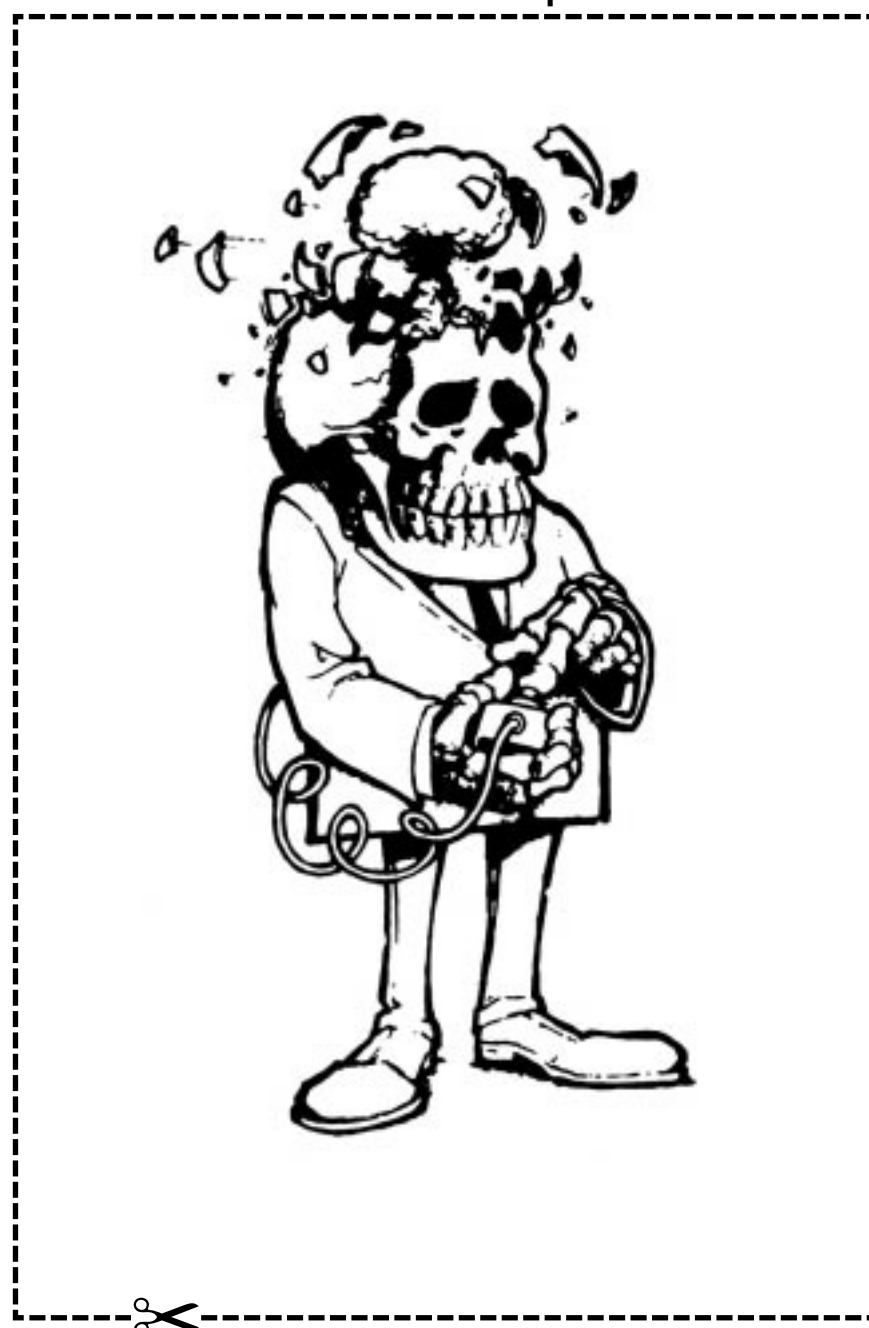


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AKA 1000 BLOWS TO BABYLON BOYS KIDNEYS AKA
ALL ON EXPENSES AKA GRANNY YOU LOVE MINCE AKA
OH ROTTEN MOLAR AKA OF BEEF AND BACON AKA
DAMN YOUR SPAM AKA THE SHUTTERS ARE DOWN**

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Michel Chossudovsky

NATO's Reign of Terror in Kosovo

In occupied Kosovo, the massacres directed against Serbs, ethnic Albanians, Roma and other ethnic groups have been conducted on the instructions of the military command of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Yet because NATO ostensibly denies KLA involvement, these so-called "unmotivated acts of violence and retaliation" are not categorised as "war crimes" and are therefore not included in the mandate of the numerous FBI and Interpol police investigators dispatched to Kosovo under the auspices of the Hague War Crimes Tribunal (ICTY). Moreover, whereas NATO has tacitly endorsed the self-proclaimed KLA provisional government, KFOR—the international security force in Kosovo—has provided protection to the KLA military commanders responsible for the atrocities. In so doing, both NATO and the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) have acquiesced to the massacres of civilians.

In turn, public opinion has been blatantly misled. In portraying the massacres, the western media have casually overlooked the role of the KLA, not to mention its pervasive links to organised crime. In the words of National Security Adviser Samuel Berger, "these people [ethnic Albanians] come back ... with broken hearts and with some of those hearts filled with anger."¹ While the massacres are seldom presented as the result of "deliberate decisions" by the KLA military command, the evidence (and history of the KLA) amply confirm that these atrocities are part of a policy of "ethnic cleansing" directed mainly against the Serb population, but also against the Roma, Montenegrins, Goranis, and Turks.

Assassinations: NATO Complicity

Under NATO's regency, the KLA has also ordered assassinations of political opponents, including "loyalist" ethnic Albanians and supporters of the Kosovo Democratic League (KDL), headed by Ibrahim Rugova. The KLA has also abducted and killed numerous professionals and intellectuals. These acts—ordered by the self-proclaimed Provisional Government of Kosovo (PGK)—are being carried out in a totally permissive environment. The leaders of the KLA, rather than being arrested for war crimes, have been granted KFOR protection.

In May, Fehmi Agani, one of Rugova's closest collaborators in the KDL, was killed. The Serbs were blamed by NATO spokesperson Jamie Shea for having assassinated Agani. But according to the Skopje, Macedonia, paper *Makedonija Danas*, Agani had been executed on the orders of the KLA's self-appointed Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci.² "If Thaci actually considered Rugova a threat, he would not hesitate to have Rugova removed from the Kosovo political landscape."³

Both NATO and the UN prefer to turn a blind eye. UN Interim Administrator Bernard Kouchner (a former French Minister of Health) and KFOR Commander Sir Mike Jackson have established a routine working relationship with Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and KLA Chief of Staff Brigadier General Agim Ceku.

As western leaders trumpet their support for democracy, state terrorism in Kosovo has become an integral part of NATO's post-war design. The

KLA's political role for the post-conflict period had been carefully mapped out well in advance. Prior to the Rambouillet Conference February [1999] the KLA had been promised a central role in the formation of a post-conflict government. The "hidden agenda" consisted of converting the KLA paramilitary into a legitimate and accomplished civilian administration. "We want to develop a good relationship with them [the KLA] as they transform themselves into a politically oriented organisation, ... [W]e can provide [help] to them if they become precisely the kind of political actor we would like to see them become."⁴

In other words, Washington had already slated the KLA "provisional government" (PGK) to run civilian state institutions. Under NATO's "Indirect Rule," the KLA has taken over municipal governments and public services including schools and hospitals. Rame Buja, the KLA "Minister for Local Administration," has appointed local prefects in 23 out of 25 municipalities.⁵

The self-proclaimed KLA administration has largely been upheld by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) entrusted by UNMIK with the post-war task of "democracy-building" and "good governance." In turn, OSCE officials have already established a working rapport with their KLA counterparts.⁶ The PGK is made up of the KLA's political wing together with the Democratic Union Movement (LBD), a coalition of five opposition parties opposed to Rugova's Democratic League (LDK). In addition to the position of prime minister, the KLA controls the ministries of finance, public order and defence. The KLA has a controlling voice on the UN-sponsored Kosovo Transitional Council set up by Bernard Kouchner. The PGK has also established links with a number of western governments.

Paramilitary Government

Under NATO occupation, the rule of law has visibly been turned upside down. Criminals and terrorists are to become law-enforcement officers. KLA troops—which have already taken over police stations—will eventually form a 4,000-strong "civilian" police force (to be trained by foreign police officers under the authority of the UN) with a mandate to "protect civilians." Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien has already pledged Canadian support to the formation of a civilian police force.⁷ This force—which has been entrusted to the OSCE—will eventually operate under the jurisdiction of the KLA-controlled Ministry of Public Order.

Despite NATO's commitment to disarming the KLA, the Kosovar paramilitary organisation is slated to be transformed into a modern military force. So-called "security assistance" has already been granted to the KLA by the US Congress under the Kosovar Independence and Justice Act of 1999. Start-up funds of \$20 million will largely be "used for training and support for their [KLA] established self-defence forces" modelled on the US National Guard.⁸

While the KLA maintains its links to the Balkan narcotics trade that financed many of its terrorist activities, the paramilitary organisation

has now been granted an official seal of approval as well as "legitimate" sources of funding. The pattern is similar to that followed in Croatia and in the Bosnian Muslim-Croatian Federation where so-called "equip and train" programs were put together by the Pentagon. In turn, Washington's military aid package to the KLA has been entrusted to Military Professional Resources, Inc. (MPRI), of Alexandria, Virginia, a private mercenary outfit run by high-ranking former US military officers.⁹

MPRI's training concepts—which had already been tested in Croatia and Bosnia—are based on imparting "offensive tactics ... as the best form of defence." In the Kosovar context, this so-called "defensive doctrine" transforms the KLA paramilitary into a modern army without, however, eliminating its terrorist make-up.¹⁰ The ultimate objective is to transform an insurgent army into a modern military armed police force which serves the Alliance's future strategic objectives in the Balkans. MPRI has currently "ninety-one highly experienced, former military professionals working in Bosnia & Herzegovina."¹¹ The number of military officers working on contract with the KLA has not been disclosed.

Croatian General Heads KLA

The massacres of civilians in Kosovo are not disconnected acts of revenge by civilians or by so-called "rogue elements" within the KLA, as claimed by NATO and the United Nations. They are part of a consistent and coherent pattern. The intent (and result) of the KLA-sponsored atrocities has been to trigger the ethnic cleansing of Serbs, Roma, and other minorities in Kosovo.

KLA Commander Agim Ceku, referring to the killings of 14 villagers at Gracko on July 24, claimed that: "We [the KLA] do not know who did it, but I sincerely believe these people have nothing to do with the KLA."¹² In turn, KFOR Lieutenant General Sir Mike Jackson has commended his KLA counterpart, Commander Ceku, for "efforts undertaken" to disarm the KLA. In fact, very few KLA weapons have been handed in. Moreover, the deadline for turning in KLA weaponry has been extended. "I do not regard this as non-compliance" said Jackson in a press conference, "but rather as an indication of the seriousness with which General Ceku is taking this important issue."¹³

Yet what Jackson failed to mention was that Commander Ceku (though never indicted as a war criminal) was, according to *Jane's Defence Weekly* (June 10, 1999) "one of the key planners of the successful Operation Storm... led by the Croatian Armed Forces against Krajina Serbs in 1995. General Jackson—who had served in Croatia and Bosnia under the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)—was fully cognisant of the activities of the Croatian High Command during that period, including the responsibilities imparted to General Ceku. In February 1999, barely a month prior to the NATO bombings, Ceku left his position as Brigadier General with the Croatian Armed Forces to join the KLA as Commander-in-Chief.

An internal report of the Hague War Crimes Tribunal (leaked to the *New York Times*) confirmed

that the Croatian Army had been responsible for carrying out “summary executions, indiscriminate shelling of civilian populations, and ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the Krajina region of Croatia ...Operation Storm resulted in the massacre of several hundred civilians in the course of a three day operation (August 4 to 7, 1995).”¹⁴ The massacres set the stage for the ethnic cleansing of more than 200,000 Krajina Serbs.

In a section of the controversial leaked ICTY document, *The Indictment: Operation Storm, A Prima Facie Case*, the Tribunal inquiry confirms that:

During the course of the military offensive, the Croatian armed forces and special police committed numerous violations of international humanitarian law including but not limited to, shelling of Knin and other cities... During, and in the 100 days following the military offensive, at least 150 Serb civilians were summarily executed, and many hundreds disappeared... In a widespread and systematic manner, Croatian troops committed murder and other inhumane acts upon and against Croatian Serbs.¹⁵

US Generals For Hire

The internal 150-page document concluded that the ICTY has “sufficient material to establish that the three [Croatian] generals who commanded the military operation” could be held accountable under international law.¹⁶ The individuals named had been directly involved in the military operation “in theater.” Those involved in “the planning of Operation Storm” were not mentioned:

The identity of the “American general” referred to by Fenrick [a Tribunal staff member] is not known. The tribunal would not allow Williamson or Fenrick to be interviewed. But Ms. Arbour, the tribunal’s chief prosecutor, suggested in a telephone interview last week that Fenrick’s comment had been ‘a joking observation’. Ms. Arbour had not been present during the meeting, and that is not how it was viewed by some who were there. Several people who were at the meeting assumed that Fenrick was referring to one of the retired US generals who worked for Military Professional Resources Inc.... Questions remain about the full extent of US involvement. In the course of the three-year investigation into the assault, the United States has failed to provide critical evidence requested by the tribunal, according to tribunal documents and officials, adding to suspicion among some there that Washington is uneasy about the investigation.... The Pentagon, however, has argued through US lawyers at the tribunal that the shelling was a legitimate military activity, according to tribunal documents and officials.¹⁷

The Tribunal was attempting to hide what had already been disclosed in several press reports published in the wake of Operation Storm. According to a US State Department spokesman, MPRI had been helping the Croatians “avoid excesses or atrocities in military operations.”¹⁸ Fifteen senior US military advisers headed by retired two-star General Richard Griffiths had been dispatched to Croatia barely seven months before Operation Storm.¹⁹ According to one report, MPRI executive director General Carl E. Vuono “held a secret top-level meeting at Brioni Island, off the coast of Croatia, with Gen. Varimar Cervenko, the architect of the Krajina campaign. In the five days preceding the attack, at least ten meetings were held between General Vuono and officers involved in the campaign....”²⁰

According to Ed Soyster, a senior MPRI executive and former head of the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) (interviewed by *Time* in early 1996): MPRI’s role in Croatia is limited to classroom instruction on military-civil relations and doesn’t involve training in tactics or weapons. Other US military men say whatever MPRI did for the Croats—and many suspect more than classroom instruction was involved—it was worth every penny. “Carl Vuono and Butch [Crosbie] Saint are hired guns and in it for the money,” says Charles Boyd, a recently retired four-star Air Force general who was the Pentagon’s No. 2 man in Europe until July [1995]. “They did a very good job for the Croats, and I have no doubt they’ll do a good job in Bosnia.”²¹

The Hague Tribunal’s Cover-up

The untimely leaking of the HCTY’s internal report on the Krajina massacres barely a few days before the onslaught of NATO’s air raids on Yugoslavia was the source of some embarrassment to the Tribunal’s Chief Prosecutor, Louise Arbour. The Tribunal attempted to cover up the matter and trivialise the report’s findings (including the alleged role of the US military officers on contract with the Croatian Armed Forces). Several Tribunal officials including American lawyer Clint Williamson sought to discredit the testimony of Canadian peacekeeping officers who witnessed the Krajina massacres in 1995.

Williamson, who described the shelling of Knin as a “minor incident,” said that the Pentagon had told him that Knin was a legitimate military target.... The [Tribunal’s] review concluded by voting not to include the shelling of Knin in any indictment, a conclusion that stunned and angered many at the tribunal.²²

The findings of the Tribunal contained in the leaked ICTY documents were down-played, their relevance was casually dismissed as “expressions of opinion, arguments, and hypotheses from various staff members of the OTP during the investigative process.” According to the Tribunal’s spokesperson “the documents do not represent in any way the concluded decisions of the Prosecutor.”²³

The report has not been released. The staff member who had leaked the documents is (according to a Croatian TV report) no longer working for the Tribunal. During the press conference, the Tribunal’s spokesman was asked “about the consequences for the person who leaked the information. Blewitt [the ICTY spokesman] replied that he did not want to go into that. He said that the OTP would strengthen the existing procedures to prevent this from happening again; however he added that you could not stop people from talking.”²⁴

Prior to the onslaught, Croatian radio had broadcast a message by president Franjo Tudjman calling upon “Croatian citizens of Serbian ethnicity ... to remain in their homes and not to fear the Croatian authorities which will respect their minority rights.”²⁵ While US military officers were on hand advising the Croatian High Command, Canadian peacekeepers of the Royal 22nd Regiment witnessed in theatre the atrocities committed by Croatian troops in the Krajina offensive of September 1995: “Any Serbs who had failed to evacuate their property were systematically ‘cleansed’ by roving death squads. Every abandoned animal was slaughtered and any Serb household was ransacked and torched.”²⁶

The 1993 Medak Massacre

According to *Jane’s Defence Weekly* (June 10, 1999), Brigadier General Agim Ceku (now in charge of the KLA) had also “masterminded the successful HV [Croatian Army] offensive at Medak” in September 1993. In Medak, the combat operation was entitled “Scorched Earth”, resulting in the total destruction of the Serbian villages of Divoselo, Pocitelj, and Citluk, and the massacre of over 100 civilians.²⁷

These massacres were also witnessed by Canadian peacekeepers under UN mandate:

As the sun rose over the horizon, it revealed a Medak Valley engulfed in smoke and flames. As the frustrated soldiers of 2PPCLI waited for the order to move forward into the pocket, shots and screams still rang out as the ethnic cleansing continued.... About 20 members of the international press had tagged along, anxious to see the Medak battleground. Calvin [a Canadian officer] called an informal press conference at the head of the column and loudly accused the Croats of trying to hide war crimes against the Serb inhabitants. The Croats started withdrawing back to their old lines, taking with them whatever loot they hadn’t destroyed.... French reconnaissance troops and the Canadian command element pushed up the valley and soon began to find bodies of Serb civilians. Some already decomposing,

others freshly slaughtered.... Finally, on the drizzly morning of Sept. 17, teams of UN civilian police arrived to probe the smouldering ruins for murder victims. Rotting corpses lying out in the open were catalogued, then turned over to the peacekeepers for burial.²⁸

The massacres were reported to the Canadian Minister of Defence and to the United Nations:

Senior defence bureaucrats back in Ottawa had no way of predicting the outcome of the engagement in terms of political fallout. To them, there was no point in calling media attention to a situation that might easily backfire... So Medak was relegated to the memory hole—no publicity, no recriminations, no official record. Except for those soldiers involved, Canada’s most lively military action since the Korean War simply never happened.²⁹

NATO’s “Post-conflict Agenda”

Both the Medak Pocket massacre and Operation Storm bear a direct relationship to the ongoing situation in Kosovo and the massacres and ethnic cleansing committed by KLA troops. While the circumstances are markedly different, several of today’s key actors in Kosovo were involved (under the auspices of the Croatian Armed Forces) in the planning of both these operations. Moreover, the US mercenary outfit MPRI, which collaborated with the Croatian Armed Forces in 1995, is currently on contract with the KLA. NATO’s casual response to the appointment of Brigadier General Agim Ceku as KLA Chief of Staff was communicated by Mr. Jamie Shea in a press briefing in May: “I have always made it clear, and you have heard me say this, that NATO has no direct contacts with the KLA. Who they appoint as their leaders, that is entirely their own affair I don’t have any comment on that whatever.”³⁰

While NATO says it “has no direct contacts with the KLA,” the evidence confirms the opposite. Amply documented, KLA terrorism has been installed with NATO’s tacit approval. The KLA had (according to several reports) been receiving “covert support” and training from the CIA and Germany’s *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND) since the mid-nineties. Moreover, MPRI collaboration with the KLA predates the onslaught of the bombing campaign.³¹

The building up of KLA forces was part of NATO planning. By mid-1998, “covert support” had been replaced by official (“overt”) support by the military alliance, in violation of several UN Security Council resolutions. NATO officials, western heads of State and heads of government, and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, not to mention ICTY chief prosecutor Louise Arbour, were fully cognisant of General Ceku’s involvement in the planning of Operation Storm and Operation Scorched Earth. Canadian Major General Lewis McKenzie, who served under the UN, confirmed that “the same officer who masterminded the 1993 Medak offensive in Croatia that saw Canadian soldiers using deadly force to stop horrendous atrocities against Serb civilians [had also] ordered the overrunning of lightly armed UN outposts, in blatant contravention of international law. His influence within the KLA does not augur well for its trustworthiness during Kosovo’s political evolution.”³² Surely, some Questions should have been asked.

Yet what is shaping up visibly in the wake of the bombings in Kosovo is *the continuity* of NATO’s operation in the Balkans. Alongside the transfer of General Ceku to Kosovo, NATO military personnel and UN bureaucrats previously stationed in Croatia and Bosnia have also been routinely reassigned to Kosovo.

