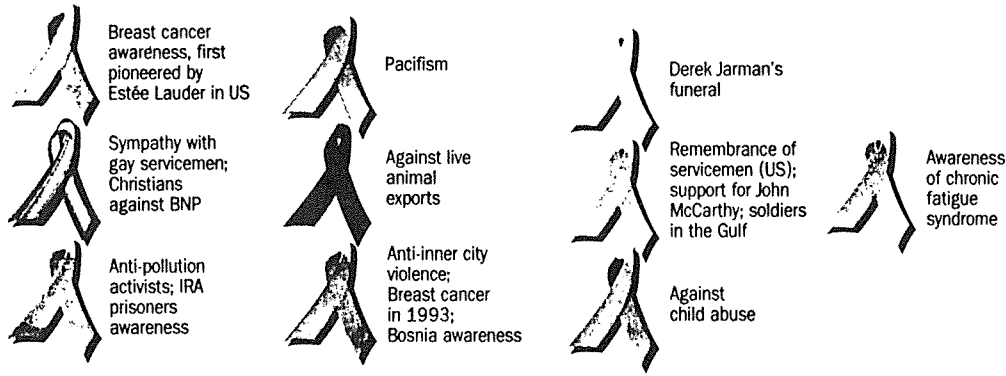
Nevertheless, anyone reading this book will know what to expect and they will find much of interest. The central thesis of the book is that MI5 has been reorienting its activities towards a whole range of new targets in the wake of the end of its main cold war business and the disturbing prospect of a possible settlement of the Irish conflict. One impor-



tant theme in O'Hara's account is that MI5 takes a strong interest in infiltrating and manipulating fascist groups, for example; he also tries to show that the green movement, animal rights groups and anarchists have become identified as profitable sources of business. Rather than getting involved with current arguments about the validity of specific claims, I think people involved in these movements would do well to think about what purpose such arguments serve.

**What is MI5?**

## Political Ribbon Development



There are some persistent misconceptions around concerning just what the secret state is about and what MI5 in particular actually does. For example:

- (1) it is widely held that this organization exists in order to 'spy' on (produce information about) 'radicals' and
- (2) that it 'protects' the state from 'subversion'.

This seems to me to miss the whole point. Its official name, the 'security service', befitting the Orwellian double-speak world, should make it obvious that it really involves the opposite functions:

- (1) it produces and distributes *lies* which serve to *deceive* radicals and
- (2) actively *manages* and *disorganises* those groups it deals with (i.e. it is itself in the 'subversion' business). In other words, it produces *insecurity*.

It does this by *doing* things to people, not just 'watching' them. The question whether it is 'necessary' or whether any radical movements have ever been a serious threat to the state over the last fifty years is probably impossible to answer. Organisations of this sort are 'effective' to the extent that they secure their *own* survival. Seen in this way, MI5 is required to justify its funding and its continued functioning by making sure that sufficient disorder and anxiety is maintained in the minds of its customers (the governing elites) on whom it depends.

### Eric Preston 'With Friends Like These..'

(Available from the *Here & Now* address)

This is a personal testimony of the life of Harry Newton, who was a lifelong left-wing activist who, after his death in 1983, was named on TV by an MI5 self-styled whistleblower Cathy Massiter as a long-serving secret state operative. This unsupported allegation, from such a dubious (to say the least) source was taken surprisingly seriously by a number of people, who didn't seem interested

in considering the implications or motives for such an allegation. Similar recent smears from the same stable against former Labour Party leader Michael Foot (of being a KGB agent) have recently resulted in heavy libel damages from the tabloid press. Dead men don't sue, however. It is left to their friends to defend them. Eric Preston's account should be read as a vindication of society against statecraft and as a riposte to the anti-social logic of gossip and rumour, which constitute what passes for 'knowledge' in the political spectacle and postmodern culture.

Preston's article was originally written for *Lobster* magazine. The relevance of this story to current concerns in the radical milieu should not need too much spelling out. Elsewhere in this issue we report on recent allegations by Larry O'Hara about MI5 infiltration into both fascist and anti-fascist circles in Leeds. The relationship between the details of particular cases and the general political (and, let's face it, 'ethical') issues justify the space we are giving to these matters here: people who think and behave like secret police deserve to be treated like them. What distinguishes secret police is not just the use of tactics of subterfuge (deception, dissimulation, forging documents, dirty tricks etc) - for these techniques have many valuable and pleasurable applications, nor just destructive, subversive purposes (destabilization of radical groups, intoxication of the political environment, the spreading of confusion and suspicion, etc) - because sabotage is, again, perfectly legitimate where its purpose is socially-emancipatory. Rather what secret police do is to reinforce domination, to keep people subject to power. In other words, secret police are always out to prevent people *freeing themselves from oppression* (whether they succeed, however, is another matter); secret police are not revolutionaries and you can't make a revolution by fucking people up in the ways that these and other cops specialise in (blackmail, harassment, intimidation, bribery, surveillance, victimization, persecution, slander, etc etc). This is (why not?) a moral issue.

