

★ VARIANT



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Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory of culture

Brigit Fowler

Pierre Bourdieu is currently the Professor of Sociology at the Collège de France, Paris. He is someone who has experienced in his own life a double transition from a pre-capitalist world to a capitalist one: initially, in his move from Denguin, in the peasant Béarn area of the Pyrenees, to metropolitan Paris, and once again, after his return from the rural South of Algeria, where after being drafted with the Army he became a self-taught anthropologist.

Thus Bourdieu is well-placed to argue that the fundamental element of modernity is the historical shift towards the greater significance of the economy within the whole society. From being a "thing in itself" the economy becomes a "thing for itself". In particular, the gift exchange of goods and labour, which had once been totally organised around reciprocity, is largely replaced. What is substituted for it, of course, is the production and circulation of commodities, but also the enclosure of a sacred island of Art, where an inversion of commodity values emerge, in such a way that high sales no longer count as an acceptable measure of aesthetic value:

The denial of economic interest ...finds its favourite refuge in the domain of art and culture, the site of [a] pure [form of] consumption, of money, of course, but also of time convertible into money. The world of art, a sacred island systematically and ostentatiously opposed to the profane world of production, a sanctuary for gratuitous, disinterested activity in a universe given over to money and self-interest, offers, like theology in a past epoch, an imaginary anthropology obtained by the denial of all the negations really brought about by the economy (1977).

Bourdieu himself is particularly concerned with the fate of art in late capitalist society, arguing that the sociological study of culture is the sociology of religion of our time. Adorno and the theorists of the Frankfurt School saw painters such as Kandinsky as adopting a language of form which was out of reach of the commercial "culture industry", not least because of the epiphanies offered within their works and their two-dimensional grasp of social realities. But Bourdieu forcefully proposes a disturbing, new, demystifying stance. He asks whether the avant-garde might not have become set in an entirely different context once the structures of the modern art market had been established. Thus when the leading exponents of the various modernisms became highly-valued in the art market and their works came to be used to prove that their owners had "a spiritual soul", a fundamental "misrecognition" occurred.

Increasingly, a hagiographic approach to "the artist as saint" has emerged. With it, any attempt to introduce a scientific study of art and its social relations are denounced as *reductionist*. But such an approach, taken seriously, means looking once again at the evolution of artistic autonomy within capitalist modernity and especially at the split phenomena of "the appearance of cultural production specially designed for the market and, partly in reaction against that, a production of pure works destined for symbolic appropriation" (1996:140). The underlying principle of difference between the two has become the opposition of "pure art" to popular taste, where the popular has become negatively associated with the "commercial". In fact "pure art" is less other-worldly, that is, disinterested and non-market-oriented than it appears, and the routine organisation of art operates to ensure that there are actually two "modes

of ageing" and two economic logics functioning, one based on a long-run time perspective with risky undertakings, organised around objects that have a long life ("art"), and the other, with the aid of multiple reproduction, organised around low-risk undertakings with a short-run life (the "commercial" portrait or Boots landscape) (1996:142-6).

Bourdieu's relentlessly empirical investigations into the taste for modernist works as symbolic goods show that its public are not just drawn from other artists, but principally from those patrician families who have "old money", often bankers, liberal professionals and higher education teachers (1984). Thus, once aesthetically certified by a leading critic and authenticated by the artists' signature, the works of the contemporary avant-garde have moved into the arms of power. "Legitimate taste" ("good" taste) is far from randomly scattered: it is the possession of an "aristocracy of culture". Moreover, artistic reputations no longer have to wait for *posthumous* recognition (as with Manet) or middle age (as with Degas, Monet and other members of the impressionist Batignolles Group). Certainly, the reverse world of bohemia, established by the first "heroic modernists", was premised on the ascetic disavowal of the market and a self-denying pursuit of artistic values alone (1996). Thus Flaubert, for example, could be recognised as truly epoch-making in his refusal to make a "pyramid structure" —to present a cumulative narrative order —and in his insistence on a perspectivist treatment in his novels (e.g. *Madame Bovary*). Equally, Manet and Redon refused to use a painting to "say something" and aimed to "liberate themselves from the writer", that is, from any "gloss or exegesis" (1996:136-7).

Such ascetic withdrawal is now no longer an adequate description of contemporary artists. Instead, the longer-term investment of their experiential effort is increasingly a *guarantee* of the art-market's eventual recognition, a recognition which often now comes to the young and which ensures rewards considerably greater than those the commercial market hands out to the mass of illustrators and designers "selling their souls" in standardised activities¹. The self-presentation of the artist as devoid of monetary interests is meanwhile preserved by the convenient alchemy of the art-dealer. For the gallery owner (or dealer), by concerning him/herself uniquely with the vulgar world of money, frees the creative figure from its grips and thus arranges the transmutation of the artistic philosopher's stone into gold. In this respect, the artist is aided by the School, in the role of the critic. The critic provides *explanations* of the nature of his/her art to a whole professional field which thus consecrates and authorises her (1996:169).