KFOR Commander Mike Jackson had been routinely assigned to Kosovo following his stint in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. His experience in “ethnic warfare,” however, predates the Balkans. From his earlier posting in Northern Ireland as a young Captain, Jackson was second in command in the “Bloody Sunday” massacre of civilians in Derry in 1972. Under the orders of Lieutenant Colonel Derek Wilford, Captain

Jackson and 13 other soldiers of his parachute regiment opened fire "on a peaceful protest by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association opposing discrimination against Catholics. In just 30 minutes, 13 people were shot dead and a further 13 injured. Those who died were killed by a single bullet to the head or body, indicating that they had been deliberately targeted. No weapons were found on any of the deceased."³³

Jackson's ignominious role in Bloody Sunday did not hinder his military career from Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s, he was reassigned to the theatre of ethnic warfare in the Balkans. In the immediate wake of Operation Storm and the ethnic massacres in Krajina, Jackson was put in charge as IFOR Commander for organising the return of Serbs "to lands taken by Croatian HVO forces in the 1995 Krajina offensive."³⁴ And in this capacity General Jackson had "urged that the resettlement [of Krajina Serbs] not [be] rushed to avoid tension [with the Croats]," while also warning returning Serbs "of the extent of the [land] mine threat."³⁵ In retrospect, recalling the events of early 1996, very few Krajina Serbs were allowed to return to their homes under the protection of the UN. According to Veritas, a Belgrade-based organisation of Serbian refugees from Croatia, some ten to fifteen thousand Serbs were able to resettle in Croatia.

And a similar process is unfolding in Kosovo. The conduct of senior military officers (including Jackson and Ceku) conforms to a consistent pattern; the same key individuals and the same US mercenary outfit are now involved in Kosovo. While token efforts are displayed to protect Serb and Roma civilians, those who have fled Kosovo are not encouraged to return under UN protection. In post-war Kosovo, ethnic cleansing implemented by the KLA has largely been accepted by the international community as a *fait accompli*.

Moreover, while calling for democracy and "good governance" in the Balkans, the US and its allies have installed in Kosovo a paramilitary government with links to organised crime. The foreseeable outcome is the outright criminalization of civilian state institutions and the establishment of what is best described as a Mafia State. The complicity of NATO and the alliance governments (namely their relentless support to the KLA) points to the de facto criminalization of KFOR and of the UN peacekeeping apparatus in Kosovo. The donor agencies and governments providing financial support to the KLA (including funds approved by the US Congress in violation of several UN Security Council resolutions) are, in this regard, also accessories to the de facto criminalization of state institutions. Through the intermediation of a paramilitary group (created and financed by Washington and Bonn), NATO ultimately bears the burden of responsibility for the massacres and ethnic cleansing of civilians in Kosovo.

Terror And The Market

State terror and the free market seem to go hand in hand. The concurrent criminalization of state institutions in Kosovo is not incompatible with the West's economic and strategic objectives in the Balkans. Notwithstanding the massacres of civilians, the self-proclaimed KLA administration has committed itself to establishing a "secure and stable environment" for foreign investors and international financial institutions. The Minister of Finance Adem Grobozci and other representatives of the provisional government invited to various donor conferences are all KLA appointees. In contrast, members of the KDL of Ibrahim Rugova (duly elected in parliamentary elections) were not even invited to attend the Stabilization Summit in Sarajevo in late July.

"Free market reforms" are envisaged for Kosovo under the supervision of the Bretton Woods institutions largely replicating the structures of the Rambouillet Agreement. Article 1 (Chapter 4a) of the Rambouillet Agreement stipulated that: "The economy of Kosovo shall function in accordance with free market principles." The KLA government will largely be responsible for

implementing these reforms and ensuring that loan conditionalities are met.

In close liaison with NATO, the Bretton Woods institutions had already analysed the consequences of an eventual military intervention leading to the military occupation of Kosovo. Almost a year prior to the beginning of the war, the World Bank conducted "simulations" which "anticipated the possibility of an emergency scenario arising out of the tensions in Kosovo."³⁶

The eventual "reconstruction" of Kosovo financed by international debt largely purports to transfer Kosovo's extensive wealth in mineral resources and coal to multinational capital. In this regard, the KLA has already occupied (pending their privatisation) the largest coal mine at Belacevac in Dobro Selo, northwest of Pristina. In turn, foreign capital has its eyes riveted on the massive Trebca mining complex which constitutes "the most valuable piece of real estate in the Balkans, worth at least \$5 billion."³⁷ The Trebca complex not only includes copper and large reserves of zinc, but also cadmium, gold, and silver. It has several smelting plants, 17 metal treatment sites, a power plant and Yugoslavia's largest battery plant. Northern Kosovo also has estimated reserves of 17 billion tons of coal and lignite.

In the wake of the bombings, the management of many of the state-owned enterprises and public utilities were taken over by KLA appointees. In turn, the leaders of the Provisional Government of Kosovo (PGK) have become the brokers of multinational capital, committed to handing over the Kosovar economy at bargain prices to foreign investors. The IMF's lethal economic therapy will be imposed, the provincial economy will be dismantled, agriculture will be deregulated, local industrial enterprises which have not been totally destroyed will be driven into bankruptcy.

The most profitable state assets will eventually be transferred into the hands of foreign capital under the World Bank-sponsored privatisation program. "Strong economic medicine" imposed by external creditors will contribute to further boosting a criminal economy (already firmly implanted in Albania) which feeds on poverty and economic dislocation.

Moreover, the so-called reconstruction of the Balkans by foreign capital will signify multi-billion dollar contracts to foreign firms to rebuild Kosovo's infrastructure. More generally, the proposed Marshall Plan for the Balkans financed by the World Bank and the European Development Bank (EBRD) as well as private creditors will largely benefit western mining, petroleum and construction companies while fuelling the region's external debt well into the third millennium.

And Kosovo is slated to reimburse this debt through the laundering of dirty money. Yugoslav banks in Kosovo will be closed down, the banking system will be deregulated under the supervision of western financial institutions. Narco-dollars from the multi-billion dollar Balkans drug trade will be recycled toward servicing the external debt as well as financing the costs of reconstruction. The lucrative flow of narco-dollars thus ensures that foreign investors involved in the reconstruction program will be able to reap substantial returns. In turn, the existence of a Kosovar *narco-State* ensures the orderly reimbursement of international donors and creditors. The latter are prepared to turn a blind eye. They have a tacit vested interest in installing a government which facilitates the laundering of drug money.

The pattern in Kosovo is, in this regard, similar to that observed in neighbouring Albania. Since the early 1990s (culminating with the collapse of the financial pyramids in 1996-97), the IMF's reforms have impoverished the Albanian population while spearheading the national economy into bankruptcy. The IMF's deadly economic therapy transforms countries into open territories. In Albania, and to a lesser extent Macedonia, it has also contributed to fostering the growth of illicit trade and the criminalization of state institutions.

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The Academy Awards

William Clark

The New American Cinema

John Lewis, ed.
£56.95/£18.95
Duke University Press

In four sections: *Movies and Money*, *Cinema and Culture* and lastly *Independents and Independence* this is thirteen essays from thirteen academics. Presumably it had no descending hierarchy in mind, nor were they superstitious.

Funnily enough, the Academy in the old days justified itself as something to be taken seriously by a kind of morality of standards. It was all bound up with Religion. In the UK this dates back to the inception of our oldest schools of learning and religious characters such as Wycliffe and a theocratic approach. The process of evaluation of evidence grew with scientific rationalism to mirror that of the courts: opposing opinion being assayed and the different sides treated with impartiality. At some point the blindfold comes off and the sword of truth (a metaphor borrowed from the New Testament) divides, usually wrongly, but not in such a manner as to call the higher processes (i.e. conveniently God's) into question. But it was all about money really.

Today's experience tells us that we can assume nothing with academic credentials. Many fine people may work there but all manner of creatures end up in colleges and universities, which are magnets for people with no talent just as Children's Homes are magnets for abusers.

Several species of crackpot ideas and foul gibberish pervade the educational institutions. Most people would hold up film theory as harbouring particularly socially and intellectually useless notions with which we can have no faith. What tends now to get put on offer is an unconscious hierarchy of deranged standards as a prop for little more than laughable attempts at self promotion.

Yes good old Money in the form of Box office gross is a common enough determinant—even in the pretend egalitarian world of college professors—of evaluative criteria, and surfaces throughout the book. With the first paragraph of his own contribution, the editor of the collection, Jon Lewis takes the trouble to illustrate (with some crocodile tears) an aspect of film-making which he seems a little shocked by:

"The system stinks. It's fed by greed and ego...[Hollywood has] been changing and always in the same direction, which is more about money and much less about what movies are. I hate it, I hate it. But you can't ignore it. As much as you keep reminding yourself with the mantra, 'it's all about the movies; it's about the movies,' it's about the money.

Joe Roth, Chairman Disney Film Division"

So not all about cuddly little fluffy bunnies then. Lewis' own contribution, in its serious focus on the Corporate junk-bond financed leveraged mergers and acquisition era of the 80s traces roots back to the intrigue surrounding the combination of so-called *Paramount* decision (ostensibly to promote free trade) and the Hollywood blacklist (to restrict filthy pinkos trading). This is all pretty well-trodden ground by now. Cue Ronnie Reagan as the front man for the Screen Actors Guild joining with management to implement the ban against some of its members in the 50s, then cut to a flash forward as he unleashes 'Reaganomics' fronting for much the same crew of gangsters.

With the second section what each author determines to be cultural currency at times stretches into some far-fetched notions of value and relevance. With the third: well in its idealism all our hopes lie.

The wisdom of illustrating his theories by choosing the first *Rambo* movie as the 'locus classicus' of 'The Male Rampage Film' is not clear to me in Fred Pfeil's essay of the same name in the second section. His logic squirms uncomfortably, simply because 'First Blood' doesn't particularly fit the bi-polar thesis he slavishly tries to impose:

"...the mass audience for Hollywood product in the 1970s was offered a choice between two kinds of anti-establishment film: a "left" version, in which the protagonist uncovers an evil conspiracy of power elites and is usually defeated and killed before he can publicize or contest it in any effective way (*Chinatown*, 1974; *The Parallax View*, 1974); and a "right" version, in which the established authorities are so corrupt or impotent that they leave the hero no choice but to wage his own war against the scum who threaten him, his family, and All That Is Decent from below (*Dirty Harry*, 1972; *Walking Tall*, 1973). If so, *Rambo; First Blood* was one of the first movies of the 80s to dream these two sides or cycles together and thus to offer us the sight of a downscale, deauthorized figure going native ...Stallone as canny proto-Indian "savage"..."

The exception does not prove a rule. Later Pfeil takes all the *Rambo* films to be the same thing, yet the fact is the first *Rambo* movie is qualitatively different from the sequels. His theorizing is meaningless. Leaving aside the fact that the hero *does* contest in an effective way and that he has *no* family, *First Blood* (1982) was directed by Ted Kotcheff, with writing credits David Morrell (who wrote the novel) and Michael Kozoll. *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985) was directed by George P. Cosmatos with writing credits for Kevin Jarre (story) and Sylvester Stallone. *Rambo III* (1988) was directed by our own Peter MacDonald with writing credits Sheldon Lettich, Sylvester Stallone (the source is www.imdb.com).

It would seem to me that Sly cleverly took the brand name (you feel like reminding Pfeil that *Rambo* isn't real) and started writing according to a more commercial logic to fit with the prevailing winds.

All the films bearing the *Rambo* brand are tainted because of old Ronnie again, who happened to mention his admiration for one of the later films and how he would like to adopt some of the character's approach to foreign policy/murdering people. It could be that Reagan 'thought' this one up himself, but it is more likely that his speech writers (and/or campaign managers) were trying to appeal to the bloodlust of their imaginary Joe Six-pack voter. The stupid amount of attention given to it probably diverted media attention away from the litany of crimes being committed by Oliver North and the gang.

The first movie starts on about Agent Orange and how it slowly killed Rambo's black buddy from The Nam, the main character spends most of the time shooting at the Cops and the National Guard and at the end of the movie our tough hero breaks down blubbing about the mind shattering horrors of war—but Pfeil casually places it along side the bally-ho of Reagan's re-election in the mid-80s, saying he will analyse it later; but never gets around to explaining the contradiction in terms of his argument. The sources cited for his line of thought are sparse and clearly not up-to-date. He is just prejudiced against *Rambo*—first he feigns intellectual detachment then promises intelligent analysis, later just referring to the film as 'obnoxious' (p 172).

In the early 80s when a spate of violent action adventures were successfully mass-marketed they were ignored by academia who criticised their audience as trash watching gratuitous trash which would numb their minds and make them violent.



Eventually feeling left out and never ones to miss out on self-indulgence, gratuitous trash suddenly became suitable for pseudo-intellectualisation and we had all these bores going on about semiotics in *Terminator* and feminist theory in *Alien 2*.

On the more comfortable subject of *Die Hard* Pfeil starts to provide us with a Greimasian rectangle (a wee diagram). Presumably you print it out on acetate and hang it over the screen while you're watching the movie. We'll leave him to it.

But the premium grade film theory gibberish is purveyed by Tania Modleski. Her essay "a Rose Is a Rose?" demolishes the terms *surely* and *purely* in its opening line:

"If there ever was a purely masculine genre, it is surely the war film."

So what about the brilliance of Larissa Shepitko's "The Ascent." Modleski's first footnote states that she is for hire while boasting about some huge endowment she has just received. Now we know what she is we can haggle about the price.

To make things surely and purely preposterous the article is predicated on a quote from Gilbert Adair which she thinks is a 'thoughtful critique' (here's that *surely* again):

"It is surely time that film-makers learned that the meticulous detailed aping of an atrocity is an atrocity; that the hyper-realistic depiction of an obscenity cannot avoid being contaminated with that obscenity; and that the unmediated representation of violence constitutes in itself an act of violence against the spectator."

Yes the map is the territory. Modleski then goes on to do what she and Gilbert find so distasteful in others—meticulous detailed aping. Let me commit an act of violence by quoting her:

"Thus, since "being there" has so far been out of the question for women (who are prohibited from combat), their authority on any issue related to war is discredited from the outset, and insofar as they may be inclined to question or oppose war (except in and on the terms granted them by men), they find themselves consigned to the ranks of the always already defeated."

This type of perversity enhances the victimisation of women and she is factually wrong on a prohibition against women being in combat. Pathetically so, although the article is about 'Vietnam films' it escapes her notice that many women fought and died in the NVA; similarly Russian armed forces contained women—indeed perhaps the most symbolic act of World War 2 was the planting of the Soviet flag on the Reichstag building: an act bravely completed by a female Soviet soldier.

To Modleski all 'Vietnam films' are intrinsically evil. Speaking of Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July*:

“Here we see an example of the commonplace phenomenon in Vietnam films in which exploited people (in this instance, the prostitutes) are further exploited by the films themselves for the symbolic value that they hold for the hero. Thus do the films perpetuate the social and cultural insensitivity that led to America’s involvement in the war and the atrocities committed there.”

Imagine believing that someone acting the part of a prostitute in a film *is the same* as a human catastrophe on the scale of the Vietnam war.

Modleski’s pathetic revisions, with a slender grasp of reality are of no use to anyone: male, female or somewhere in between. On this evidence she is only capable of trying to infect other minds with imprecise thought delivered with the insouciant arrogance of someone who has been getting away with it for too long.

Christopher Sharrett’s analysis of the reactionary responses to Stone’s *JFK* contains stimulating, well-researched material expressing legitimate concern with America’s ‘Deep Politics’—the clandestine institutional political culture:

“Garrison’s investigation was roundly condemned not for legal impropriety, but for its assertions about the legitimacy of the state. Perhaps more important, this investigation (and those of many independent researchers) ultimately forces us into a reassessment of some commonly and blithely held assumptions about the political-economic order. Students of this matter cannot help but intuit John Dewey’s assertion that government is but the shadow cast by business, thus assassinations, coups, and other forms of political violence flow from economic assumptions. Garrison’s later writing placed the JFK assassination within the context of the CIA support of coups in Guatemala, Iran, Chile, the Congo, and elsewhere; this work, largely unknown to Stone’s audience, stands with the most important progressive indictments of the real dynamics of contemporary state power as it serves specific class interests. Stone’s adaptation of Garrison’s work

prompted media commentators to suggest that further conspiracy talk might push a nation already suffering a profound legitimation crisis into catastrophe.”

Sharrett was one of the consultants to the US Congress’ House select Committee on assassinations and is a much needed saner voice than some of the psychobabble. It is a fair analysis of Stone’s work. It frees and opens up the implications—more is known now about the reality of the US political culture and covert alliances of the early 60s—of the dogged persistence of investigative journalists. That this should find an expression in mass audience movies was too much for the majority of commentators working for big business/the US press. And it is also refreshing to see someone challenge the commonplace American waking dream that the crimes associated with state power are so huge and entrenched that they can only be taken as normality.

“...research shows that Shaw was far more than an international businessman giving the odd tip to the CIA, nor was he merely the shadowy protector, a la Monks in *Oliver Twist*, observing the Ferrie/Banister gang of young anticommunist, anti-civil rights provocateurs, which is the main role that the film ascribes to him. Cumulative study, including work done by the Italian and Canadian media, suggests that Shaw worked for U.S. intelligence since his service on the staff of General Charles Thrasher, deputy commander of the Western theater of operations during World War II. There is compelling evidence that Thrasher and Shaw were among the U.S. army officers and other officials responsible for constructing Operation Paperclip, which created the “rat lines” central to the migration of Nazi military brass, intelligence officials, and scientists, including Reinhard Gehlen, who orchestrated the “Gehlen Org,” a powerful arm of Western intelligence within the eastern Bloc during the post war years; Klaus Barbie, the notorious Butcher of Lyon; and Walter Dornberger and Wernher von Braun, the scientists who pioneered the V-2 “buzz bomb” ballistic missile at Peenemunde (murdering many slave laborers at the



Nordhausen concentration camp in the process) and became central to the construction of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The “rat lines” project is chronicled in documentary filmmaker Marcel Ophuls’s *Hotel Terminus* (1988), among other sources. During these operations, general Thrasher was simultaneously responsible for the gratuitous murder of ordinary German POWs (mainly old men and boys) while their officers actually became part of the U.S. state apparatus.”

The title of the collection is now something of an anachronism. I wonder if the 20th century will be romantically thought of as being dominated by celluloid film which is now a medium no longer required. What effect this will have on independent film makers, distribution cartels and the whole junket marketing culture remains to be seen. The last few screenings I have been to have been digital. Will people still want to meet in the dark and watch a projection in complexes whose screens are getting smaller as those at home get bigger?

'You're twisting my melon man'

Noise Water Meat (A History of Sound in the Arts)

Douglas Kahn
£24.95, ISBN 0-262-11242-4, MIT Press

It just deliberately ignores huge developments, movements and forms of music in favour of devising fables from his own vain contemplations. Revealed is a man who is shall we say... a plastic jug short of a full tuppaware set. But the omissions are no loss: there is rather, a feeling of relief that he said nothing about—say the whole of Jazz and Blues. Anyone with the misfortune to be set this as desired reading as part of some dubious media course will probably find themselves going back to the introduction to find out what the hell he is on about. His statements on his intentions are a whisker away from satire:

"The book focuses on inscriptive practices (but is in no way restricted to them), whereas ideas of vibration and transmission occur only intermittently and have not been addressed directly. The book ends with a contrast between the manner in which, with Burroughs's virus, inscription has been sunk from the surface of bodies into each and every cell (a shift that itself should complicate notions about writing or inscribing on bodies), and the energetic configuration and situation of bodies and environments found in Artaud's post-Rodez work and McClure's meat science. Their use of energetic flows, derived from Eastern bodily practices and elsewhere, poses a challenge to techniques and tropes of inscription that have so strongly informed and problematized modernism and suggests that any theorization of contemporary aurality will have to take into account not only the changed status of inscription and the historical background of transmission but also a figure or phenomenon, particle and wave, capable of spatial elaboration and vica versa, which supersedes both."

So to utterly baffle the *potential* reader Khan has chosen to 'contrast'—read perform the Vulcan mind meld with—Burroughs (now that Wild Bill is safely full fathom five he feels comfortable to exhibit his tiresome interpretations out of the range of gun fire) with Artaud (let me take you to Junkie Town!) Just in case that accidentally produces clarity of thought he will inject some McClure: that's Michael, not Troy. Any persistent bloodhounds will be shaken off the trail of meaning by the contortions of some ersatz Kundalini Yoga. He also couples all this with uncritical musings on William Reich and—read them and weep—L. Ron Hubbard. To go to such lengths to appear sophisticated must be a cry for help.

Unbelievably that was presented as an incentive to read this book. The pretence is that it is some kind of new synthesis or approach to 'the' history of sound in the avant-garde, yet if we dipped in at *any* point we read a poor misunderstood re-hash of better material.