I know there are people who will get angry at my use of the word 'moral', but this indignation itself expresses one of very the things this word denotes, that is, the sense of outrage at the violation of an individual's right to be considered as a fellow-creature. When you try to use someone's name as a tool in a battle, treating them as an inanimate object, you are doing nothing different from...

### Readers Guide to Magazinism Today

ID/TIME OUT/GQ/BLITZ/NEW SOCIALIST/SPECTATOR/PARIS PASSION/YOU/

*Here & Now* is not a political organisation, but a magazine of radical social critique; it cohabits the world of 'radical social critique' with a number of other magazines with whom it entertains relations of different kinds. Recent changes in the surrounding *magazinery* are reported on below.

*Red Pepper* now into issue 3, is about as far from *Here & Now* politically as it is possible to get: it is the *magazinal* expression of that self-satisfied middle class network called "the socialist society" which has done so well out of the latest developments in capitalism, and its main reason for existence seems to be to express that self-satisfaction. It is at the national level what the (mercifully defunct) *Northern Star* (Leeds) was at the local level.

*Parallax* is a new venture in that sector of the academic journals market called "cultural studies". It is worth noting here because the claims to 'radicality' are integral to both the promotional strategy of this type of enterprise and to the self-delusions of the kind of intellectuals it addresses. It is now joined at the local level by *Versus* - a significant title: a disjunctive conjunction signifying 'antagonism' but it is not against anything discernable: thus revealing the vapidly abstract formal 'negativity' of modernism.

*Transgression* is another addition to the overflow. Mover and shaker-in-chief is Alastair Bonnett. Its chief interest is its high rate of typos and its eccentric typefaces, as well as its managing to rope in the likes of Stewart Home and Fabian Tompsett. The name is too depressingly conventional. There is a publishers' subcommittee somewhere combining through the *Thesaurus* for signifiers of deviation...

*Aufheben* and *Radical Chains* are, not unrealistically, seen as being near neighbours of *Here & Now*.

Capitalism today operates a special interest culture. Its magazines display the mental wares in stock on the shelves at railway stations. These consumers are meant to make of their brains is deducible from the range of magazines on display at WH Smiths: the culture displays its topographical organisation after the fashion of those 19th century phrenological models of the human head, with different portions being labelled: love, intelligence, wisdom, dieting etc. *Kings Cross to Leeds? Time enough to 'flick through' a copy of FACE.*

To find out how we use magazines, it might be easier to ask those who produce them than to ask oneself. There's probably a feature on the subject in one of them: 'why you are reading this magazine: a survey of our readers' Whether the special interests are hobbies like muscle building or politics or fashion or pop music, each magazine is a complete world. The similarities in treatment and content whether it is a yachting magazine or a magazine for Labour Party members are only discernable by reading them all - an exercise prohibited by the simple device of the scarcity of time and money. You have a free choice of which magazines you care to use; you may even peruse several, switch from one to another, even select several at random, if you wish. The circumstances simply cannot be arranged for any individual or group to systematically gather the entire range and proceed to analyse them. The producers or some marketing agency on behalf of some of them will do that sort of thing and publish the results in their own magazine for that special interest group of people who work in the magazine business. There is no general interest outside the system except the interest of the system itself i.e. of those whose special interest is the general interest of the system.

Is *Here and Now* a magazine? If the day should come when it is stocked in WH Smiths at Kings Cross (presumably classified by a place alongside *Marxism Today* or *Modern Painters*) then we will have to tackle the problem very seriously which we can for the moment postpone: how to resist or even subvert the compulsion of trying-to-get-attention. The desire to get outside the magazine system, or to 'challenge' or merely just comment upon this system can all too easily be expressed as a desire to 'attract' the magazine user. If one does that one internalises one's knowledge of the rest of the range as the 'background'. One becomes an advertiser pure and simple, with all the justifications it is possible to make. We want people to have a chance to glimpse our wares, which we know to have 'value' if only they will find them and read them. Fatal mistake. Magazines are not read. If *Here and Now* were ever to become 'successful' enough to win a place in the magazine system that would be time to cease producing a magazine. This is not some purity rule - we are safe from corruption as long as nobody has heard of us. It is rather a reminder of what the purpose of the magazine is.

# The Zone of Shadow

The Ranters lit lanterns at noon to search for evidence of their sins. Light already gave Power its vision long before *enlightenment* announced its dawning. Today, nothing stirs in the darkness without being illuminated in advance for inspection by entrepreneurs and innovators. No signs of life, nourished by the night, and free of all obligation to be responsible, reasonable or even meaningful, can be allowed to grow before being scrutinised and dissected in academies. Any affirmative resistance is now formed after the spectacle of its recuperation and is invested in accordingly. This permanent pre-emptive strike against negativity is what produces the current sense of paralysis.