There is also another reason for the changed role of the arts in contemporary society. This concerns their emergence within the field of education, both as the mechanisms for selecting the "best brains" and more indirectly as the means by which the dominant social classes arrange their social inheritance. Bourdieu (1968, with Passeron) saw the post-war bourgeoisie as distinguished from other classes by its acquisition of state credentials in the form of educational success ("meritocracy"). The notion of meritocracy was and is one of the most brilliant rationales of good fortune for the successful few, just as the karma doctrine served to create a perfect theological justification for the hierarchical pre-eminence of the Brahmin few. Moreover, the canon of great artists and writers could be incorporated into such a



state-certified education by means of the mechanisms of critical discrimination (via representation in the National Gallery, Oxford anthologies, etc.). Yet the secret of such disproportionate success in school for the sons and daughters of the dominant class was that they alone possessed, via family visits to museums and libraries, a domestic culture that trained them to penetrate the academic mysteries of the school curriculum. Thus Bourdieu's *The State Nobility* showed that only 32% of students of the great *grandes écoles* (the topmost rung of French higher education) came from the subordinate classes, while earlier research on the universities revealed that in 1964 only 6% of the children of workers (or peasants) were enrolled.

Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Bourdieu is becoming synonymous with a "holy trinity" of concepts: habitus, capital and field. There are dangers in stripping these from their conceptual moorings in his other, wider, theories, but I will risk these to show how these "trademark" ideas operate. I will then apply them especially to the art-world, and show how a Bourdieusian perspective refuses a charismatic theory of the isolated artist and resists the interpretation of pure disinterestedness on the part of both public and artists. I shall suggest that Bourdieu represents a powerful analysis of the high culture of modernity but that his social theory also contains certain problematic omissions.

Bourdieu aims to avoid the oppositions based on privilege and prejudice that resonate through the linked dualism of the "individual genius" and the "masses", noting how the deskilling of the subordinate classes has been accompanied by the "hyperskilling" of the genius, how the subordinate classes' incomprehension of high culture has been similar to that of colonised natives awed by colonial power, and how the dominant classes' racist fears of the masses has echoed the irrationality and childishness which was once attributed to "primitives" by the colonising Western powers.

In contrast, for Bourdieu, all action, including artistic work, is modelled on craft action. To put it another way: *practice* is strategic action. Within this strategic action or agency, everyone is capable of improvisation, just as the clarinetist's jazz solo both obeys certain rules but also —as the fruition

of long experience —may go beyond even the virtuoso performances of other great improvisers. Such rules, which guide improvisation, are implicit in your habitus —or loosely, your “world-view” — that is your way of perceiving, emotionally responding to and evaluating the world. Your class habitus (sometimes referred to as “habitus” as such) is the product of your family’s experience over generations. For example, a gradually-declining aristocracy is on a social journey or trajectory over decades that produces a certain kind of habitus, made up by a strange mixture of pessimism and condescension. Bourdieu writes of the resentments endemic in many habituses, as in the scrimping and saving of the upwardly socially-mobile, petit-bourgeois parents who have literally “made themselves small” and “done everything” for their children (1984).

The mistake in reading Bourdieu is to assume that he is concerned with habitus as a product of class experience alone. Certainly, for him, each agent’s habitus is formed by their class, but also by their gender and their own occupational field. We can reasonably talk of a working-class habitus but also of a farming habitus, a military, scientific or an artistic habitus.

The habitus itself has to be thought of as like an old house —its own order or logic has an aesthetic resemblance to a well lived-in, much-adapted interior. In the case of both class and gender, the marks that these create are the consequence of centuries, or even millennia, of naturalising social differentiation. The differences feed into each other, so that the working-class feed off their sense of being the last bastion of masculinity against the effeminate bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie pride themselves on abandoning a dehumanising patriarchy. What is more the “structuring structures” of the habitus discipline both mind and body: for Bourdieu, there is no cause for a split. So the military body grows ramrod stiff, the painter learns an “automatic” way of handling his paint and the sound of the gears tell the driver “without thinking about it” when to change. The artistic habitus, in other word, is *bred into the bone*.