In actuality—if that is not too intrusive—the book is an out-of-focus reinforcement dealing with *ascription*: the old quasi-religious academic technique of giving the amen to something. This is performed by a mind wash with all manner of acid-casualty-cosmic-debris which was *inscribed* in his brain at some mid-eighties-post-modern-love-in

at a US west coast far-out, terminally groovy 'educational establishment.' So on a more prosaic level—leaving aside the Goddess Shakti amongst many other thousands of mutually exclusive terms he uses—it's a series of various lectures (largely made up of quotes: some of which are interesting, and padding) with his musing in between like some insipid but foul-smelling glue. Reading his prose you get the feeling that the verbs and adjectives are squabbling amongst themselves trying to run away from a series of oxymorons: "As a dead Aristotle might have said." (page 221)

He is a devotee of the late John Cage—who I have always thought seemed a bit of a non-event compared to Victor Borge?!...

Much in the way people talk about architecture as frozen music he has tried to merge...well who am I kidding I haven't got a clue what he's trying to do. The book is impossible to read because you disagree with every sentence. The Kundalini yoga stuff, which just cuts in at any time like somebody selling Hare Krishna on the streets, is like Newtonian Physics compared with his own scribbling which sound like a cross between an encyclopedia salesman and some old showbiz whore on the chat show circuit.

To properly review this book you would have to hire a group of highly dedicated and knowledgeable experts, get them to take years to sift through this thoroughly and *then* you could come to the conclusion—which you knew all along—that this is an institutionalised academic talking to other institutionalised academics. And who would want to listen to that?

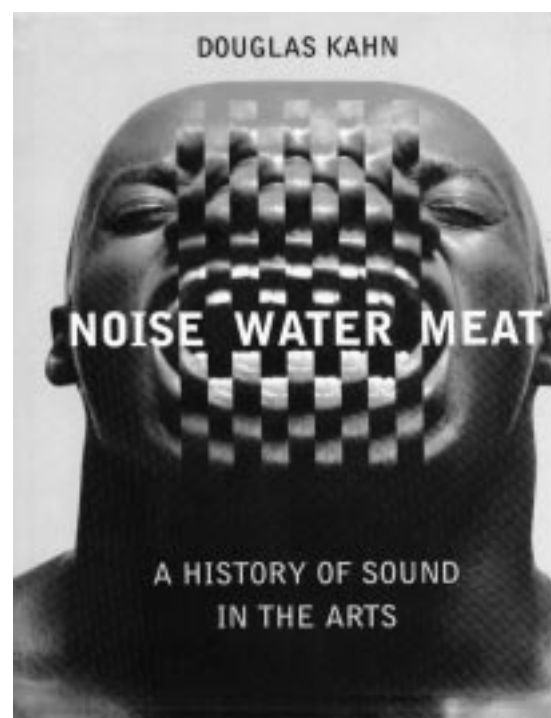
The quick way to review the book—the method adopted tonight—is to go in through the back door: i.e. look up the index and bibliography, weigh what he's selling, check for contentious authors—he seems to be trying to replicate what Attali did in 'Noise'—unravel his position on key issues; look what he recycles; look who he criticises, look who he flatters and so on...

His general tone indicates that Douglas Khan will probably never leave the safety of the institution and join us on the streets. The students have left the auditorium but the professor, thumbs behind lapels, still bellows out The Word:

"John Cage appears throughout the book and is the subject of an entire section. He would occupy a central position within any discussion of sound and art in this century because of the importance and influence across the arts of his music, writings, and ideas about sound throughout his long and prolific career. Moreover, like Artaud he connects the first half with the second half of the century, but unlike Artaud he lived to see the second half, almost all of it."

When it comes to other theorists and musicians who are of an independent disposition and whose existence and creative outlook could be said to challenge his worship of an image of Cage he has constructed for himself, they are either wholly or partially ignored or the subject of snide or pitifully inadequate remarks. Or all three in the case of Pierre Schaeffer where the writing is nothing more than a mis-reading of an interview in *Re Records Magazine* (vol. 2 Number 1) in 1987.

Unable to write anything of any consequence



on the matter he offers selective quotes to dismiss Schaeffer (known for his seminal work in the late 40s with electronic recording at Radio-diffusion-Television Francaise (RTF) in Paris, where he produced several short studies in what he called *Musique concrete*).

Uncomprehending of Schaeffer's artistic honesty and specific terms of reference he prefers to throw up a puerile after-dinner anecdote—thinly disguised self-indulgence concerning you know who:

"He returned to the notion that no music was possible outside of conventional musical sounds: "It took me forty years to conclude that nothing is possible outside DoReMi...In other words, I wasted my life." In 1988 I had occasion to describe Schaeffer's lament to John Cage over the dinner table. He quickly responded. "He should have kept going up the scale!"

It would seem no dissent from this transparently foolish orthodoxy is tolerated. Despite the fact that he knows nothing about what has been going on in Europe, he has detected that Chris Cutler, the editor of *Re Records* has committed a crime against the inquisition leading him to pronounce his own aut'o-da-fé:

"After reviewing an article on the history of live electronic music, he [Cutler] felt compelled to "resist the unquestioning inclusion of a randomly derived aleatory and raw environmental sound in what we understand when we use the work [sic] *music*." Pitted specifically against the threat posed by Cage, he argued:

If, suddenly, *all sound* is "music", then by definition, there can be no such thing as sound that is *not* music. The word *music* becomes meaningless, or rather it means "sound". But *sound* already means that. And when the word *music* has been long minted and nurtured to refer to a *particular* activity in respect to sound—namely, its conscious and deliberate organization within a definite aesthetic and tradition—I can see no convincing argument at this late stage for throwing these useful limitations into the dustbin."

That's not good enough for professor Khan:

"Cutler tries to fend off the totalization of Cagean thought, at a time when so much Cagean thought had been benignly internalized, by rhetorically positing music *as we know it* and politically marginalizing the other through common sense. The problems with Cage's notion that all sound is music, which do not revolve around a music/not-music distinction, will be taken up in chapter 6."

No we are not to use common sense, we are to bow to whatever has been benignly inserted into us—here you have his intentions in a nut shell: we must be followers: now bend over. His chapter 6 vaunts itself as if it laid out some grand unification theory relating to Cage's interest in sub-atomic vibration. It maintains that if everything vibrates all the time then everything is always emitting sound, Cutler's useful distinction on the human level of language and terms is just not dealt with.

Much the same can be said of his pat descriptions of *the life* (read *the myth*) of Burroughs: they are treatments of grotesque veneration. Burroughs' irony remains undetected. Symbolism becomes reality in the 'analysis'—if you can call this guff analysis:

"The Other half had become all others, they had become all, and the *theys* were not necessarily biotic. Organism has shifted the rise of the inorganic to the fall of the inorganic, all on the wings of the life and death struggle of the virus, the internecine being of the virus, fuckin' transitional bastard." (page 321)

The insidious elements to his ideas on Burroughs are evident with well-rehearsed exclusions which reveal that Professor Khan is just like all The Others:

"His own work was deeply informed by a variety of scientific and quasi-scientific theories—by an obsession with *fact*, as he was quick to say. It was within this culture of fact that this notion of the virus grew and subsequently became well known among a broad range of people, especially the beat and beyond literati, heady punks, and other subcultured individuals, cybertypes, and urban degenerate renegades."

You know: street scum—the people who don't count. *Where exactly did this the culture of fact lead to, could that be academia perchance?*

His observations are that an essay on Burroughs' audio experiments "broke the scholarly ice on the topic of sound and voice..." The footnotes reveal that this is from a magazine Khan edited, published by MIT in 1992. So pathetic a claim to fame necessitates that he has to discredit everybody else with any knowledge of Burroughs. Bad Karma Khan.

It should be pointed out that this book, in as much as it deals with music, succeeds in one thing: it excludes almost all of the music which almost every potential reader has ever held with lifelong affection or gained pleasure from. Imagine if you will a book which mentions Yoko Ono (even her plumbing) but pretends the Beatles did not exist. And she should think herself lucky: he states

quite clearly that he is excluding women due to "practicalities of time and resources." He is not clear at all why the music of "Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, Ornette Colman, and others and of African-American poetries and linguistic play" are excluded, he would appear to explain this by saying that there is "still much work to be done." Yes and part of that is tackling meaningless exclusion.

The real reason though is to amplify a smug little coterie's, cliques and claques which he aspires to join rather than analyse.

good proportions for a good music

Fabienne Audéud

On Saturday 27th November 1999, Sadie Coles HQ and Cabinet Gallery presented a Rock 'n' Roll gig at the Scala, London. Most of the performers were artists, playing Pop rock music in front of an art crowd. Artist Angela Bulloch of *Big Bottom* was tediously marking and counting the beat... Artist and curator Mathew Higgs was dancing in front of the stage... Artist Wolfgang Tillmans was taking photos... I wondered if it was comedy... but I seemed to be the only one to laugh. The music reminded me at the time of Michael Nyman's or Steve Martland's easy listening new music, sometimes too of a not-so-loud reference to noise music, then of a more straight rock gig. What did they play?

When *Frieze* editor Mathew Slotover is quoted in the *Evening Standard's* article 'Artful Rockers', saying that Rock 'n' Roll "still carries connotations of rebellion and nonconformism" and "some artists are still attracted to that kind of glamour" is it opening or closing up the debate?

If music theory is often avoided in art talks because it is too specialised and formalist, and Pop music only dealt with from the consumer's point of view (that's what the music people—and artists—like) then one is left with a safe realm, a realm where "glamour and connotations of rebellion" can be performed through yet another nice tune on a regular beat.

I can't deny the pleasure of all the people who enjoyed the gig. But can music—which I would formally define as creation of order (any order) in sound or noise, in what we hear—be *only* a question of reference, taste, or a majority of taste? In *Noise*¹ J. Attali argues that in all culture noise is associated with destruction, disorder, dirt, aggression, that noise is violence. For him, to make music is a channelisation of noise, therefore a form of sacrifice. Since it is a threat of death, noise is a concern of power and the function of music is first ritualistic, it creates political order: "The game of music thus resembles the game of power: to monopolise the right to violence. It provokes anxiety and then provides a feeling of security..." Attali considers the production of music as the creation, legitimisation and maintenance of a form of order.

In Western cultures, the making of music was for a long time the responsibility of performers/musicians. In Antiquity they were often slaves, but mythology endowed them with supernatural powers (Orpheus domesticated animals). Throughout the middle-ages, musicians remained outside of society, condemned by the Church where music had started to be written. They were itinerant, creating music and were circulating it within all classes of society. From the 14th century, Church music became secularised and autonomous from the Chant, and nobles would pay musicians to play them light songs, solemn songs, to celebrate victories and to dance. Musicians became professionals bound to a single master. Within three centuries, the jongleurs had been replaced by salaried musicians playing scored music.

The notated tonal music produced in Western Europe from the pre-Renaissance to the end of the 19th century has been developed mainly through two groups, the hegemonic religions (Catholic and Protestant churches) and the hegemonic social classes (initially the aristocracy and

later the bourgeoisie). What today we call 'classical music' was created around the Platonic theories placing musical sounds on the continuum of order/disorder. The fact that certain notes or chords sound 'right' with others was explained by mathematical rules.

But one should not confuse the mathematical calculations of ratios with the way they are applied to the creation of music and how they are used as a legitimisation of a specific order: in fact their use value within the Western practice of music is more at a cultural level than an influence on music itself. In the *Theory of Harmonics*² in 1784, Keeble writes that "as their principles are in nature, they must be fixed and immutable", claiming the universal validity of the Western musical system. Until the end of the 19th century, so called 'classical music' was composed around those rules.

Then composers and musicians started to take non-western music more seriously, questioning the rules of tonality and regularity of rhythm as the only way to hear and make music. The ratios within sounds did not change: it was their use values. It is not because Western ears are used to certain arrangements of notes and chords—around the concept of the tension and the resolution of the tension—that composers have to develop music only around those rules.

To simplify to the extreme a complex evolution I will mention only some of the formal changes:

Chromatism (initiated by Wagner and Debussy) replacing diatonism, the loss of hierarchy within the degrees, complex chords and aggregates instead of chords in the traditional harmony, dissonances that are not used to put the stability of the consonance into focus but played for their own sound; Schonberg developing a system of series as composition structures; Jazz introducing another form of scales; Industrial noises regarded as musical sounds by the Futurists; Noises into composition, Varese; Pierre Schaeffer using the recording techniques to create a "musique concrete" through the editing of tapes, opening the way to electroacoustic music; Boulez and Stockhausen following Schonberg's work on systems of series and developing it into a 'total serialism' (rules for heights, lengths, intensities); Xenakis using the computer for statistic calculations as composition principles to create a scholastic music funded on a structure of mass; Cage working on the idea of chance to create a 'non-interventionist' music; Reich and Riley using the repetitive process to challenge the experience of music in time; La Monte Young and Max Neuhaus transforming spaces into musical instruments; Improvising musicians extending the technique on a variety of sound producing bodies as well as traditional instruments, reclaiming the performance of music outside the hegemony of the composer's score.

The composition rules that defined the *natural rightness* of music and which were the base of 'classical music' are the ones used for what I call Pop (which is different from popular). Tonal composition on regular rhythm are to be found from traditional to Progressive Rock, easy listening Jazz or reinterpretation of classical melodies, most Dance music (Techno to Trance), to what I would describe as the "musically-politically correct Pop" of the Scala's Gig. Of course Pop is not consciously 'about' sounding 'right' and is not openly con-

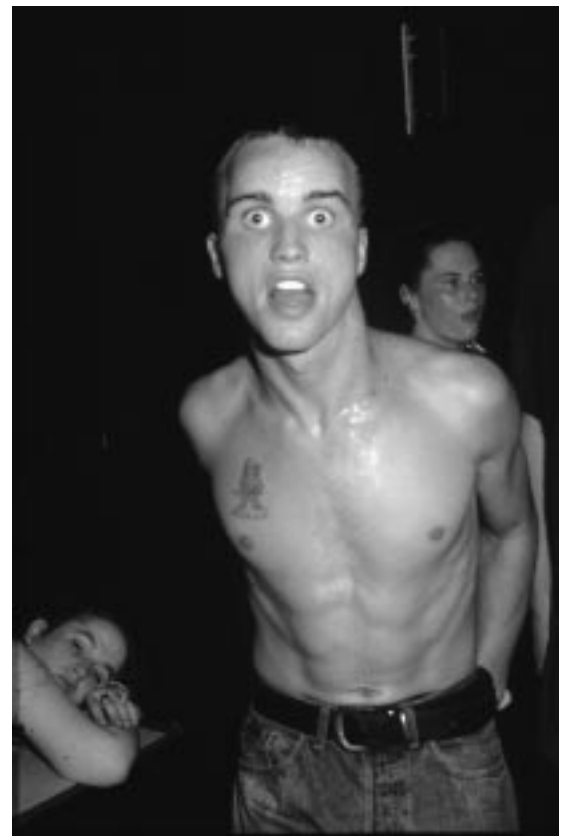


image: Wendy House

cerned with the ratios within sound mentioned earlier. It is nevertheless the way sound is used, as notes ordered on a classical scale (sometimes with some so called "ethnic" influences) and arranged in tonal chords and melodies on top of a metronome pace. The instruments are not clearly the ones from the traditional orchestra (except that we see more and more violins around, and that keyboards are built on the traditional tonal principle).

The other formal aspect of Pop that is in accordance to the principles 'of the right music' is the regularity of rhythm. Rhythm in Pop is the choice of rhythmical sequences repeated throughout a piece, always on the 4/4 structure (some exceptions in Drum & Bass on 3/4), marking the first beat. There are of course variations in the way the sequences are produced and the pace but not, as far as I know, in the reducing concept of rhythm as a repeated pattern. We all know the overwhelming experience of a repeated pattern of rhythm, it is physical, it makes us want to move, to dance. In Western cultures, people dance in very defined circumstances. They don't always dance when they hear Pop—they might think about it or remember dancing to certain music; but the argument that Pop is based on regular rhythm because it is good to dance to does not seem to be relevant to most situations where music is heard.

I am often given the example of African music as the ultimate justification for the "natural and universal" value of a regular rhythm. There is no Pop music that would slightly approach the complexity of traditional African rhythms and on the other hand dance and music making in traditional African Cultures are "interrelated components of the same process" as Olly Wilson puts it in her article *The Association of Movement and Music as a Manifestation of a Black Conceptual Approach to Music-Making*³. She writes that "the Western assumption of a division between consciously organised sound (music) and movement associated with that sound (dance) usually does not exist there... The music is the dance and the dance is the music." We are far from being able to compare

those practices with DJs playing for a crowd of dancers.

There are of course innovations (or noise) within that Pop grid of regular rhythm and tonal melodies: the rhythmical specificity of Punk was to accelerate the pace of Rock, the way Rock had quickened the pace of Blues. Blues was cleaned by Rock of its complexity and danger, and the melodies of Rock were simplified by Punk. But the fact that the musicians didn't play their instruments in the traditional way, over-amplification, noise, unsharp tuning or a raw voice created what I call 'noise' within the Rock structure (and what I find interesting in Punk), endangered it in a way. But the formal grid was not fissured.

In Drum & Bass, the rhythm is created mostly by the repetition of looped samples. There are real variations and accelerations of pace through the juxtaposition of sequences, but within an overall structure of extremely regular beats. In fact, the implacability of the beats created by electronics tools is not endangered by the rhythmical innovations (even if sometimes the drumming samples invert the traditional hierarchy of instruments by creating the body of the music—the only noise added to the frame).

Some dance music goes back to a rhythmical structure where the first beat is not accentuated within the rhythmical section by playing only the pace, the metronome becomes the instrument. A simple melody (often in 4/4) would do the subdivisions. It is as if the first bar of a dance piece or maybe a piano piece for children of the classical period was quantized, sampled and looped. The level of sound and the qualities of the chosen sounds change so that bits of classical music can wear a contemporary sound and can be danced to.

The composition concept has moved from the writing of a long musical sentence, with tensions and the resolutions of tensions, to the repetition of shorter and shorter musical phrases.

In fact, the formal complexity of classical and contemporary music can not be compared with Pop: the term becomes irrelevant. It is the reason why Pop is usually talked about from the audience point of view, within cultural studies and not in formal terms. The fact that the musical tonal development is reduced is obvious, the fact that rhythm is the repetition of a few patterns is clear, and this is not about value judgements. Can the choice of ordering notes in a classical way and repeating them on the base of identical rhythmical sequences be neutral? How can such a choice avoid the reference to the political statement of the "right order in music for the right sort of music?"

It seems to me that Pop music does not need to legitimate its own order through an 'explanation', a musical development, a sentence, a dense contrapuntic evolution, a long evolution towards a resolution. It doesn't need to build itself from a simple order (the right platonic one, the enlightenment one, the natural one) into a more complex order (the simple order fully developed and illustrated through for example: a symphony), it just needs to repeat itself because it is not about representing a fixed order or power: it is power.

I hear Pop as a totalitarian formal device, a well tested musical structure where power exercises itself. As it does not illustrate, justify, question or endanger the order within music, it plainly states it and loops it. Pop has its strength in its ability to integrate slight changes, stylistic variations, so called new sounds. What I think Pop does is clean the dirt in music: Pop silences music. Pop today is a formidable power tool that co-opts opposition. Opposition within music (no atonal Rock but progressive, avant garde Rock, never ever a rhythm that is not a repeated pattern) and opposition within the political potency of music. It is the slight flexibility of the

frame that makes its strength. If it were rigid it would break. It manages to carry and then annihilate social opposition, political revolts, youth rebellions, identity or gender demarcations and ethnic differences because what it does within the space of music, it also does within the social realm. If classical music used to represent social and gender order, I claim that Pop music now silences people, musicians, listeners and everybody who hears it. What it states is just become 'normal', obvious, unquestioned...

Pop carries its legitimisation in its name: *Popular*. But Pop is not popular, it is the prerogative of Pop to be popular. It is a 'simplification/repetition' of the class-representation structure, the *classical* one. It uses the support of the majority principle—which is difficult to question without going into a political analyses of the idea of democracy. It also uses the support of centuries of tradition (which goes unnoticed or is even negated): Pop is rarely acknowledged as the dressed & looped samples of the Platonic and Enlightenment theories of music, but rather as the expression of a youth culture that it has the luxury or duty to represent.

Pop benefits from the legitimisation of the revolt of a generation and it sits comfortably on the credibility of a repressed minority of Black American musicians through its roots in Blues and Jazz. A lot of people who were not heard otherwise chose the Pop medium "to express themselves".