The anaesthetising effect of this all-consuming research for social hope is felt but not understood. Every struggle from Animal Rights and Rave Culture to the Zapatistas will be twisted and turned till it yields complicity with posthumanism or postmodernism or even worse; whatever is unique in these eruptions is instantly disembowelled by the false generalizations of hungry niche-theorists on the make. And movements which learn to recognise themselves in this academic mirror and mimic the dead language of experts deserve their fate as items on the agenda of a no-longer-even liberal intelligentsia.

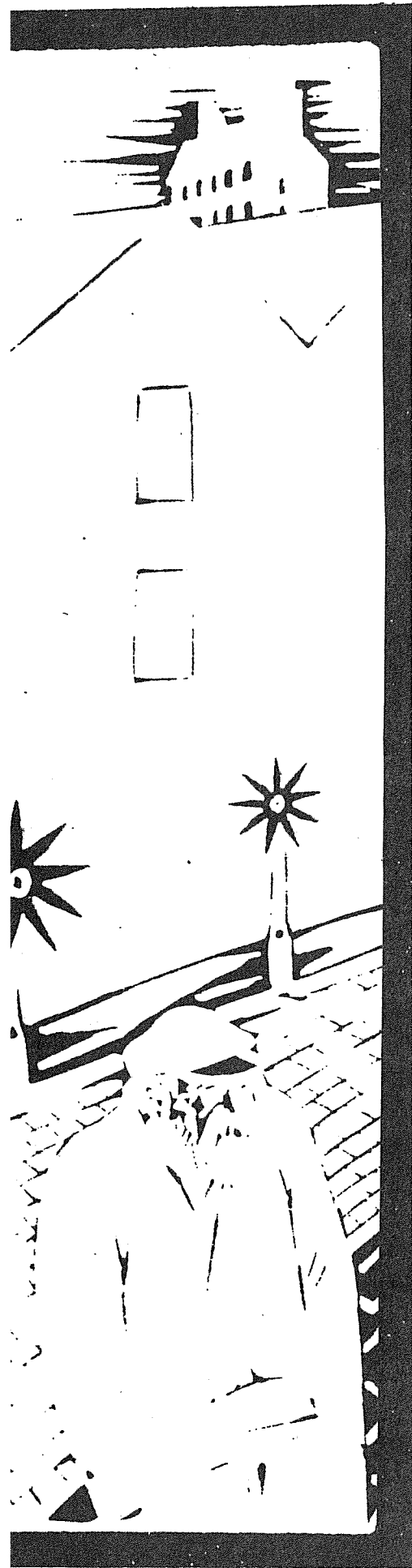
It is now time to call for a definitive end to the obsession with exposing, uncovering, revealing, and illuminating the hidden, the invisible. Only a reversal of perspective can salvage what was revolutionary in a pre-cynical age. For all who write, the private has always been a challenge. Let them fail it: the universalization of the public sphere has only undermined it. Without the necessary darkness and silence, everyday life and administration flow seamlessly into one another. No wonder the public has vacated its own space.

Radicality is now barely able to distinguish itself from its academic simulacrum. It colludes with its own dissolution by confusing the radical transformation of society with the parasitic endeavours of wannabe academics and social "improvers", while the State encourages citizen initiatives, armed with expertise and technology, and social activism fuses shamelessly with state policy.

But such "social activism" always belonged to a tradition of managerial benevolence: the pioneers of investigation, inquiry and strategic resocialization of the poor laid the foundations of the transparent society, now administered more effectively by the fourth estate with its insatiable appetite for "new issues" to be addressed, new needs to "shed light on" and new problems to "break the silence over" and all the rest of it.

Without a zone of shadow, however, the social will not survive. The social becomes nothing but the State - realizing the dream of a socialism at the very moment of its political decomposition. Those illuminated gatherings which pass for communities are dazzled by the brightness of their supervisors' lights, and even those in the gutter are unable to see the stars. Better by far to be blind than to see oneself in their projected image: to make no demands; to confess no sins.

But darkness never dies away entirely, and everyone can cast a shadow, however small. Overseers assume a time of eternal day, but night draws in, and shadows lengthen... morning comes too late.



## PHRASEBOOK FOR PEACEKEEPERS

- Arms Embargo:** News blackout on where the weapons are coming from.
- Peace Process:** Procedure to ensure war is waged at a level sufficient to be ignored by the international media.
- Safe Haven:** Journalists' Hotel.
- Humanitarian Aid:** Ransom demand threatening more horror if the public refuse to pay up.
- Charitable Appeals:** The only legal part of the snuff movie industry.
- Peace Talks:** International Employment Initiative for retired politicians.
- Outrage:** Atrocity committed by side currently out of favour with UN.
- Just War:** Rhetorical device justifying waging of war by any means necessary.
- Ceasefire:** Reloading time.
- Ethnic Cleansing:** Production of enough refugees necessary to sustain war across the generations.
- World Opinion:** Journalistic fiction created to give the impression that an informed public prepared to listen to their homilies still exists.