It is difficult to split the music and the visual spectacle of Pop. What Madonna, Boy George, Kurt Cobain and many others address in terms of sexual and body politics is more at a textual and visual level than a musical one. The political aspect of their practice is probably quite successful because it uses a medium that is in itself not dangerous and usually not critical, but what is said in the other physical space which is sound is about obedience to a power structure. They might not have any problem with that power but I do. I do not trust a message that tells me "be sexually free... dress the way you want... disobey the rules... fuck the power;" when the subtext is: "There is a beat and it will be regular for ever... This is how sounds should be put together as it is in nature, and it has been so for centuries and centuries... This has always been the power of music and this is popular."

As a product, Pop doesn't need to create markets. Dance music for example is left to grow and evolve in clubs by the work of young musicians and DJs who bring innovation into the frame. The consumer's reaction is instantly tested in the space where the product is actually reinvented in the context of a quick changing (life-time of a piece of music before its come back?) but safe realm.

Pop is the ideal capitalistic product: started with the recording industry, no heavy inputs, no research, self feeding, self tested, adaptable to quick adjustments (but never really changing), same products for a majority of consumers; recycling friendly with the come-backs and nostalgia phenomena; widely cross fertilising other economical sectors: from fashion ('listen to his clothes!' as Frank Zappa had it⁴), home recordings and music equipment, sonorous decoration for supermarkets, images for any kind of stationery goods to the constant feeding of certain press.

I am often told that a lot of small labels keep a real subculture of Pop alive, that even if the industry holds a monopoly in terms of production and distribution, other kinds of Pop music are offered outside the few "majors." Progressive or avant-garde Rock and their opposition to the recording industry (or their non-acceptance by it) do not weaken the economic and political power of the Pop business. On the contrary: *they feed it*, they create its solid ground, its vital, "healthy" and quiet opposition. The 'creative' investment of the overall Pop industry is taken care of by those who think they can work without the economic power of the entertainment industry. The small labels are the guardians of the temple as long as they produce a music according to the same ruling principles. Their strictly musical input as well as their political positions are quickly sucked out and managed, if not with the very same people, then

with more flexible individuals who will reproduce the product: the music, the 'attitude' and the sub-products. The structure is strong: *The periphery regenerates the centre.*

The actual making of music becomes marginal to fit the given instruments, the given tonal and regular rhythm grid and the capitalist structures of distribution—the making of music as we saw it at la Scala fitted the given instruments, the given effect pedals and samplers, the given tonal system, the given rhythmical grid. The power of Pop music is not only about production, centralisation, colonisation and total distribution within capitalism: it is the fact that its form is in total harmony with it all. There is a shift from the representation of power to the unquestioned exercise of it. As Alice Creicher writes in her article *The Genius in the Bourgeois Society*⁵ "the star doesn't deliver representation anymore because it is promiscuous like the media itself, it doesn't hide capital anymore, it states it."

On a practical level, Rock standards, strictly Pop bands tracks, dance music and all their stylistic variations, easy listening classical music, reinterpretation of traditional jazz pieces, artists' Pop bands, and all the other costumes of Pop are occupying most social aural landscapes. Everything with a regular beat that sounds right. It's on television, in the streets, in shopping malls, inside the shops, in bars, in pubs, in public places, in cars, in parties, in video art, in performance art clubs, in galleries, in music venues rented out by galleries. There is only one space outside of specialised venues where a non-Pop music is represented: cinema. There, lyricism, the uncanny, the frightening, the diabolical, the alien, the ridiculous are very effectively edited with contemporary-style compositions or extracts of contemporary music pieces. Music is mimicked or reduced to a melody, a stylisation, a phrase, a song or an effect, into what Adorno would call the fetishization of musical pieces. Except for the cinema sound track, every other space where there is a social link between people is occupied by Pop. H. Draxler writes in the exhibition catalogue for "Market" by Group Material:⁶ "Today the media's mass rituals of subjugation guarantee domination outside politics..."

The ability to depoliticise the message of Rock into Pop has become openly exposed: Janis Joplin's Blues makes a perfect sound track for a Mercedes TV ad. Soft Drum & Bass for a bank, Jimmy Hendrix for another car... a strings ensemble plays an atonal chord for the flu symptoms: the message is clear.

In *Unmarked*⁷ Peggy Phelan writes that if visibility was an equalling power, then almost naked women would rule the Western Culture...

Pop music—the notes arranged to sound right on a regular rhythmic pattern—fulfils the aural space. It states power through the reassertion of a fixed order to the people who share the hearing. The social relations become defined by the power stated through the music. It doesn't represent the divisions within society any more but it creates unquestioned links between a redefined audience, a new social contract. It co-opts opposition and empties political statements, the principle of the right order in music for the right sort of music is disguised in popular fun, in body politics through visual signifiers... in sonoric subjection.

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4. Frank Zappa, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*.
5. Alice Creicher, *Das Genie als Bederfnis der bergelichen Gesellschaft*, in *Akademie*, 1995.
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image: Wendy House



Criminal justice

Since coming to power in May 1997, New Labour have deported over 93,000 people.

Enforcement figures for the first 9 months of 1999 are up 9.1% on the same period last year.

Deportations for the first 9 months of 1999: 4,615 — 625 less than the same period last year.

Refused and removed for the first 9 months of 1999: 22,650 — 2,900 more than the same period in 1998.

Total enforcements for the first 9 months of 1999: 27,365 — 2,275 more than the same period in 1998.

Total enforcements under New Labour, January to December 1998: 34,775.

Total enforcements under New Labour, May to December 1997: 21,743.

On the 29 & 30 September 1999:

47 Asylum seekers had been detained over 12 months, 171 Asylum seekers between 6 and 12 months.

Statistics from: Home Office Research Development & Statistics Directorate. (All figures are provisional and subject to revision.)

Immigration Laws Criminalise People—

The effect of immigration laws are to criminalise people. It does not matter if they have committed any criminal offence or not. The Immigration Act authorises detention and imprisonment where there has been no offence, no charges no prosecution, no court intervention.

Criminalisation takes place through language—

Under immigration law immigrants, migrants and refugees can be defined as being in the UK “illegally” or “unlawfully.” In this way people are defined as non-persons and as being outside of the law. Immigration Officers regularly describe Third World people as “illegals”—as having no identity other than as being devoid of status in the UK.

Those who lose their claim for asylum become “Bogus.” All these definitions are ways of criminalising people. Immigration laws are not static, but are constantly being redefined, made harsher and harder.

Criminalisation takes place through Media Presentation—

On Saturday 26 February 2000 the *The Times* ran the following story on page two:

‘Refugees flock to Germany and Britain’,
by Stewart Tandler, Crime Correspondent

BRITAIN attracts more asylum-seekers than any other

country in Europe bar Germany, according to Home Office figures issued yesterday.

The United Kingdom had 71,160 applications in 1999 compared with Germany’s 95,115, a survey of ten European nations showed. In all there were 365,745 applications for countries including Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Kosovo and other parts of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia accounted for more than 100,000 of the applications, including 11,535 in the United Kingdom. Britain was also the most popular country among asylum-seekers from Colombia, Croatia, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, Somalia and Sri Lanka. The Home Office figures show that there were 6,110 applications in January against 7,180 in December. That is the lowest figure for eight months. In May the number of applicants was 5,370 and since then monthly figures have fluctuated between 6,130 and 7,355.

From November to January the average was 6,570—a 40 per cent increase on the monthly average for the same period in 1998-99. Processing applications rose steeply from 2,320 cases in December to 4,040 in January, although the backlog continued to grow and has now reached a record 104,890.

Kent County Council said yesterday that dealing with child asylum-seekers will cost households an extra £3 next year on council tax.

This article should be condemned in the strongest possible terms—not for its content but for the way 71,160 asylum applicants have been criminalised by the way the article has been presented. By giving the story ‘Refugees flock to Germany and Britain’ to a crime reporter *The Times* has labelled at one stroke 71,160 asylum applicants as criminals. This is a grave injustice to those 71,160 people seeking asylum. Surely this article should have and would normally come under Home Affairs.

Criminalisation takes place through images—

On the same day the Electronic version of BBC World News ran a story on immigration with a picture of a Asylum Seeker at an airport. The picture was of a women very advanced in pregnancy (enough said).

Criminalisation takes place through a rise in Council Tax—

On Friday 25th February 2000 Kent County Council announced they were increasing its rates by £3 per household to cover a £1.7m shortfall in funds caused by an influx of asylum claimants. And there are rumours that many other councils will follow suit unless the government pledges

more money.

Interviewers were able to find any number of people to condemn the rise “caused” by the asylum seekers but no one was able or wanted to point out that this was less than 1 penny per day.

Refugees are not criminals—So why lock them up?

At any one time, up to 1,000 asylum-seekers are imprisoned in Britain.

On Monday 20th March 2000, a new detention centre opened in Oakington, at an old army barracks just north of Cambridge. This centre will initially hold up to 400 more people. These will be individuals who are not suspected of having committed any crimes, and will include women and young children.

The centre will operate like a prison.

Detainees will not be able to leave the site or move between buildings on the site unless escorted by security guards. There will be constant surveillance through CCTV cameras, a 24hour gatehouse, and regular patrols around the centre. The accommodation blocks will be surrounded by high fences. The Home Office has refused to allow refugee families to use the houses already on the site on the pretext that they are too “comfortable.” Large accommodation blocks will be used instead.

The Home Office claims that the purpose of this centre is to allow “Fast-tracking” of asylum claims in under ten days. Past experience has shown this is highly unrealistic: the average length of time for a claim to be processed has been 18 months, and there is a large backlog of undecided claims due to Home Office inefficiency. It is quite likely that innocent refugees will be imprisoned for long periods at Oakington, or else deported without proper consideration.

The centre will be run by a private company, *Group 4*, for profit. *Group 4* and the Home Office have already been sternly criticised in reports by the Chief Inspector of Prisons following visits to refugee detentions centres/prisons at Campsfield (Oxfordshire), Tinsley House (Gatwick) and Rochester detention/prison.

Cambridgeshire Against Refugee Detention (CARD) tel: 01223-462187

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC)

email: ncadc@ncadc.demon.co.uk

<http://www.ncadc.demon.co.uk/>

Ian Brotherhood

Tales of the great unwashed

Bill dropped one of the bags as he struggled to get the pram into the close. The woman downstairs was right behind and she picked it up for him.

'Some day Bill, eh?' she said, but he didn't answer. He pulled the pram up the last of the four steps and held the door open for her to get in out the rain. 'Thanks,' he said, hand out, but she passed by still carrying the bag with the eggs and milk and frozen stuff. He reached out to take the bag but she held onto it and walked a bit ahead. 'You're alright son, I'll take this,' she said, and she looped the carrier over the arm already bearing her own shopping, then used her free hand to take off the wee square of plastic she used to cover her blue hair. She was a nosey old bastard, always had been, that's what Sharon said. He remembered then that he had to remind Sharon about that call earlier, but he didn't know what it had been about. If he hadn't written it down he'd have to do it as soon as he got in. Factors. Factories? The bastards wanted money anyway.

'Aye, it's a filthy day to be out with the weans right enough,' she said. Young Billy was already half-way up the first flight. Bill shouted after him, 'Billy, get back here!' but the lad kept climbing.

'He's coming on grand the wee one,' she said then, all smiles and close enough to him that he could smell stale milky tea and strong fags off her and it gave him the boak. Ever since the 'accident' he'd hated the smell of cigarettes, even though he'd been a heavy smoker himself before it.

'That's him two now eh?' she asked.

Questions again. Sharon said she was going to bust the old bastard one of these days what with her always asking about him and the weans, and were they still getting the health visitor up, her knowing fine well it was the Social checking up and just wanting to get a bit of gossip for her pals down at the bingo.

'Billy, I'm not going to tell you again, I swear it, get down here now!' he shouted then, but the lad was too busy staring at old Mrs whatever-the-fuck-she-was-called, now nearing the top of the second flight and her own front door.

Bill went up the stairs fast, Louise firmly under his arm, and Billy made a bid to start up the second flight, laughing excitedly like it was some game or something, but Bill grabbed his arm hard and yanked him down off the third step, and the lad sort of swung in mid-air, his arm twisting too fast so Bill dropped him and he hit the landing, cushioned by his thick quilted 'Broncos' jacket, and when he got up again he grabbed onto the railings and made a swift descent of the first flight as Bill followed him down.

So Billy took one of the carriers, and Bill managed with the pram under one arm, Louise under the other, and the other two carriers hanging from the fingers clasped under Louise. Old fuck-face was already inside but Bill knew she'd be standing at her wee peek-hole at the door, watching out and seeing if he was doing anything to the weans, ready to pounce on the fucking phone and tell her pals.

But eventually they got in, and even though it was just the third floor it might as well have been

the top dancer of a high-rise. His fingers were all stiff and cramped, red and wet and freezing cold. The boy's face was the same colour, his chin and mouth all wet with snot and slabbers.

Bill stuck the telly on for Billy, then put Louise on the couch behind where the lad was sitting. 'Right, you watch her son,' he said, and went to the bog for a quick slash before getting some grub for them. Louise could wait until she woke again, and she'd be due a feed. The trickle at the bottom of the bottle told him she'd almost finished the last batch but he couldn't be sure when exactly he'd given her that—just before they went to the shops? That must've been, two, half-past? What was it now anyway? She had to be overdue for another feed, but he'd let her sleep anyway.

It didn't take long to get the stuff out and into the fridge, but most of it went into the freezer. He meant to check all the stuff against the receipt but he'd forgotten all about it until he found the receipt in the third bag, so he took out what he'd already put in the fridge and freezer then started checking it. Then it became a waste of time when he realised that he'd been putting tins of beans and spaghetti into the fridge. Should've been the cupboard, so he stopped checking against the receipt. Sharon always said you should, but it would take too long. Anyway, if she really wanted to do it she could do it herself later.

He poured most of a tin of beans on top of the three potato waffles and stuck the lot into the micro for five minutes. Sharon usually cooked the waffles first but it was all he same. He stayed well away from the micro when it was on—Sharon always said how it was bad rays and shite coming out the thing so he always made sure that Billy was in the room when they were cooking so he wouldn't get blasted and end up fucked-up like him.

Starting to think about the accident always got him het up to fuck, so he left the kitchen and went to the bathroom to get a towel to dry his hair. Bastard rain had been on all day. Summertime. It was a song that came back then, just a snatch, Summertime and the living is easy. So, it was alright anyway, that was the shopping in, and a few quid left so he could maybe see the guys for a jar later if Sharon got home on time. This was, what, Thursday, aye, had to be, so she'd be home before seven.

He went back into the kitchen and checked the calendar where Sharon marked up her hours in advance every week. Thursday? Right—Thursday—eight to six. Billy helped him to get Louise washed and changed and then it was back into the room and Billy wanted to see even more cartoons, so that was okay, it kept him happy. Bill started reading the paper, trying to get through the Sports pages, but it wasn't really making much sense. He could get the headlines about this new signing from some German club, but the name of the outfit stumped him time and again and he kept having to go back to the start and try again. He had to get the name right. That was the sort of thing the boys would laugh at—if you tried to get your tongue round some foreign team or player's

name and made a cunt of it then you got a beast- ing for it. Fuck, wasn't that how he'd had the 'accident' in the first place? Something trivial, nothing at all really, but then there's a bit of name-calling and then it's just mad fists and feet flying and jeers and strangers joining in and it's just a bit of rough play but then he's on the deck and there's that kick from nowhere and it all goes brilliant white then dead and it's hospital-time, and will-you-be-bringing-charges, and sorry-we-can't keep you and all that shite.

He eventually folded the paper and let it lie in his lap. He was maybe dozing a bit what with the room getting dry and too warm with the electric fire. That was making Louise's skin dry, so Sharon said, so he got up and turned it down a bit. Billy started on about wanting crisps 'cos he knew they'd got some earlier, so he went and got a couple of packets and that would keep him quiet for a wee while anyway, and it was still more cartoons. It was almost six. Sharon would be home soon if she managed her bus. That reminded him what he had to tell her. That old bastard underneath. What the fuck was her name? He could never get it, even though they'd been neighbours for what, three years, more now? It didn't matter, but he would be sure to tell Sharon 'cos she was a bit like-that with the old fuck, wanted to know if she put a foot wrong. Something had been said one day, but he couldn't remember what it was. It had put Sharon's nose out anyway, and she was dying for any excuse to go down there and sort her out.

Something else to tell her. That call. He went into the kitchenette and found a bit of paper, took it back into the room, but there was no pen to be found. Into the bedroom. Billy came in after him, not saying anything, just sort of girning stuff about Mum and wanting something. What do you want? Moan, moan, girn. What is it then? Grabbing at his legs, wanting lifted up, sucking his thumb and all sorts. Back into the room and plonked him back in front of the telly. The Superwings were coming on so Billy quieted again and slumped down at the sofa.

Then it was old cartoons, the sort Bill had watched himself when he was wee, different colours, different faces altogether, but Billy didn't like them, started on about wanting Superwings back. The phone started up, bastard thing was too loud, he'd have to work out that volume button, get it turned down. Sharon. Late. Something about that cow Julie not turning up, she had to stay 'til nine. But there's a game on, I was going to go down see the boys and that—but it's overtime, right, you're always moaning otherwise so tough, and that was that.

He went back into the room. Louise was still out for the count. Maybe seven before she'd wake again for a feed. Half six? Billy was half conked out, eyelids giving it heavy close. Fuck it then. He checked the paper. The game wasn't even on the telly, only being on the satellite. Fuck all else on.

Bill checked what he had left. Twenty-three quid and some change. Enough to get a few cans anyway and maybe a quarter-bottle, that would never break the bank, and if she was getting a few

extra hours anyway, well, it was only fair seeing as he never got out the fucking door.

He made it quiet going down the stairs. That old cow would know that Sharon wasn't home. He wasn't even out the close when he remembered that he still had to write something down about factories, factors, money overdue, whatever. He should've said to her on the phone and that would've been that.

Round to the offy and a half-dozen cans, but no quarter-bottle 'cos he remembered there was still some stuff in the kitchen after the New Year, some brandy or rum or something that Sharon had got in for her old dear coming up, so that would save a few bob. Well, she could hardly complain if it was just a few cans. Then back home rapid, quiet as fuck up the stairs, and Billy was asleep where he'd left him, dead to the world.

It wasn't much past seven. Billy looked alright, happy enough out for the count and Louise still breathing nice and quiet right beside him. He kept the telly low, just some crappy sit com but the jokes were too fast so he gave up watching and went back to the paper. No point looking at the Sports pages either—why spend the time trying to get the news on this and that, all foreign bastards anyway, and he wouldn't get to see the lads tonight and tomorrow's gossip would be all different. He went to the start of the paper, skipped all the heavy politics shite with the usual beaming gobs and promises and election shite, but then, near the start, came a familiar face, none other than good old Elton, Elton John having his birthday. He was hardly recognisable, all painted white face and done up in a dress and all sorts.

He put the paper down, remembering that he had to write down that message before he forgot. The piece of paper was still on the table where he'd left it earlier. He went through to the kitchen and rooted about in the drawer under the cutlery drawer until he got a pen, then went back in, wrote down 'factors called about money' and then put it on the mantelpiece where Sharon would be sure to see it, so that was that done.

He cracked open the third can. The beer was sweet and warmish, nothing like drinking it in the pub. That reminded him about the stuff that was left. In the cupboard over the cooker. He went through. There were two bottles. One was dry vermouth, almost a full half-bottle of that, and the other was some mad liqueur-type thing in a cracking curvy dark-green bottle that had hardly been touched. Bendick, Benidectin, fuck it, it was forty-odd percent so it was the real stuff.

Sharon would probably get back about ten, what with the buses being a bit dodgy after six, so the wee one would need fed and changed again before then. He went back in with the liqueur stuff and a glass full of ice and checked on her. She was still sound. The wee man had wakened again but was just lying looking up at the ceiling, all sweaty and red. Alright son, he asked him, and the wee man just stared on as if he was looking at something right through the roof, still dreaming about something maybe. Bill fetched through some more crisps and a glass of milk for Billy, but the boy just ate the crisps and got back to watching the telly. It was a drama about vets, so he let him watch that, and went back to the paper.

He found the page he'd been reading earlier. That was it—old Elton was fifty, so he'd had a big party somewhere and invited all and sundry who were pop stars or not, and it cost thirty grand. He stopped and read it again. No, it wasn't thirty grand, it was thirty grand for the cunt's outfit. No. He read it again. The fuck had hired some hotel or other, and that cost him a hundred grand what with the spread and all that and then the costume had cost twenty-something grand to make, and then there was the cost of getting him to the place

because the whole outfit was so big, like a Marie Antoinette sort of get-up, that he couldn't go in a car but it had to be a fucking removals van, and he had the van all decked out with candelabra and all these hanger-on lads dressed as angels and whatever and the whole thing altogether cost more than three hundred grand. Three hundred thousand quid. He closed the paper and went back to watching the box.

The liqueur stuff was nice. Very very sweet, but nice with a bit of lemonade in it. Billy took some lemonade. The glass of milk was still lying there, so Bill took that through and stuck it in the fridge. Waste-not-want-not Sharon always said. So that was alright.

After eight the wee one was overdue again, and even though she hadn't really stirred, Bill woke her up and gave her another bottle. Billy had fallen asleep on the sofa so Bill draped the sofa cover over him and tucked it under his neck in case he caught some of that draft from the door.

Louise would probably be needing another change but he left her. He was feeling a bit knacked now, and didn't really fancy fucking about with basins of water and all that. Besides, Sharon would be home soon, so they could do it together then. She might want a charge of this stuff. There was enough left for a couple each.

But she didn't come back. It was half-nine, then it was ten. There was a film on. He'd started watching it but wasn't really following what was happening. Black and white, war-time stuff, lovers separated, all that shite. There was some good stuff with fighter planes and beach-scenes, sort of Dunkirk stuff, but then it got bogged down in some mad plot so he flicked about and it was this one on about politics, and there was the news, and such another one was on about fucking stock prices and shite so eventually he put it back to the film and turned it right down and put a music tape on. It was songs that his Dad used to sing when he got pissed, all sort of maudlin and supposedly stirring and that, and he didn't even really know the words but he stuck it on anyway and hummed along.

He cracked open the last can. It was almost eleven. She must've gone out with her mates or something. So fuck her anyway. Billy woke and started getting hyper, crying about Mum and wanting something again, and it was what-do-you-want but no answer, only crying, and the crying eventually woke up Louise and when he pulled back the cover to take her up he got a waft of shite and knew he couldn't get away with leaving her any longer, and there was Billy about his knees pulling and crying to get up, and he half kicked him away so he could get through the door to the kitchen to get her bottle. If he fed her first, that would quieten her, then he could change her again.

He got back into the room and settled down. Billy had eaten the piece-and-stork he'd made him, and was starting again with trying to get up between him and Louise, so he told him to get down between his legs and watch telly 'til he'd fed Louise, and he did for a few minutes, sort of sobbing and whining and rubbing his eyes and Bill tried to feed Louise, but she wouldn't take the bottle, jerking away like she was getting wind or something and kept up this mad crying, like really painful, and he put her over his shoulder just like Sharon would, and patted her back and patted her arse and waved her to and fro and the more he did it the more he felt kind of sick in himself like it would be him to belch first or maybe even throw-up, then Billy was between his legs again and pulling at his arms and giving it scream, bawl, about Mum and where's Mum, and Bill shouted to him to shut-up, and then to fuck-up, but the lad kept going, giving it full-tilt 'til he was that way that he was crying so hard that he wasn't making

any noise at all and his face was just this big red blot of pure misery and pain, so Bill shouted to him again to shut-the-fuck-up but he just screamed even louder, eyes screwed shut and tears and snot everywhere, and Louise shook her wee head away from the bottle and let out a roar and it was Billy's fault for upsetting her so Bill shouted again for Billy to SHUT-THE-FUCK-UP and as he did he banged his knees together on either side of the boy's head and he dropped right away onto the carpet.

Bill tried to get Louise to take more of the bottle, but then she screamed again and shook her face away from the bottle and then he remembered that he hadn't checked the milk so he shook some onto his wrist like Sharon always did and he got a shock at how hot it was. He grabbed her up and through to the bedroom, put her in her cot and went back to see Billy. The lad was face down on the carpet. Bill picked him up, turned him to face him, but the lad was out. It was time for bed anyway.

Bill put the wee man in the centre of the double bed, then pulled the covers up to his chin. He remembered that night again, the kicks coming in, the flash of lightning.

He went to the bog and honked up until there was nothing left. When he got back into the room, the wee man was exactly where he'd left him, eyelids twitching, slabbers making a damp patch on the pillow. Bill sat on the edge of the bed, leaned over, and palmed his hand across his son's head. Something shifted beneath the lad's scalp, a slight movement of bone, a ridge where it should be flat.

She would be home soon.

Class-ifying contemporary cinema

Tom Jennings

Even in the 'digital age' of advancing video and computer markets, the scale and hype of Hollywood, its spin-offs and the rest of the cinema industry lead films to dominate many peoples' relationships with commercial popular culture. They tend to be the organising centre for the private consumption of TV's visual wallpaper, while multiple screens proliferate to cater for that special public submission to overwhelming sounds and images. This strength of impact allows elements of film narratives, styles and characters to become markers of experience and identity, so that cinema is as thoroughly woven into social and cultural life as, say, sport or music.

However, public discourse on cinema has been surprisingly limited: film-as-art theory and philosophy, gee-whizz journalism, technical studies, family viewing advice; all entailing a fair degree of snobbery of one kind or another. But writing about films is now catching up with the sophistication and diversity of the commodities it addresses¹, largely thanks to cultural and media studies shifting the terms of debate on 'mass culture.' The sheer complexity of responses to films, and thus the general significance of cinema for modern cultures, can now be questioned along with the wider social, economic and political dynamics of culture.

Established rhetorics of art, morality and taste still have useful mileage for a range of interests: many films are produced and marketed in terms of them being the 'cutting edge' of experimental cinema as an art form. Claims made for their value relate more to avant garde form and risky content, rather than any 'uplifting' qualities; indeed, their controversial nature and success are more likely to be attributed to regressive and reactionary tendencies, both of the film maker and the audience. So-called independent or art-house films follow commercial pressures just as much as the mainstream, but not necessarily with the same budgets or agendas of Hollywood (that is, multinational) companies. The films exploit niche marketing by targeting diverse audiences—combining styles, genres and narrative structures in one product². This also makes them 'postmodern' so they tend to have cachet as art. And as the major companies begin to exploit the profit potential of each new wave of film makers, the names of the directors (as stars/auteurs) become the promotional focus—rather than films being vehicles for their celebrity actors or their titles functioning as commodities.

Hysterical images

One effect of the breaking down of conventional categories of genre and narrative is that films may be relatively open-ended, confusing to viewers, or even downright unintelligible. Other films and media images are referred to as much as real situations, using pastiche and parody, while nostalgic images and styles bring versions of the past firmly into the present. Horrific, sublime, unrepresentable aspects of human experience are not funnelled off in embarrassment into specialised genres such as horror or pornography. Instead they are brought into the centre of mundane existence. Significantly, these 'postmodern' films usually

strongly privilege white male middle class perspectives and choices—and the film literature generally mirrors this tendency, especially ignoring what non-middle class viewers might make of them. However, the frightening, exotic or disgusting contexts that middle class protagonists struggle in and out of are usually represented by poor and dangerous Black and/or working class communities and characters.

So the 'slumming' in *Something Wild*, *After Hours*, *Blue Velvet*, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* etc., contrasts with earlier generations where magic and horror are located in the wealth and decadence of upper class life (of course, many films continue this tradition). Respectable lifestyles are portrayed as not only boring and sterile, but totally insecure—hardly the morale-boosting stuff of aspiration and meritocracy peddled elsewhere by education and the media. Slumming in the yuppie nightmare is a cautionary tale—titillation, then reassurance for middle class viewers. Waking from the bad dream, having sampled the terrifying but sublime environment of the gutter (a commodity on offer in the supermarket of life), audiences feel refreshed for the rigours of their professional lives. But how will the inhabitants of the gutter (that is, poor, Black, and/or working class viewers) respond to their portrayals? The film literature seems to find it very difficult to pay attention to such questions.

But just as interpreting films need not focus on questions of artistic, intellectual or political merit, neither is there any inevitable identification with middle class characters and dilemmas. Ordinary viewers will select some elements of the films, and will enlarge on these in the imagination and in discussion. They can experiment, identifying with different characters, positions and possibilities within the narrative—and can switch among them during viewing and afterwards. With their open-ended plots and bizarre characters, the new films in particular are likely to stimulate very varied and complex feelings and thoughts, in wider audiences, as they achieve higher box office returns and wider cinema, video and TV distribution.

The yuppie nightmare soon retreated into the more smug subgenre of 'x from hell', where 'x' may be a neighbour, flatmate, employee, etc.—showing the further social alienation and paranoia of recent generations of successful middle class consumers. Meanwhile the mixed genre characteristics of the yuppie dilemma are used in films which purport to apply more to waking life than to nightmares or romantic dreams, such as in *Cape Fear*, *Candyman*, *Deep Cover*, *Kalifornia*, *White Palace* and *Pretty Woman*. Alternatively, the slumming may be performed by the audience carried along by the narrative in sampling unhappier lives or by parachuting obviously middle class characters into lower class narratives (such as in *City of Hope*, *Short Cuts*, *Shopping* and *Lone Star*).

The 1990s mixed genre films continue to go further in blending fantasy and narrative layering. Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction* use the crudest of genre stories and characters, stitched together with inventive camera direction, editing and plot devices. The films twist and turn according to the minutiae of real human personal-

ity, random accidents, banality and psychopathology of daily life, recalcitrant complexity of the world and over-determination of events. A remarkable kind of emotional and situational realism ensues, in the midst of elaborate homages to just about the most unrealistic cinema styles imaginable. Tarantino's scripts are compelling enough for their power to persist even through Tony Scott's sentimentalism (*True Romance*), or Oliver Stone's moralising individualism (*Natural Born Killers*)³. In general, even though big budget mainstream films now routinely use the virtuoso camerawork, editing techniques and narrative complexity learned from independent film makers, their stories and characters are often even weaker and narrower than before. As in the cases of cult and exploitation genres, new film methods are mainly enlisted by Hollywood merely as a gloss on the superficiality of conventional genres, and in the process the most interesting and powerful aspects of the source material are lost⁴. Except, perhaps, when the success of independent directors propels them into the big budget arena—as in Tarantino's meteoric rise, or more modestly in the case of David Lynch.

A body of films

David Lynch has been exemplary in experimenting with style and genre. He is uncompromising in locating extremes of sexuality, violence, fear and pleasure within ordinary life; transgresses boundaries of taste and moral and political acceptability; and keeps to his own trajectory despite fluctuations in popularity with both audiences and the industry. He depicts Middle America as full of emotional excess, signposted by his characters' weirdness, where scratching the surface reveals rich and hysterical depths. The films can be read as critiques of bourgeois social arrangements and morals, which suppress, fear and may be undone by the effects of passion and fantasy on bodies and behaviour, relationships and institutions.

Lynch's early films are notable for bizarre, lurid, nightmare visions of grotesque bodily excrescence, infantile emotion, dreams and a powerful sense of nostalgia for past eras and lost innocence. These subjects are not treated by romanticising them: typical moods are depression, rage and ambivalent desire. In the short film *The Grandmother* (1970), and in *Eraserhead* (1976), these effects are achieved against backdrops of industrial, urban and domestic blight, but without relying on traditional surrealist or horror genre conventions. Critics were thus left with no easy way of dismissing the films, except for their weirdness—and this mute response no doubt helped *Eraserhead* become a cult classic for horror audiences. Something similar might have happened with *Elephant Man* (1980), if it hadn't been for the prop of a 'true' story funded by the mainstream industry with corresponding budget and hype.

Dune (1984) failed even as cult, partly because the source material (Frank Herbert's sci-fi epic) was too vast. But Lynch continued to harness the body's vulnerability, power and monstrosity—bypassing thought and language—to illuminate and complicate personal dilemmas and their

social contexts. From *Dune* onwards Lynch's films deal explicitly with recognisable coming-of-age and family dramas. Such developments possibly say as much about what was needed to consolidate his move into the mainstream, as opposed to the director's 'artistic' ambition—for example when market imperatives insist on appealing to younger audiences.⁵

Blue Velvet (1986) was a turning point, set in an identifiable postwar America, and not the timeless, fantastic worlds of its forerunners. In all Lynch films the implacable, menacing presence of the flesh, raw nature, and their excesses of degradation and ecstasy, are central motifs. In *Blue Velvet*, *Twin Peaks* (1989-1990) *Wild At Heart* (1990), and *Twin Peaks, Fire Walk With Me* (1992), the fascination of these images and experiences is thoroughly woven into depictions of 'real life'. It becomes difficult to distinguish fantasy from reality; to identify boundaries between them; or even to know whether or not any such boundaries exist at all—as in *Lost Highway* (1997).

Blue ambivalence

The avalanche of criticism and analysis following *Blue Velvet*'s release was as contradictory as the film itself⁶. Mainstream critics pigeonholed the narrative as small town or rites of passage drama, film noir, psychological thriller, soft porn cult, nostalgia film, gothic comedy or surrealism, or even as a religious parable of sin and redemption. Cultural analysts tended to feel that blending styles and images from several periods was superficial—everything being made equally bizarre, as well as appearing normal, without sufficient context to make it socially or politically meaningful. The 'unspeakably' fascinating images and behaviour—dirt, nature, flesh, violence and perversion—were interpreted as distractions, depicting evil in a way that evokes distaste rather than horror. Worse still, in linking sexual desire with violence and voyeurism, the psychological logic was said to leave the characters no better options. But the use of songs, names, nicknames, media and advertising fragments, plus images of the cruelty of nature, resonate strongly with all sorts of unexpected significance. Bypassing rationality, such sounds and images have more power to focus the hidden desires of the protagonists. They explode into the viewer's awareness, in extremes of colour and lingering close up, with an impact that can't easily be grasped by analysing the narrative. For both characters and viewers, events in the film resemble dreams—where apparently random elements condense, combine and multiply, uneasily reconstructed in memory or description.

Critics and academics were frustrated in their need to impose authoritative readings, in the absence of a congenial 'message'. So, every single review and analysis assumed that the final scene represented Jeffrey's return to normal real life. But it could just as easily be another twist in the nightmare. By crudely embedding Jeffrey's dream or fantasy in a small town mystery, Lynch fulfils his ambition to reveal strange desires lying beneath a respectable veneer. Yes, the film does threaten safe middle class life. It depicts perverse inadequacy, the fear, hatred, idealisation and stereotyping of women and the dangerous potential of the criminal lower classes to invade and ruin the pleasant security of the American Dream. These feelings aren't conveniently attributed to an 'other'. They are hidden under the nice, clean-cut exterior of a young man ready to take his place of power in the middle class scheme of things, grounded in the trivia of romantic consumerism. Viewers who aren't middle class may not make Lynch's and the critics' mistake, seeing Jeffrey as representative of 'Everyman'. Instead we might glimpse and understand a little more clearly the attitudes of those with power over us—attitudes which may be multi-layered and complex, but which are also very concrete in shaping the conduct of those in the professions, commerce, education and the media.

The American nightmare

Wild At Heart is a family drama, road movie and love story. Lynch transforms Barry Gifford's novel,

focusing again on the body's ecstasy, agony and violation, and the visual impact of fire, sex and death. Sailor (Nicholas Cage) and Lula (Laura Dern) avoid awareness of their excesses by weaving all experience into fairytale yearning via images and narratives from rock and roll. Sex is their drug and their anaesthetic, and as they lurch between catastrophes the past always catches up with them. The past and the present are more complicated than in *Blue Velvet*, however. The lovers seek freedom from Lula's well-off mother (Dianne Ladd) whose status derives from gangsterism—in many ways more representative of American economic history than shop owners.

The underclass hell looms, and the concerns and illusions of Sailor, Lula, their family and community, collide with and mirror the cruel animal passions of its denizens—personified by Bobby Peru (Willem Dafoe). They are distinguishable from the main protagonists by the latter's race, suburban accoutrements and aspirations for themselves and their children. So, the fate of a rich teenager affects the lovers far more deeply than their own predicament, as she frets about her handbag and her parents' anger while bleeding to death after a car crash. The film can be read as reflecting the fantasies and fears of the new middle classes. They escaped from the ghetto, but expressing dangerous passion could return them there. To be safe, romance must stay within the class and race limits staked out in geography and psychology, by conventional American social structures.⁷

Twin Peaks is a bizarre murder mystery and comic soap opera, attracting huge TV audiences. Lynch parodies the soaps, giving the characters absurd idiosyncrasies and relationships, although sticking to emotional realism in the family and neighbourhood dramas depicted. But everything hinges on the mystery of the naughty teen queen's murder. The convoluted plot keeps fans of detective stories alert, identifying with FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan). As before, the series can be read in terms of the main character's fantasies. Only Cooper has more than two dimensions—ace detective, father figure, scientist, masculine ideal, bureaucrat, all-American WASP, new man, philosopher and mystic, government representative, tourist, pervert, angel ... you name it! In his desire to master truth, fight evil and control his world, he embodies the middle class ambition for domination via knowledge and individual merit. Displaying superhumanity, he charismatically enrolls the entire community to his agenda, so that by the end they all inhabit what amounts to his imaginative world. Crucially, *Twin Peaks* shows that the whole project must fail—the narrative, the TV concept and the worldview. Neither Lynch nor Cooper, nor the reign of science and middle class values, can run the show, or solve the problems—the nearer Cooper thinks he gets, the more the *Twin Peaks* community falls apart. That *Twin Peaks* needed to go to such extremes to reach this conclusion bears witness to the power and fascination of those myths.

In the feature film 'prequel', *Twin Peaks, Fire Walk With Me*, this theme was spectacularly pared down to the failure of the American nuclear family as well as the FBI. On TV we saw the diverse manifestations of 'evil forces' (i.e. some of the more appalling expressions of masculine insecurity) in an extended community. Whereas the film begins with the authorities' arrogance and stupidity—obsessed with their worldview, rituals and trivia, the incompetent FBI men chase around pontificating about the nature of evil. Meanwhile, in the face of forces which pose as benign, a young woman struggles to establish an identity and a sense of agency over her life. Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) lurches desperately between agony, anger and an ambivalent search for distraction in drugs, sex and friendship. All of these abuses, mirroring her father's (Ray Wise's) denied cruelty and her mother's (Grace Zabriskie's) distant, pre-occupied neglect—in possibly the most powerful cinematic treatment ever of long term sexual abuse. Navigating an intolerable course, some of her troubled dreams begin to unravel, and she can see the dread reality more clearly. Her father kills her, rather than allow truth to surface. And the

rest of the adult world, by implication, colludes. The community holds onto its complacent ignorance, and the police maintain their delusions of control and grandeur.

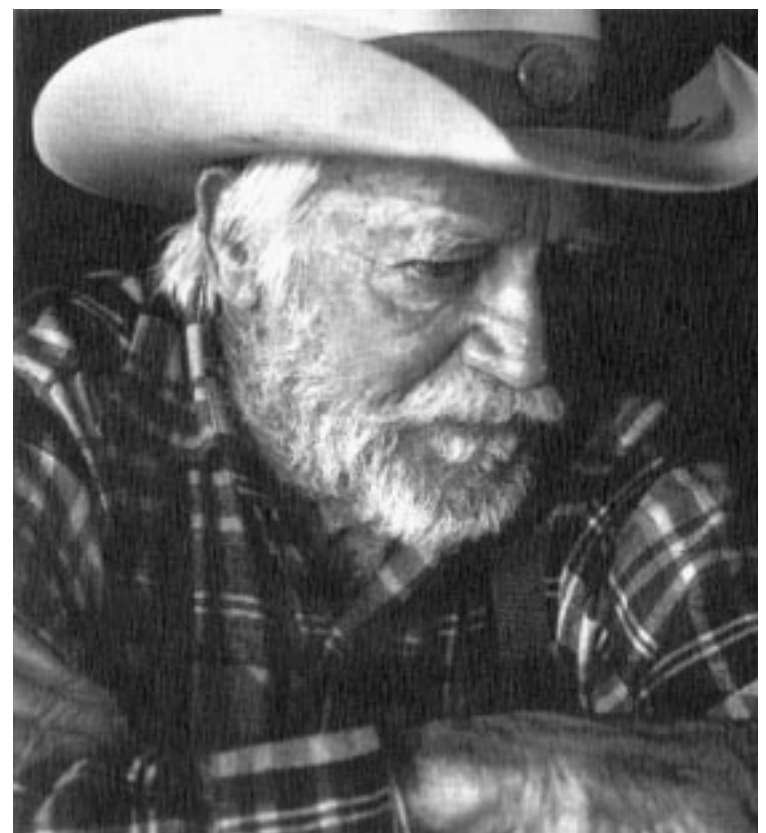
You take the high road...

Lost Highway in some ways closes the circle. None of the details in the film are necessarily 'true'—we are in the realms of identity loss and madness. The story—like the early films—tackles the main character's existential chaos: it may represent Fred's doomed attempt to fantasise solutions to his intolerable fears, since even during the most shocking events we focus on his *confusion*. Despite an enviable position and a job which is also a passion, he is uneasy and distrustful of everything—his wife, his shadowy home, the world outside. Whatever the circumstances of his metamorphosis into Pete, it surely can't be coincidence that he escapes from himself into a carefree working class youth. Except that abuse, deceit and injustice quickly filter into this incarnation too—much of it down to him. Then, mistrusting his own thoughts, perceptions and feelings, he has nowhere else to go. No one else, in either Fred or Pete's life, has much more of a grip on 'reality'. Authorities (such as the police or Pete's parents) seem especially stupid and ineffective. And Patricia Arquette's characters are full of compelling but unintelligible needs and motives. It is very tempting to see the film as excavating masculine insecurity and infatuation; or even as a sustained metaphor for the artificiality of cinematic contrivances in general. Or, to stretch the analogy, a commentary on the complacency of middle class discourses of knowledge, psychological integrity and consistency, and individualistic agency and control over one's own life.

However, this film makes *no* attempt to give this (admittedly extreme) dilemma of conventional aspirations an optimistic outcome—a resolution. A yuppie nightmare you will *not* wake from, very frustrating for the viewer, with no feelgood factor and none too promising at the box office: *Lost Highway* may be a logical conclusion to Lynch's films in the way I have read them, implying that bourgeois social, cultural or political philosophy furnishes only fantasy, and not solutions. To mainstream critics this makes the film 'enigmatic', 'meaningless' or 'hollow'⁸—just as middle class discourses in general are typically reluctant to envisage, to acknowledge, or to respect any other kind of discourse.

...and I'll take the low road

By representing the dreams and fantasies of diverse modern middle class American characters, the films build complex pictures of the way such individuals and groups bring their passions to bear upon their own lives and their surroundings. From a static picture of the small-town lumpen-





bourgeoisie, through the strivings and insecurities of more mobile fractions of the middle classes, we reach an absurd allegory of white America itself. The small town boy grows up, from shop owner to professional, gangster, FBI hotshot—or even a famous film director. Then, *Fire Walk With Me* and *Lost Highway* finish the job of pulling apart all of the stereotypical elements of this macho mythos—things certainly *don't* improve when the patriarchs fantasise themselves as saints, or disavow responsibility for evil. The weight of history operates on the inner lives of the characters—their biographical, emotional baggage—and on threads of money, class, sex, race and power entwined in the social history of families, neighbourhoods and societies. The weirdness, though bizarre, rings true—in the gaps between what we see making the characters tick, what they think, say, feel and believe about themselves, and how they explain their actions. We're reminded of our own experience of our inconsistencies, quirks and foibles, our unaccountable and unruly emotions, and those of people close to us.

Lynch's latest film, *The Straight Story* (1999), reinforces these points by negating any sign of inconveniently messy inner, or public, life. An ailing 73-year-old ex-trucker drives 300 miles on a lawnmower to visit an estranged brother. We learn little about this 'Gump on a grasscutter' from his family, friends and neighbours, or from the down-home counselling assorted strangers derive from him on his journey. Everyone accepts their lot: traumas from war, poverty, ill health, family tragedy and conflict must be adapted to—meekly and unreflectively. Agency is impossible, collectivity unimaginable, struggle inconceivable. The rhetoric is conveyed in the warm sentimental glow of muted and unthreatening quirkiness; the superb photography, editing and acting; and also in Alvin Straight's kindly words of wisdom (which are unerring insults to anyone harbouring a sense of the real injustices of the world). Truly the dreams and fantasies of diverse modern middle class American viewers!

These resonances may be even more meaningful to lower class viewers, in the light of the pretensions of those who seek to know, teach, deploy, administer and police us. They are secure in 'knowing' the rationality of their systems, the comprehensiveness of their knowledge, rightfulness of their power, and, often enough, the ignorance and

inferiority they think they see in their charges (especially those more uppity than Alvin Straight et al). Whereas we may suspect that strange and venal wishes, fears and hatreds must lie under their cool, superior demeanours, just as they do under our uncouth common-ness.

The films can reinforce these vague, uncomfortable suspicions—we don't have to rely purely on our own disquiet, pain or fury to confirm it. And, through necessity, those without the resources for, or interest in, building illusions of individual superiority might realise that social and cultural strength has the potential to weave our collective weaknesses into the possibility of a better life—except that distortions of power and wealth get in the way. But there is no reason to expect the film makers and producers to be aware of these possible kinds of impacts of their films; and scarcely any more likelihood of film criticism comprehending them either.

Uncontrollable responses

The main method the films use to achieve their strongest effects is to create images that virtually defy words, set in contrast to the visual clichés of high and low culture, fashion and taste. Poignant, disgusting, intimate, tragic, sublime and terrible experiences are just as likely to come upon us during the mundane everyday as they are in special circumstances, and the films exploit this irony to the full when such moments occur at crucial points in the narrative. In concentrating and escalating the viewer's gut responses they provide a focus to highlight the significance of events and situations for the characters.

However, mainstream entertainment critics and academic analysts depend on reading films as texts or as art, wishing to discover value and meaning within the object of their study itself. Popular audiences prefer the recognition of pleasure and pain, both in the intransigence of the world and in the fantasy of doing something different about it. Fantasy is not just escapism, however. For viewers who routinely face drudgery, degradation and domination, fantasy can connect with the possibility of effecting change in real life. But this is not the same world as the one professionally inhabited by those who 'know' for a living. Their discourse can't accommodate the immediacy and visual power the new films use to emotionally engage their viewers. Likewise, art cinema buffs can't handle their vulgar appeal to popular audiences not schooled in aesthetic subtlety. So it comes as no surprise that the tricks of the new film trade owe much to advertising—which also relies on engaging a mass audience's familiarity rather than its contempt.

Cultural theorists wrangle over whether or not the meaning of film images are sites of 'struggle'—still concerned with claiming the correct reading, even while agreeing that many are present. Searching for secret knowledge, they are frustrated by stories that don't yield straightforward answers and by viewers for whom the last thing desired is a lesson. The Political Correctness Pundits, for example, focus mainly on what they see as the negative effects of a film—desiring to police popular culture. The typical strategy is to dream up stereotyped fictional 'ideal' viewers who get attributed narrow and fixed responses. The ensuing interpretations are then universalised as the only significant political understandings (unless you're reactionary).

Lynch's films are usually trivialised as well, as the pigeonholing of *Blue Velvet* suggests. But since the viewing audience is so diverse, with highly ambivalent responses, such analyses miss the point—as do the common elitist complaints of superficiality, narcissism and style over substance, and the loss of meaning. Much of the more recent trend of cultural populism is scarcely more promising, in its tendency to glorify the subversive

opportunities afforded by consumer choice in a saturated media market—seeming to confuse the potential for 'reading against the grain' with its *de facto* achievement on a mass scale.⁹

The new film criticism has begun to go beyond the arbitration of taste and morality. And by interpreting the (potential) responses of specific types of viewers, the dangers of uncritical populism are at least partially side-stepped. But there is still a strong proclivity for privileging certain viewer and subject positions and, in doing so, downplaying others. Most noticeably, social class is consistently treated as subsidiary to gender, race and sexuality, even when such analysis turns out to be incoherent without a firm grounding in class dynamics.¹⁰

But, in general, the most significant development in recent film criticism might be its tentative abandonment of elitism, in no longer simply treating films as special opportunities for enlightened and universal judgements. Films are part of the debris of our material cultural environments—and how they will be used is not determined from within their structure or by objective qualities, but depends on how users articulate responses to them. And this is no new, postmodern phenomenon. Symbolic material, fantasy and myth has been woven in many subversive and revolutionary directions—in the peasant cultures of early modern Europe, at the beginnings of industrialism, in carnival and religious heresy, native and aboriginal societies, and in the persistent murmurings of lower class collective cultures¹¹. Media images may not be our religion, but they form a significant part of our mythic worlds. The best that traditionally leftist critics usually manage to concede is that there might be 'positive misreadings' which can prompt slight changes for the better in an aimless, distracted audience. However, we might prefer to remain distracted from *their* aims.¹²

Media and cultural critics and academics need to claim to know the pleasures of ordinary people, assuming the capacity to define our interests in ways that can establish status for their forms of knowledge, institutions and careers. The film readings given here try to enter the terrain of this discourse from the position of an outsider with different motives¹³. Cinema films are prominent in general awareness, and in their incorporation into popular imagination. Without worrying about the 'rightness' or 'goodness' of it, we may appropriate film imagery in line with what we desire the meanings to be, for particular purposes. Video technology does allow a level of control over watching and reflecting on films, so that ordinary viewers can be in the relatively unusual position of distancing ourselves from the spectacle even while being flooded by it.¹⁴ Many contemporary films do, as it happens, lend themselves to this, in their mixtures of nostalgia and futurism, novelty and pastiche, violence, sex, comedy, magic and banality.

If the professionally knowledgeable have to distance themselves from culture in order to objectify and monitor it; radicals these days all too often pretend to exist outside of their own living culture, hating what capitalism makes of it—and have lost *their* (high)way.

Notes

1. Studies in this category would include: Fred Pfeil (1995) *White Guys: Studies in Postmodern Domination and Difference*, Verso; Yvonne Tasker (1998) *Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema*, Routledge; S. Craig Watkins (1998) *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema*, University of Chicago Press; Sharon Willis (1997) *High Contrast: Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood Film*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press.
2. Genre-bending and recent developments in the US film industry are described by: Thomas Schatz, 'The New Hollywood,' and Jim Collins, 'Genericity in the Nineties: Eclectic Irony and the New Sincerity', both in Jim Collins et al (Eds.) (1993) *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, Routledge; and in Timothy Corrigan (1991) *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam*, Routledge.
3. For what Stone did with Tarantino's script, see ref. note 1. See Sharon Willis, 'Borrowed Style: Quentin Tarantino's Figures of Masculinity', in *High Contrast* (ref. note 2). And while it makes sense to concentrate on other cinema production functions, so as to counter the hype of director-as-author, directors are the most visible focus in the motivation for these mixed genre films, and thus allow a more convenient cognitive mapping of this region of contemporary cinema. See: Yvonne Tasker (1998), 'Performers and Producers', in *Working Girls* (ref. note 1); and Lizzie Francke (1994) *Script Girls: Women Screenwriting in Hollywood*, Routledge.
4. For example, pornography: Linda Ruth Williams (1993) 'Erotic Thrillers and Rude Women', *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 3, No. 7, pp. 12-14; or horror: Carol J. Clover (1992) *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, BFI.
5. Accounts of Lynch's early films are given in: Michael Chion (1995) *David Lynch*, BFI; Corrigan (ref. note 3); and John Alexander (1993) *The Films of David Lynch*, Letts.
6. A range of perspectives on *Blue Velvet* can be found in: Michael Atkinson (1997) *Blue Velvet*, BFI; Peter Brunette & David Wills (1989) *Screen/Play: Derrida and Film Theory*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press; Chion (ref. note 6); Corrigan (ref. note 3); Barbara Creed (1988) 'A Journey Through Blue Velvet', *New Formations*, Vol. 6, pp. 97-117; Norman Denzin (1987) 'Blue Velvet: Postmodern Contradictions', *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 5, pp. 461-73; Fredric Jameson (1989) 'Nostalgia for the Present', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 88, pp. 53-64; and Jed Sekoff (1994) 'Blue Velvet: the Surface of Suffering', *Free Associations*, Vol. 31, pp. 421-46.
7. Sharon Willis (1997) convincingly argues that *Wild At Heart* violently displaces various middle class anxieties into its treatment of race and gender ('Do The Wrong Thing: David Lynch's Perverse Style', in *High Contrast*, ref. note 2). But this insight is left hanging, almost as an afterthought.
8. On *Lost Highway*, see: Marina Warner (1997) 'Voodoo Road', *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 7, No. 8, pp. 6-10; David Lynch & Barry Gifford, (1997) *Lost Highway*, Faber & Faber; Kim Newman (1997) [review], *Sight & Sound*, Vol. 7, No. 9, pp. 48-9.
9. An incisive critique can be found in Jim McGuigan (1992) *Cultural Populism*, Routledge.
10. Yvonne Tasker dissects representations of women and their sexuality in terms of the economic and social implications of women's employment (*Working Girls*, ref. note 2). Her discussion works partly due to its explicit attention to the articulation of social class interests in film narratives, producers and viewers. But despite recurring throughout the book, there is little sense that such questions need to be foundational—as in Sharon Willis' analysis of *Wild At Heart* (see note 8).
11. See, for example, E.P. Thompson's studies, and the work of James C. Scott—in particular, *Domination: The Arts of Resistance*, Yale University Press (1990). Tricia Rose shows how fruitful a sensitivity to grassroots audiences can be, in *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, University Press of New England (1994). Ron Eyerman also discusses Black American culture and politics: 'Moving Culture', in Mike Featherstone & Scott Lash (Eds.) (1999) *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, Sage.
- 12 See 'Natural Born Cultures' (note 1).
13. If, as I believe, collective grass-roots action is always both political *and* cultural, then radical left criticism of popular culture should avoid elitism. But, to put it mildly, this seems rare.
14. Thanks to Stefan Szczelkun for this point.

Zine & Comics Review

Mark Pawson



In the **El Borbah** and **Big Baby** collections, Charles Burns finally gets the treatment his work deserves, these two stylish large format volumes from Fantagraphics, showcase Burns' ultra-clean scalpel-sharp lines in true black and white, not the murky grey and off-white that comics readers usually have to put up with.

Facetasm—a creepy mix & match book of gross face mutations!—is a collaboration between Burns and Gary Panter (Jimbo comic, "Pee Wee's Playhouse" designer). It takes the form of one of those kids flip books—where you build up faces identikit-style from different hair, eyes and mouths. The pages of mutants, zombies, robots, monsters, aliens and some very odd looking humanoids alternate between the artist's, there's a marked contrast between Burns' ultra smooth lines and Panter's scratchy more primitive style.

Whilst I feel it necessary to point out that I bought the larger, collectable 1992 edition of **Facetasm** when it came out, this new version is more satisfying, the smaller format makes it easier to play with, there's some extra monsters and a thoughtfully provided space to insert your own picture!



only just met proves to be a mistake. Julie soon gets distracted and bogged down with too much cheap beer, too many drugs, too much TV and the poor quality drawing paper she has to work on! She misses her cat, suffers increasingly frequent epileptic seizures and feels trapped by her overbearing asshole of a boyfriend and the sheer remoteness of living in a shitty NY suburb. It's just too much having to put up with all this crap when she should really be living downtown and hanging out with New York's cartooning fraternity. Despite the desperation of her situation, Julie doesn't seem to get too bitter, perhaps drawing this strip seven years later helped her come to terms with it all, putting it down to experience, she swiftly gets the hell out of New York and leaves for the cartoon artists Mecca of Seattle.

Cheap Date magazine started out as a magazine about second-hand clothes but soon evolved into a more all-encompassing anti-fashion/anti-lifestyle magazine. **Cheap Date** the book has plenty of new articles together with the best parts from six issues of the magazines. The contents are just as varied and unpredictable as a junk shop or jumble sale. Interviews with people off the telly jostle with an eulogy to the Stylophone, celebrity pin-ups fight for space with Old Bangers. Editor Kira has assembled an ultra-eclectic gang of contributors, skip-scroungers, ketchup dispenser historians, ex-teenage Goths, dandies on the dole, Anti Consumerism Campaigners, Oxfam obsessives, crap collectors, zinesters, junk shop addicts, obsolete technology aficionados, inspired entrepreneurs, the fashion-victimised and assorted celebs.

Cheap Date interviews their style-idols and then goes out shopping with them. It pays homage to Flexipop magazine with the goofy "Tale of Putney Turner" photo story—starring Wreckless Eric no less!, and bravely goes where others fear to tread—inside Christopher Biggin's Flat! In a ground-breaking photojournalism story certain to be picked up soon by the newspapers, **Cheap Date** exposes *shop-dropping* a subversive new craze sweeping the high street: its the opposite of shop-lifting, recycle old clothes by leaving them in shops! Get a copy now, unless you're a real cheapskate and prefer to wait a couple of years in the hope of finding a copy for 29p at the local Mencap shop....

Stephen's **Second Little Book Of Charity Shopping** by **Cheap Date** contributor Stephen Drennan features ten of his favourite recent finds from Brighton and Hove's numerous charity shops. Each item is lovingly described together with the price paid and shop location details. Superb illustrations by Erica "Girlfrenzy" Smith and endpapers patterned with charity shop logos make this a cute, neat little book, and unlike Drennan's writing for **Cheap Date** which is for some archaic reason handwritten, his own **Second Little Book Of Charity Shopping** is neatly typeset and thankfully we're spared the scrawl.

Coming from the opposite direction of **Cheap Date** yet similar in many ways is **Things**, a publication put together by history of design post-graduates "as a forum for the free discussion of objects, their histories and meanings." **Things** significantly avoids calling itself a Journal, the writing is relaxed and accessible and avoids being too academic or theoretical. Each issue begins with "contents", three or four long pieces, followed by "other things" with approximately 25 short pieces—"texts, exhibitions, ideas"—this eclectic, zine-like section is the most interesting part; a recent issue covered: disappearances in Soviet Photography, Donkey Jackets, Taylorism & scientific management, children's games past and present, the '98 England v. Argentina World Cup Second Round, the Museum of Collectors, Cod and a poem about Picasso's Pots. The issues I've seen vary from 130-200 pages long and have all been completely different, the lively mixture of research based writing exhibition and book reviews with more personal musings, selected literary quotes and snatches of oral history works extremely well.

Cool And Strange Music! Magazine #15—"dedicated to unusual sounds" is required reading for anyone into the vast field of what has come to be known as "Incredibly Strange Music". Recent issues have featured Julie London, Wildman Fischer, Alvino Rey, Claudine Longet, Mrs Miller, Hanna Barbera Records, Elvis Parody Records, Star Wars Cash-in Records, Twist Records and Music from Car Horns—this gives you a pretty good idea of what to expect. Issue 15's Julie (Cry Me A River) London article is accompanied by a full colour 2 page spread of her sultry album covers, and I particularly appreciated the thoughtful and considerate



Gary Panter's **Burning Monster** is one of the first titles in a new sketchbook series issued by maverick French screenprinters Le Dernier Cri, his ultra-scratchy, almost totally self-obliterating sketches of monsters and monster trucks alongside holiday and wedding scenes make me think of those biro-scrrawl encrusted fag packets sometimes found on pub tables. Gary Panter's most recent work **Pink Donkey's Coot Country** is not available in any shops, it's a web animation exclusive for the cartoon network; www.cartoonnetwork.com/wpt/coot/index.html

Also in the Le Dernier Cri sketchbook series is **Caroline et Ses Amis**. Caroline Sury's scratchy sketchbook wander around Marseille, calling in at the Post Office and Boulangerie, running the gamut of loitering track-suited youths, dropping in on numerous friends' studios and bars, centrespread is unsurprisingly of the Dernier Cri screenprinting/bookbinding studio, there's a recipe for fish soup as well.

Julie Doucet's **My New York Diary** is a collection of three autobiographical comics, the title story is a powerful account of the brief and rather miserable time she lived in the Big Apple. Moving in with a boyfriend she'd





"Once is Enough! Recordings you don't need to hear a second time" article, it's enough to just know that some of these records exist without having to hear them.

With snazzy layouts, colour covers and cartoons by Wayno (best known here for his illustrations in the Guardian Guide) **C&SM!** is looking more and more like a proper magazine, but the lively letters pages and overlap/interchange between readers and contributors reveal their zine roots. With the golden days of finding Incredibly Strange records at charity shops and car boot sales now long gone, the extensive CD reviews section is particularly useful for keeping track of new and reissued material—much of which you're unlikely to see mentioned anywhere else, I'm keeping an eye out for the Ramonettes LP—16 classic Ramones tunes played instrumental surf guitar Ventures style!

My only complaint is that **Cool And Strange Music!** comes out too frequently, I've only just finished reading the last one and made a shopping list of records to track down when a new issue arrives!

Fucked Up And Photocopied: Instant Art of the Punk Rock Movement, is an impressively hefty 240 page collection of American Punk gig flyers accompanied with photos and short pieces of writing. More than 100 band members, concert organisers, Punks, ex-Punks and poster-makers have contributed material from their personal collections by coming up with photocopied posters that have been lovingly kept for years.

Most large US cities have ultra-cheap photocopy shops and concentrated "downtown" locations with plenty going on, these factors combine to produce a tradition of flyposting, that sadly there is no UK equivalent of. Fly posting—as an attention grabbing, quick and cheap form of communication—thrives in such an environment according to 'Winston Smith': his hometown San Francisco had an active flyposting circuit, he loved making posters, but didn't happen to know any bands—so he just invented band names and went ahead sticking their posters up all over San Francisco. The book is divided into regions, Northern California, Southern California, the Pacific North West etc., in this way each section gives a flavour of the importance and vibrancy of local scenes, each with their own set of bands and venues.

Initially I was a disappointed that there's very little about cre-



ation of the posters/artwork, but there's not really much that needs to be explained—the posters themselves say it all, they combine information, art and the method of communication on an 8 1/2 x 11 inch sheet of paper. Collages, photos, drawing and stencilled, hand-drawn or pricey letrasetted text were the quickest, most accessible methods of making posters in the pre home computer age. It's interesting to see very early work by Gary Panter, the Hernandez brothers and Raymond Pettibon—all of whom retain a Punky edge or content in their current work.

Sadly most UK readers won't have the fun of being able to flick through the book saying "I was there!" My copy has already started acting as a repository for Punkabilia, there's a flyer for a 1978 Slaughter and the Dogs gig inside the back cover.

The **Fucked Up And Photocopied** editors have done an impressive job of assembling so much US Punk ephemera, their book gets extra Punk points for being defiantly bar codeless but is guilty of wimping out in a most un-Punk way by not daring to have the full title visible on the front cover or spine!

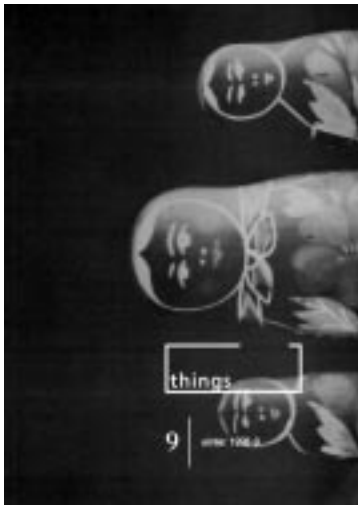
Check My Chops is a fine example of an all-round personal zine with a bit of everything, I read it cover to cover the morning it dropped through the letterbox rather than the usual reviewing technique of filing it in a pile of magazines and forgetting about it. Publisher 'Dave the Chimp' is one hyperactive ape and keeps plenty busy with pen, sketchbook and camera. Issue 5 has stories of his travels as he swings from New York to Japan, Germany, California and Portugal, there's photos of Motel signs and the desert, cartoons, reviews of skateparks and sideburns as well all the other usual things that zines review, there's even some poems as well. Layout and lettering is all done by hand in a nice 'n' chunky skateart/graffiti style, no computers appear to have been used, the tall-and-thin A3-folded-in-half format is different and effective. **Check My Chops** is bursting with monkey energy, an organised chaos feel, with every inch of background space crammed full of collages and doodlings is reminiscent of *Bugs 'n' Drugs*.

Parasol Post creates its own cross-fertilisation of fringe and mainstream cultures, the result is a surrealistic, sometimes disconcerting zine. The Association of Autonomous Astronauts, Zoë Ball, Leicestershire

Psychogeography, Chris Evans, umbrella symbology, Grateful Dead Conspiracy Theory, a rant in praise of Lard and a possibly non-fictional Stewart Home interview are all haphazardly juxtaposed leaving the reader to sort them out. The transcript of a Jerry Springer show with couples scrapping over fundamental philosophical principles: "I am so an existentialist, Bitch!" is a precisely observed classic parody that surely deserves to be filmed! Serious subversives or cheeky wisecrasses? Do these people really want to make a revolution and have fun at the same time? *Parasol Post's* lo-fi presentation and home-grown mix of articles of uncertain origin with loopy press clippings may not be to everyone's taste, if you don't get it, don't get it.

Contact Information

- El Borbaj** and **Big Baby**, both Fantagraphics, £19.95, fantagraphics.com
- Facetasm**, Gates of Heck, £8.95, www.heck.com
- Burning Monster** and **Caroline et Ses Amis**, £5.50, Le Dernier Cri, 41 rue Jobin, 13001 Marseille, France available in UK from disinfortainment.
- My New York Diary**, Drawn & Quarterly, £9.99, www.drawnandquarterly.com
- Cheap Date** antidotal anti-fashion, £7.50 inc. p/p, Slab-O-Concrete, PO Box 148, Hove, BN3 3DQ, www.slab-o-concrete.demon.co.uk
- Stephen's Second Little Book of Charity Shopping**, £1.25 inc. p/p, Fabgear Books, PO Box 2927, Brighton, BN1 3SX
- Things**, £6.00 inc. p+p, PO Box 10632, London, SW3 4ZF
- Cool And Strange Music! Magazine**, £3.00/\$4.95, 1101 Colby Ave., Everett, WA 98201 USA, www.coolandstrange.com available in UK from disinfortainment.
- Fucked Up And Photocopied** £29.95 Kill Your Idols/Gingko Press Inc., 5768 Paradise Dr., Suite J, Corte Madera, CA 94925, USA
- Check My Chops** is £1 and an A5 stamped addressed envelope. Send cunningly concealed cash or unused postage stamps to; CHIMP, 27 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, Mace Street, Bethnal Green, London, E2 0RF.
- Parasol Post** send some stamps or trade your stuff; to 24 Marfitt St., Leicester, LE4 6RN
- disinfortainment PO Box 664 London E3 4 QR www.mpawson.demon.co.uk



'It could be an eye...'

Neil Mulholland

Now what has 'good' criticism to look like... I would say first that it recognises the figural nature of its language. Further the non-referentiality of its discourse in respect of critical readings which may or may not have happened literally. Recognising just these two conditions would release—or lead to the release of—criticism from its own ontological crudities...¹

Now look harder. Your probably saying, "Hey! That's just a full-stop. I've seen one of those before!" But that just goes to show how stupid you are. [...] That black, black circle says a lot about death, it says a lot about modern anxiety, it says a lot about our whole concept of what kind of concept a concept really is, it says a lot about everything and a lot about nothing. And it says a helluva lot about the here and now. Hey! Let's take another look at it: It could be an eye. It could be an arsehole.²

Based on his writings for *New Left Review*, *Art Monthly*, *Art & Design* and a vast body of primary and secondary literature, Julian Stallabrass' *High Art Lite* is a sustained critique of London-based Young British Artists of the 1990s, a manufactured 'movement' obsessed with commerce and cults of the personal "purchased at the price of triviality." (p2) Stallabrass coins the evaluative term "High Art Lite" to describe this body of work rather than settle for more commonly used terms such as yBa, Brit Art and the Britpack. "Naming a tendency is easy," he writes. "Showing that it deserves a name, is coherent and distinctive enough to need a category to contain it, is another matter." (p2) Stallabrass should be commended for having chosen to evaluate the work in such a transparent fashion. The "lite" of Stallabrass' term obviously relates negatively to two key issues of this art: commercialism (sponsorship from leisure industries such as Becks) and quality (Stallabrass' claim that this work is not really high art but a branding exercise, a mediated, dumbed-down substitute for fast-living lifestyle junkies on an art diet who have "made a very smooth ride for themselves."). (p217)

In order to substantiate these claims, Stallabrass begins by focusing on the role of personality in *high art lite*, looking at Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, Tracy Emin and Gavin Turk. Hirst, who is simultaneously a media darling and an enfant terrible sensationalist, is his main target here. There is little doubt that Hirst's work mixes the spectacular with the literal, and in this sense, is a great boon to the British tabloids and the lifestyle industries. This simultaneously appeals to the art cognoscenti in the widest sense: "...Hirst in a naive, sincere way does appear to be caught up with the big themes of the human condition." (p23) "Hirst, then, despite his Goldsmiths training, serves as the tendency's Douanier Rousseau." (p25) Such facile, faux-naive philosophising does not mean Hirst's work must therefore be facile, as Stallabrass implies. To argue this would be to commit the intentional fallacy. Hirst, like most artists since the 50s, is, of course, wise to this, adopting a highly successful Warholian "what you see is what you see" approach. This allows him to be all things to all men. In order to evade the triteness of Hirst's personal references to "life and death" and popular culture — which Stallabrass disparagingly characterises as "hammer-horror" — sympathetic critics have constructed a lineage with "the authentic sources of his art", (e.g. The Cabinet of Curiosities, Protestant Iconoclastic still-life painting, Burkeian and Lyotardian theories of the Sublime, Francis Bacon and post-war European Existentialism, Museological Art of the 80s, etc.). (p25)

Characterising such sources as 'authentic', risks intimating that the world as known through the mass media fatalistically confirms the actual

world. The mass media may be fatalistic (it would like to think so) but this does not entail that this is true of all popular culture which demands a diverse range of factionalised, active consumers. According to a hard-line materialist reading, art and popular culture are both superstructures, myths which disguise the 'real' workings of the world. An attempt to discredit the yBa as a whole by revealing their 'real' workings will be reductionist insofar as it seeks to reinstate the legitimacy of the Theory industry as an arbitrator of the real over the fragmented praxis of cultural production. Stallabrass is more than aware that criticism is just another form of representation or myth: "...for criticism to be truly effective, it must take on the art world as a whole, showing how it is thoroughly entangled with the society, its economy and politics. Such criticism will have to start with an examination of its own apparent powerlessness in the market-led vacuum." (p272).

However, while calling for artists and their promoters to be more reflexive and critical, Stallabrass is often just as reluctant to examine the Marxist premises of his own judgments. Of course, this in no sense mitigates his concern with the lack of active negotiation of such critical issues in *high art lite*. Indeed, Stallabrass' overtly critical stance is a long overdue corrective to what he characterises as the "schoolboy relativism" which has long plagued the art world. (p264) The urgency of this task exonerates his tendency to avoid the paralysing self-reflexiveness of much recent art historiography.

Stallabrass charts how artists became less interested in controlling or contributing to the critical debate surrounding their work, demonstrating the numerous ways in which the 90s witnessed the re-emergence of the traditional division of labour between critics and artists, with a concomitant dwindling interest in the practice of Theory. In one sense this is a result of the failure of critical postmodernism in the 80s, which became increasingly totalitarian and predictable in its deconstruction of the postmodern trinity of race, class and gender: "It was not cheery stuff, and only rarely did it allow the viewer any leeway, any response other than the sanctioned one, or any sense of its subjects other than as powerless victims." (p86) Stallabrass contends that, in its critical relativism, 90s art was equally predicable, being little more than an empty collage of ready-made elements. For Stallabrass, abdication of critical responsibility is as much a travesty as it is a symptom of postmodernist relativism: "It is as though this generation have learned their post-modern lessons too well, ditching its persistent but ungrounded moralising in favour of its licence to sanction anything except judgment." (p95) Hirst, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Sam Taylor-Wood, Marcus Harvey, Matt Collishaw, Abigail Lane and Douglas Gordon among many others are all guilty of utilising this debauched "feature of the tabloid press: the knowing exploitation of their subjects, the indifference to their subjects' feelings or their fate when set against the imperatives to produce spectacular copy, to best rivals and pull in profit." (p139) This formulates shallow, 'lite' art, spectacular, clear products and crude puns tailor-made to attract the attention of Charles Saatchi as is "most clearly seen in the prevalence of the one-liner work of art [which] makes its points swiftly with conventional signs." (p99)

On the face of things this is a fairly convincing argument. However, we need to ask how important it is for artists to make "judgments". Favouring poetic, unstable signifiers does not necessarily mean that the work has to be shallow, it could

equally be read as signalling a commitment to complexity. Stallabrass distrusts intuitive decision-making because, being a vague and mystificatory concept, it grants art relative autonomy, meaning that it cannot be readily subjected to materialist institutional analysis. This is highlighted when he illustrates his thesis with an embarrassing attempt to produce a series of 'Hirsts': "A large cabinet with shelves on which stand jars of brightly coloured sweets—gob-stoppers, Smarties, Refreshers and the like. The title: Knows Candy." (p27) This lacklustre satire indicates that something needs to be said in defence of praxis, that there needs to be an acknowledgement of the difference between thinking about things and making things. Recognition of this factor is lacking in Stallabrass' discussion which means it risks becoming histrionic, destructive rather than constructive. Stallabrass' critique of *high art lite's* lack of self-reflexiveness may be justified, but it perhaps confuses the ways in which art and criticism can operate. While artists' readings may be questionable from an historical materialist viewpoint, we must consider criticism as being of no more importance than any other influence. Distaste for *high art lite's* historicism only demonstrates that the hierarchies of art historians and artists are not identical. Crucially, however, Stallabrass sees this familiar issue as having gone beyond mere disagreement and reconditte dispute:

"the attitude is not only of a repudiation of arcane jargon, of language that excludes the majority, but also of a suspicion of whole categories of knowledge, of the process of acquiring learning, and even of sustained thought itself." (p105)

In this sense, Stallabrass' dislike of the populist lack of critical ambition of London-based scene of the 90s is warranted.

"To play dumb is not just to defend yourself against attack for being high-brow but to take the first steps from saving your art from being ignored. The new art provoked conservative critics, certainly, but also learned a good deal from them, accepting as valid their attack on liberal (and previously left-leaning) art as obscure, elitist and boring." (p86-87)

Certainly, in much 90s art, the free play of the signifier was little more than a marketing tool (bigger audiences) and peer group aesthetic (who know better). Poststructuralist inspired polyvalence and pluralism became serviceable tools "for saying everything and nothing, for stamping a work with a mark of value, while never being reductive, never subjecting discourse to closure, never trampling on anyone's subjectivity, never completing a thought." (p123) Failing to recognise the irony of this situation, Liz Ellis made a similar point in the feminist journal *n.paradoxa*:

"Sarah Lucas makes it clear that she is not making work of social or political or critical meaning, she says: 'Just look at the picture and think what you like.' [...] [We are therefore] returned to the old, tired familiar notion of artist as moral relativist, removed from the rest of the world, at liberty to make and say and do without the necessity for explanation or intellectual framework. This role does have social-political implications, and however weary these graduates of Goldsmiths may be, many others are passionately involved in these poststructuralist debates. To choose not to join the messy debates over the language of experience, the themes of difference and otherness is to adopt a political and intellectual position. The narcissistic self-referential, free-enterprise nature of the work to the exclusion of any other outside factors ultimately locates the work as politically right wing."³

Indeed, it is a truism to say that apolitical stances are political. The problem with this view is that it does not tell us anything about the specific

ways in which 90s models of 'apolitical practice' were political. This is vulgar materialism, characterising *high art lite* as the direct 'reflection' of the base in order to make the 'critical' claim that it must be bad because its defenders are bad critics, and capitalist collaborators. Given that art was and is the product of capitalist societies, this should lead swiftly to the conclusion that all art is inherently reactionary. Holding to this (essentially accurate) belief would mean failing to distinguish between promotional strategies and the differing qualities of *high art lite* since it encourages a complacent unwillingness to pay any detailed attention to culture. Such stagnant materialism is hardly dialectical. It is equally unwise to claim that ideology is such a direct form of cultural exchange that it can be tokenistically illustrated (narcissism is not necessarily right wing). Assuming that the historically ambivalent attitude of the political avant-garde towards consumerism, is 'acted' out ad nauseum by the yBa myth declines to consider the fact that the belief that art can have a transparent relationship with the 'political' and the 'ethical' has been thoroughly reworked since the late 60s. Materialist criticism must now face up to a (convenient) postmodernist orthodoxy which asks questions such as: "Why should the ethical and political dominate cultural praxis, and who is in a position to decide what is political and ethical?" Given the "disappearance of any agreed perspective from which to judge things", Stallabrass' critical intervention is a hazardous project. (p270-271)

Rather than adopting a static, vulgar Marxist position, Stallabrass seeks to verify the reactionary character of *high art lite* by examining the issue of image to gauge the value of its intentions. For Stallabrass, the yBas were not interested in the production of art as a site of conflict but as a media identity which could be clearly defined and marketed: "as long as the work is considered only as the product of a persona rather than of a wider culture, it becomes impossible to place." (p95) As such, Hirst's cigarettes mainly represent a 'Hirst' rather than 'death', Hume's door paintings mainly represent a 'Hume' rather than 'life and death', Turk's autosculptures mainly represent 'Gavin Turk' rather than 'fame', Emin's tent mainly represents 'Tracy Emin' rather than 'sex and death'. While this is certainly true, it does not render other readings of the works obsolete (even if they tend to be bland and predictable). Art requires the humanist concept of signature/authenticity to concur or reject, *high art lite* just happens to be childishly obsessed with this factor. Are the art objects of Hirst and Turk "critique or exemplification or both at once?" (p46) This is an old chestnut. Such works are not overtly critical of commodity fetishism, but, given that all objects in a capitalist society are commodities and fetishes anyway, how could they be otherwise? Is *high art lite* nothing more than yet another literalist Warholian employment of the Catch-22 of 'new' art, a bourgeois construct used to 'critique' bourgeois constructs? Yes and no. The difference, Stallabrass indicates, lies in ambition. Hume's paintings are mirrors; he either defends his work with "brief ambivalent remarks" (p98) or his presence is non-existent. Warhol was passive in every respect. For Stallabrass, then, Warhol's interviews do not compare with Hirst and Hume's since they are not authentically committed to inauthenticity. "...once a certain complexity of bluff and counter-bluff is reached, there is no way of knowing what any statement really means." (p95-96) This strategy is autoerotic, rather than rhetorical, "well

digested Baudrillard, turned to deeply conservative ends." (p151) It could be a hall of mirrors. It could be an arsehole.

Taking on the relativist arsehole gazing either/or a logic of 90s art is a thankless task which haunts this book.

"For theory, the combination of a false but ineluctable authenticity from which the art is supposed to issue and the neutral, non-judgmental position that it adopts, is lethal. [...] While it dethrones critical thought, irony enthrones the artist, for to see irony in the work is to believe that the individual creator has taken an attitude towards their work, and towards the viewer. The masks, then, do finally fall away in the grasping of irony, for we have to believe that the artist is at least serious about irony (or if ironic about irony, at least serious about the irony with which irony is taken—I could go on.)" (p96) This double bind was unquestionably at the heart of the mystifying accounts which supported the yBa. Again, this way of thinking is clearly a product of the critical postmodernism taught in art schools in the 80s and early 90s. Critical strategies designed to disrupt the production of meaning and knowledge, such as deconstruction, tended towards aestheticism in practice. Accordingly, *high art lite* often fails to properly consider contradiction, the desire to demonstrate the impossibility of judgment leads to idealism—i.e. every work is seen to contain contradiction, end of story. To see a difference between things is to see specific qualities uniquely contrasted with each other. To see unspecified, indeterminate differences is a contradiction—it is to see nothing at all. *High art lite* tends to come down on the side of (supposedly) irreducible complexity as the universal result, the only thing that is new is the element of certainty.

Stallabrass argues that this came to be seen as the only available position for criticism in the 90s, a position exemplified by the ironic double-coding of Matthew Collings' writing.

"One of the virtues of Matthew Collings' book, *Blimey!*, is that it offers a consistent pastiche of conventional art world talk. His meandering prose, inability to sustain an argument and thinking in soundbites is an exemplification of that talk, and its careless but consistent mislaying of all that is important." (p105)

Can Collings' version of events be challenged effectively? The Collings satirized by *Private Eye* is virtually indistinguishable from the real Collings, whose writing is already a "pastiche of the tyranny of received opinion that governs the art world." (p106) Even Stallabrass' garish pink book jacket, compete with Chapman brother's illustration, and soundbite chapter headings in a borrowed font pay homage to Collings while deriding him. This does not prevent Stallabrass from shrewdly examining the "Decline and Fall of Art Criticism". Numerous indicators of decline are cited: published idiocies are growing in number, pop stars have become critics, lifestyle magazines produce feeble features on art, art journals have become picture sheets for the purposes of name-dropping, criticism is anodyne promotion, "an adjunct to the business of art, and the art of business." (p266-267) *Transcript* is rightly castigated for its use of the interview form, which in feigning authenticity is consequently lacking in critical distance and intellectual responsibility. That which does profess to be theoretically reflexive and critical is found equally wanting. John Roberts and Dave Beech's construction of the 'phillistine' as a defence of the yBa is taken to task for its patronising attempt to validate the "pure pleasures of the body [...] against the corrupt machinations of the intellect" as though this bourgeois cliché was the 'voice of

the excluded', a 'proletarian' challenge to the hegemony of institutionalised theory in the '80s." (p119)

"The working class is allied with the wild body, with unregulated hedonism, with violence, drug abuse and filthy sex. For the majority of working class people who are not fans of the *Sunday Sport*, this simple-minded identification of their culture with the products of pornmongers and media monopolists is pretty insulting." (p121)

Is *high art lite*'s non-reflexive form of cognition totalising, or are there alternatives? According to Stallabrass:

"theory's standard configuration of intellectual disciplines may not be the most effective tools to use, since the art has thoroughly inoculated itself against most of them in advance." (p122)

Either this bleak picture is correct or Stallabrass is immoderately close to the culture he rebukes. Just as the apathetic modernist flaneur's fascination with 'low culture' was inseparable from life in the big city, exorbitantly ironic double-coding and an overwrought obsession with conspicuous consumption are predominantly products of London. Elsewhere in Britain, where this theatre of ostentation is of little importance, many artists have been able to ignore metropolitan peer group aesthetics and promotional criticism to produce work which, intentionally speaking at least, is romantic (though not naively so). Like the art he analyses, suffering as it does from falsely presenting parochial situations as though they were the products of national consensus, Stallabrass' critique becomes less meaningful outwith its mega-municipal context. His detailed discussion of the relationship between art and private capital in "The Market and the State" and "Saatchi and Sensation" are mainly relevant to those intimately involved with the machinations of the promotional sectors of the London art scene in which there is a massive boost of capital from the City's corporate purse. Equally, institutional critique of soundbites such as "Young British Art", "Cool Britannia" and the "Third Way" do not apply easily in Scotland on cultural and constitutional grounds ("yBa" and "Cool Britannia" oversimplify a complex set of post-colonial identities which are based primarily on London's diverse ethnographic and economic constituency; Labour does not have a majority in the Scottish Parliament.) Moreover it is clear that Scottish-based artists, working predominately in the public domain, have, for several years, been able to establish international reputations while maintaining a distance from London, and therefore must be approached differently. The chapter entitled "The Britishness of British Art" is an astute analysis of the unitary and nostalgic images of the working-class and the "corpse" formally known as Britain (read non-gentrified inner-city London, its suburbs and pastoral South East England) which forms the aestheticised subject matter of much *high art lite*, but could, perhaps, have introduced more into the debate over what is meant by the use of terms such as "British" and "Britishness" outwith this area of the UK.

With regard to Saatchi's sovereignty over such litigious terms as "British Art", Stallabrass comments that "the reduction of state funds to the public sector has played a role in the appearance of a more populist art, though hardly rendered in the polite colours that would pacify the conservatives" who argued at the end of the 70s that minimal and conceptual art were the expression of state bureaucracy. (p222) It is true to say that *high art lite* is the consequence of a fully fledged mone-

tarist policy for arts funding, the new (publicly unaccountable) orthodoxy. However, the critical attacks on the institutionalised art world in the late 70s were initiated by Marxists principally inspired by Raymond Williams, Herbert Marcuse and the *New Left Review*, not, as Stallabrass argues, by conservatives.⁵

"Ironically the conservative trend in the visual arts ran riot. This was due, above all, to the confusion and paranoia left in the wake of an onslaught against modernism launched by pseudo-Marxist-writers, some of whom never understood the basic problems (confusing art with the market). They left destruction in their wake with no practicable alternative. The few theories that did emerge were difficult to apply to the traditional media to which they were by and large addressed, and misinterpretation brought the old reactionaries out in strength."⁶

The major problem with Stallabrass' pessimistic criticism might be that it fortuitously echoes the Marxist critiques of the end of the 1970s. The highly negative, combative assertions made then served as the main catalyst for the factionalisation and privatisation of British art in the early 1980s, a corollary of which was the suffocation of 'critical postmodernist' discourses on British practices.

Stallabrass' negativity nonetheless raises anxious questions about what 'real' art might be. Following George Walden, Stallabrass cites *The Simpsons* as a model:

"The Simpsons critique is radical because it implies that fallibility and corruption are not just a matter of individuals but of systems, and it offers some small and faintly glimpsed positive elements to set against the dystopian vision, particularly the feelings of the main characters for each other. The challenge such a programme offers to high art lite is the following: is there anything that it does that art can do better (other than sell unique objects to millionaires?)" (p168)

This much might imply that Stallabrass is seek-

ing catharsis or redemption. He is happy to settle for art which is 'critical', sympathetically citing BANK for their policing of the yBa with "distinct curatorial interventions." (p66) It could be argued to the contrary that BANK were highly conservative artists, entirely reliant on the inadequacies of the London art scene, and that their parasitic work only helped to reinforce the status quo. Besides, BANK were tiresome, *The Simpsons* is entertaining.

If the 90s lead to a reintroduction of the old hierarchies of artist (passive producer of autonomous objects) and critic (explicator of objects), it also created hybrids such as the artist-curator, much heralded as the model of 90s art practice. Stallabrass is sceptical regarding the value of such developments:

"While there is a certain radical charge in the act of negation against the industry of high culture, nothing is recommended in its place except the loosest and hippest of liberalisms, defended but also defanged by irony. [...] The result is a lot of shows which all claim to be unique but which all say much the same thing: that they are 'alternative'. The most important claim that these exhibitions make is negative: it is to proclaim what they are not." (p65)

As an "alternative alternative" Stallabrass praises the South London artist run space *Beaconsfield*, claiming that the "extraordinary variety of detritus which [Tomoko] Takahashi had assembled was a reminder or the capitalist economy". (p77) Mark Wallinger is commended for using the techniques of *high art lite* to "convey a message without patronising the viewer or settling into propaganda." (p227) Michael Landy's *Scrapheap Services* (1995) is handled benevolently, mainly because Landy is unambiguous about his political commitments. (p287) This, again, raises difficult questions concerning intentionality. If all yBas had resolutely announced leftist sympathies would this improve the standing of their work? In

this light, Stallabrass' defence of Takahashi, Wallinger and Landy is far from convincing, but it does at least indicate that there is a possibility of adopting a different model to that which he denigrates with great clarity:

"To refuse to offer neatly packaged solutions, to recognise complexity and ambiguity, does not have to entail refusing to say anything at all." (p152-153)

Notes

1. Michael Baldwin, Manuscript notes from a diary kept during the production of Art & Language's Museum Paintings, early 1986.
2. "Matthew Collings' Diary", *Private Eye* 918.
3. Liz Ellis, "A critique in three parts of the Britpack phenomenon and particularly the critical reception of Bank, Sarah Lucas and Sam Taylor-Wood", 1997, @ <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/members/n.paradoxa/ellis.htm> Stallabrass writes: "Since Lucas makes no adverse comment on the material she uses, the work enacts what the newspaper itself does, glorying in its own bad taste and stupidity, amusing its readers with its crude and philistine attitudes. If the work has an effect, it is in placing the viewer in a situation where voyeurism and the pleasures of looking collide with conventional liberal attitudes." (p93)
4. A comparable critique of Roberts and Beech can be found in Stewart Homes' *Disputations on Art, Anarchy and Assholism*, Sabotage Editions, 1996.
5. "Modernism is the realisation of the 'progressive' ideology of the New Class and the modern state as an evaluative and ordering view of art." Andrew Brighton, "The Radicalism of 'Falls the Shadow'", *Artscribe International*, No. 59, September/October 1986, p50. Richard Cork and Peter Fuller also heavily promoted such ideas between 1976 and 1978
6. David Hall, "Artists Thoughts in on the '70s in Words and Pictures", *Studio International*, 1980, p31. For more on this see my "The Fall and Rise of Crisis Criticism", *Visual Culture in Britain*, No.3, Summer 2000, University of Northumbria.

Robin Ramsay

Tragedy and Hope

On a number of occasions, most notably during his inaugural address as President, Bill Clinton has paid tribute to one of the people who taught him as a student, a man called Carroll Quigley.¹ To at least 99% of those who heard the speech, the name meant nothing. But it sent a major *frisson* through a section of American conspiracy theorists. They knew who Carroll Quigley was; what they didn't know was why the President of the United States was naming him in such a public way.

The American conspiracy theorist has always known that there were people out to destroy the paradise that was mythical America, land of the brave, home of the free. But they kept changing their minds about the identity of the evil conspirators. Was it the Catholics? The Masons? The Jews? The bankers? The East coast elite of "old money"? Fabians? After 1917 they knew it was International Communism but they weren't sure if there was someone else behind the Red Menace. Some suspected that Communism was merely a front for international Jewry (weren't Marx and Engels Jews?). Sometimes all the suspects were amalgamated into one vast, muddled, fudge as in this early 1950s formulation in which the threat was a 'Fabian, Rhodes Scholar, Zionist, Pinko, Communist, New Deal, Fair Deal, Socialist-minded gang'.²

In the mid-1960s the most important of the American conspiracy theory groups of the time, the John Birch Society, discovered the 1920s writing of a dead English writer called Nesta Webster. Webster had been quite widely read in Britain just after WWI and she claimed to detect behind both French and Russian Revolutions the presence of an 18th century Masonic lodge called the Illuminati. On finding Webster, the Birchers looked as though they were about to move from being the most fervent exponents of the Great Communist Conspiracy Theory—Birch leader Robert Welch famously called President Eisenhower a 'conscious agent of international communism'—to a belief in the Illuminati as the all-powerful secret group pulling the strings behind the facade.³ But just as the organisation was about to make this shift, the Birchers' discovered a book by the aforementioned Professor Carroll Quigley, *Tragedy and Hope*. Which is where the story gets interesting.

Quigley's *Tragedy and Hope* was published in

New York by Macmillan in 1966. It was 1300 pages long. Its subtitle, a history of the world in our time, gives a sense of its ambition and scope; yet the 1300 pages carried no documentation, no sources of any kind. Educated at Harvard and Princeton, Quigley taught at the School of Foreign Service, Harvard, Yale, the Brookings Institute and the Foreign Service Institute of the State Department—all major league, American ruling class institutions.⁴

Despite his impeccable academic credentials, the book being published by a major firm, and its unusual length and scope, *Tragedy and Hope* attracted only two tiny, dismissive, reviews from Quigley's peers.⁵ The American academic world blanked the book. Having had no reviews, the book didn't sell and Macmillan destroyed the plates from which the first edition had been printed.⁶ When the American writer Robert Eringer tracked Quigley down just before his death, Quigley warned him that writing about him and his book could get Eringer into trouble.

What had Quigley done to deserve this extraordinary treatment? He had done two things. First, unusually for a mainstream American historian, Quigley had described in some detail the rise of what he calls 'finance capital' in 20th century history. Second, more importantly, he included two sections, amounting to less than 20 of the book's 1300 pages, which described the formation and some of the activities of an organisation known as the Round Table and its origins in the megalomaniacal fantasies of the 19th century British imperialist Cecil Rhodes.

In the sections of *Tragedy and Hope* which caused Quigley problems, he claims that an organisation, variously titled the Rhodes-Milner Group, the Round Table, and just the Milner group, had virtual control over British foreign policy for much of the first half of this century when Britain was one of the world's leading powers. The inner core of this group, the Round Table, was a secret society founded by Cecil Rhodes. Using Rhodes' money, this group set up the Round Table groups in then British Dominions; the Council on Foreign Relations in the U.S.; the network of Royal Institutes of International Affairs; the various Institutes of Pacific Relations; controlled *The Times* and the *Observer*, All Souls in Oxford and the Rhodes Scholarship program; was largely responsible for the destruction of the League of Nations and the appeasement policies of the 1930s and converted the British Empire into the Commonwealth. These 'gracious and cultivated men of somewhat limited social experience' as Quigley describes them, 'constantly thought in terms of Anglo-American solidarity, of political partition and federation... were convinced that they could gracefully civilise the Boers of South Africa, the Irish, the Arabs and the Hindus... and were largely responsible for the partition of Ireland, Palestine and India, and for the federations of South Africa, Central Africa and the West Indies.'⁷ And so on and so on.

It is not that the Round Table people have been unknown. The names Quigley gives—e.g. in the inner group: Rhodes, Rothschild, William Stead, Viscount Esher, Milner, Abe Bailey, Earl Grey, H.A.L. Fisher, Jan Smuts, Leopold Amery, the Astors—are well known.⁸

The Round Table group are conventionally viewed as a group of enthusiastic imperialists who had a period of some visibility and influence in the 1910-20 period. Their journal, *The Round Table*, was well known between the wars, and is in many university libraries. (It continued until the mid 1970s, folded and was relaunched in the 1980s.)

Orthodox historians who have written about the Round Table people offer accounts of the peri-



the logo of The Trilateral Commission

od which are, more or less, consonant with Quigley's thesis.⁹ Toynbee, for example, attributes the Royal Institute of International Affairs to the Round Table people; and Butler, himself part of the group in Quigley's longer account, acknowledges that the so-called 'Cliveden Set' of the 1930s were, as Quigley claims, merely the Round Table at one of their regular meeting places.

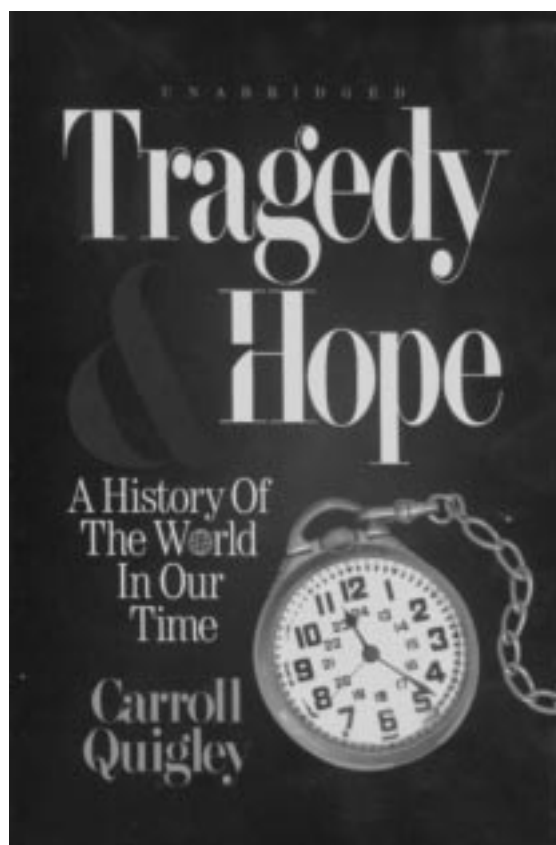
In his biography of Rhodes, Flint gives a good deal of room to an account of the size and possible influence of the Rhodes Scholar network. He writes of 'the excessive number of Rhodes Scholars in the Kennedy Administration' and of the Rhodes Scholars forming 'a recognisable elite in Canada.'¹⁰ Apparently unaware of Quigley, Flint notes that 'in each of the white settled Commonwealth countries, South Africa and the United States, a similar, if less influential elite, had emerged... and since 1948 India, Pakistan and Ceylon may be experiencing a similar development... Rhodes Scholars created links between American, British and Commonwealth "establishments" ... and they have played a role in creating the "special relationship" between the U.S., Britain and the dominions after 1945.'¹¹

Kendle, although he dismisses Quigley's thesis without an explanation, is of particular interest: he, at least, had read *Tragedy and Hope*. No other historian of the period seems to have done so.¹²

Enter the 'radical right'

The one group of people who took Quigley to heart were the conspiracy theorists of the 'radical right' in America for whom *Tragedy and Hope* became a kind of bible. Here was the proof, the academically respectable proof, of the great conspiracy. It may not have been quite the conspiracy they had in mind, but it was a conspiracy none the less.¹³ Only a handful of academics have taken Quigley on board—Shoup and Minter, Carl Oglesby, Pieterse and van der Pijl—and none of them are mainstream Anglo-American historians.¹⁴ To that august body Quigley remains unknown—or unmentionable.

Quigley's sketchy account of the Round Table in *Tragedy and Hope* comes to a halt after WW2. The Round Table was one manifestation of the power of the British Empire and, as that disintegrated after the war, to be replaced by the new American economic empire, so the Round Table network's influence waned. The Rhodes Scholar network is still there;¹⁵ the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is still the single dominant force



in the formation of American foreign policy;¹⁶ and from the CFR grew the Trilateral Commission in the early 1970s. President Clinton has been a member of both—as well as a Rhodes Scholar.¹⁷ Even without the article of endorsement by the Trilateral Commission founder, David Rockefeller, just before the 1992 presidential election,¹⁸ Bill Clinton was obviously Jimmy Carter 2—another southern Democrat governor, sponsored and groomed by the Trilateral/CFR networks.¹⁹ The Royal Institute of International Affairs is still going strong in this country but much of its standing as an ‘unofficial foreign office’ has declined with the rise of other foreign policy think tanks. The last sighting of the Round Table as an organisation I have seen is a reference to it in the early 1970s.²⁰

Quigley’s thesis presents the familiar problems raised by the existence of all such elite groups: how to decide whether any particular policy outcome advocated by such groups was in fact the result of their advocacy. Even in his book solely about the Round Table network, Quigley mostly alleges rather than actually proving, the causal connections. (But the fact that he was so comprehensively blanked by academic history is, of course, a rather substantial hint that was on to something.)

In a sense what Quigley describes as the Round Table’s conspiracy is merely the traditional behaviour of the British ruling class—only systematised slightly. Instinctively secretive, until recently more or less protected from public scrutiny by its control of the mass media and from academic investigation by its control of the universities, in a sense the British ruling class is the most successful ‘conspiracy’ ever seen. But Quigley claimed more than that. He actually asserts the existence of an honest-to-goodness secret society operating at the heart of British foreign policy in the years between the war whose activities can be traced across the British Commonwealth and the United States. For an establishment professor of history this was a remarkable thing to have done in 1966 when discussion of the influence of elite management groups such as the CFR, RIIA and Bilderberg—especially the latter—was confined almost exclusively to the far right. These days such groups are discussed a little more openly; but the fact that the minutes of the 1999 Bilderberg meeting were leaked and posted on the Internet was not reported by any of the major British print media. It is thus perhaps not a surprise that Anglo-American historians remain almost completely ignorant of, or silent on, the existence of Quigley’s two books.

Notes

1. An early sighting of Clinton’s esteem for Quigley is in *Antaeus: Journals, Notebooks and Diaries*, ed. Daniel Halpern (London: Collins Harvill, 1989). This is on p. 73 from the then largely unknown Governor Bill Clinton: ‘I had a course in western civilisation with a remarkable man, the late Carroll Quigley. Half the people at Georgetown thought he was a bit crazy and the other half thought he was a genius. They were both right.’ This is discussed in Daniel Brandt, ‘Clinton, Quigley, and Conspiracy’, in *NameBase Newslines*, no. 1 April 1993—a supplement to subscribers to Brandt’s NameBase data base. This is available on line at www.pir.org
2. Cited on p.77 of *George Thayer, The Farther Shore of Politics* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1968).
3. On Nesta Webster and the Bircher’s discovery of her, see Richard Gilman, *Behind World Revolution: the Strange Career of Nesta H. Webster*, (Ann Arbor: Insight Books, 1982), especially pp. 4-6.
4. Quigley’s entry is in *Who’s Who in America*, 1966 through 1977.
5. In *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Spring 1966, and *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, November 1966.
6. Robert Eringer, *The Global Manipulators* (Bristol: Pentacle Books, 1980) p.9. *Tragedy and Hope* was eventually reprinted in 1974 by the ‘radical right’ and has been in print ever since.
7. *Tragedy and Hope* p. 954.
8. Quigley wrote a book exclusively about the Round Table network which, though written in 1949, was not published until after his death. It is in this book, *The Anglo-American Establishment* (New York: Books in Focus, 1981), that the details of the group’s membership and alleged activities are given.
9. D. C. Ellinwood Jnr., ‘The Round Table Movement and India 1909-20’ in the *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, November 1971; A. L. Rowse, *All Souls and Appeasement* (London: Macmillan, 1961); M. G. Fry, *Illusions of Security* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1972); W. B. Nimocks, ‘Lord Milner’s Kindergarten and the Origins of the Round Table’ in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Autumn 1964; D. C. Watt, *Personalities and Policies* (London: Longman’s, London 1965); J. Kendle, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1975); J. R.M. Butler, *Lord Lothian* (London: Macmillan, 1960); F. Madden and D.K. Fieldhouse (eds.) *Oxford and the Idea of the Commonwealth* (London: Croom Helm, 1982); David Astor, *Tribal Feeling* (London: John Murray, 1964); Arnold Toynbee, *Acquaintances* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
10. John Flint, *Cecil Rhodes* (Hutchinson, London, 1976). In the US, six in the State Department and at least 12 in the upper reaches of the administration. See Arthur Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days* (London 1975) p. 181. JFK’s father was close to the Round Table people while U.S. Ambassador to London in the 1930s. In Canada, Flint provides a list, circa 1973, beginning with the Governor General, three cabinet ministers, head of the armed forces, most of the permanent officials in the civil service, etc etc. Flint pp. 244-5.
11. Flint p. 245.
12. Kendle p. 305—the last paragraph of the book.
13. See for example the best known of the Bircher’s books, *None Dare Call It Conspiracy* by Gary Allen and Larry Abraham (Seal Beach, California; Concord Press, 1971).
14. Carl Oglesby, *The Yankee and Cowboy War* (New York: Berkley Medallion, 1977); Laurence Shoup and William Minter, *Imperial Brain Trust* (London and New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977); Kees van der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class* (London: Verso, 1984); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Empire and Emancipation* (London: Pluto, 1989). Shoup and Minter are American Marxists and are only interested in the Round Table as the parent body of the Council on Foreign Relations; Oglesby is a maverick historian, former SDS activist, so far from mainstream intellectual life as to be publicly interested in the Kennedy assassination; Pieterse and Pijls are Dutch Marxists.
15. They had a great reunion in Oxford, attended by the Queen, in 1983. See *Time*, July 11 1983. When that article was published, *Time* had six Rhodes Scholars on it.
16. This is extensively and repeatedly documented by the Website calling itself roundtable at www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/2807
17. So obvious has Clinton’s education in the Anglo-American elite become, even the *Sunday Telegraph* had a long piece on the Rhodes Scholars connection, sneering at the Rhodies in the Clinton administration as ‘charming dreamers’. See 21 March 1983, p. 22.
18. *New York Times*, October 16 1992.
19. On Jimmy Carter and the Trilateral Commission, see for example, Jeff Frieden, ‘The Trilateral Commission: Economics and Politics in the 1970s’, in *Monthly Review*, December 1977.
20. Cecil King, *Diaries* (London 1975) p. 52.