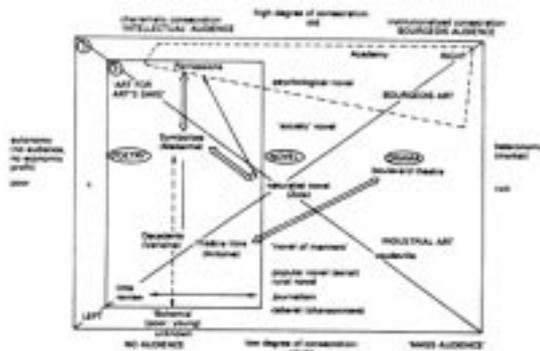


Figure 3. French literary field in the second half of the 19th century. + = positive pole, implying a dominant position. - = negative pole, implying a dominated position.

Capital and doxa

For Bourdieu, artists and other agents possess certain capitals, of which there are four basic types: first, *economic capital* —stocks and shares but also the surplus present in very high salaries —second, *social capital* —the network or influential patrons that you can use to support your actions; third, *cultural capital* —including the *knowledge of the artistic field* and its history, which in turn serves to distinguish the naïve painter from the professional, and including also *scholarly capital* of a formal type (a postgraduate degree, the award of a Rome visiting scholarship etc.); finally, *symbolic capital*: your reputation or honour, as an artist who is loyal to fellow-artists and so on.

These capitals can be (and often are) distributed around a kin-group, their specific structure and volume distinguishing the “great family” of the dominants from the others: One of the properties of the dominants is to have families particularly extended (the great have great families) and

strongly integrated. They are united not just through the effects of the habitus, but also by the solidarity of their interests. They are united at once by capital and for capital: economic capital certainly, symbolic capital (the name) and above all, perhaps, social capital (which one knows is both the condition for and the consequence of the successful direction of capital on the part of the members of this domestic unit).

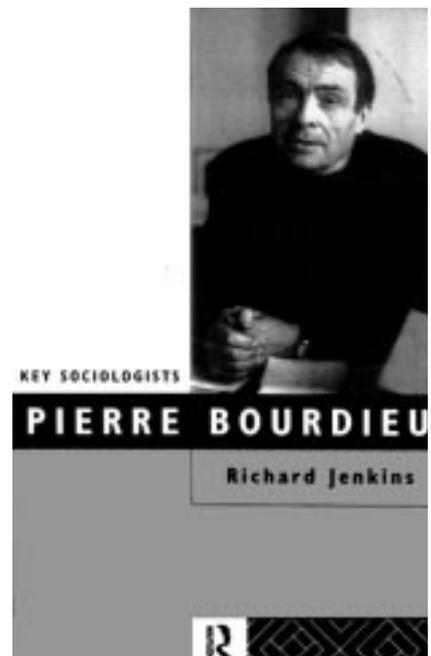
Bourdieu calls “doxa” the taken-for-granted assumptions or orthodoxies of an epoch which are deeper in the level of consciousness than mere ideologies, but are also productive of conscious struggles and new forms. “Heresiarchs”, as Bourdieu calls them, include painters like Courbet and Manet, as well as political figures and philosophers like Pascal and Spinoza. They rupture the doxa (or break with conventions). Bourdieu writes particularly powerfully of Flaubert and of his decision to write well and flout mediocrity while choosing, as his subject for tragic love, characters coming from the middle class provincial obscurity of Yvetot. Heterodoxy distills in its most consecrated forms the lived experience of groups who are not of the subordinate classes, but nor are they of the dominant fraction of the dominant class. Instead they derive from that part of the ruling class which has cultural capital but not much economic capital.

Bourdieu has himself let loose some debunking arguments which have deeply upset art historians and philosophers of aesthetics. First, he claims that art critics have a model of a “fresh eye” which is opposed to the academic “eye”, but is still itself thought of as a naturalised essence (that is, they presume that those competencies in colour, line etc which are actually the result of early upbringing or training are instead an *innate gift of nature*) (1996: 284-312). Critics suffer from what we might call a poverty of ahistoricism: in particular, they are unprepared to understand the artist in terms of his/her positions and position-takings within the art field. What is more, when the rhetoric of art-criticism is analysed closely, the terms chosen are all those that loosely link in to aristocratic discourse —the paintings are noble, distinctive, refined, subtle, etc. Such terms are convenient. They are at once sufficiently autonomous to continue to have some currency in creating an ethos of rarity but sufficiently loose to be compatible with any aesthetics (see 1984, conclusion).

Secondly, Bourdieu argues —like Foucault on the invention of the homosexual —that the West saw the invention of the artist in the mid-nineteenth century. This figure was characteristically bohemian, emphasising with a Christ-like devotion the sacrifices necessary for art. The artist provoked a sense of awe and respect for disinterestedness, initially within the progressive intelligentsia of the Left bank, and then more generally among the bourgeoisie. Bourdieu’s work undercuts this, although his latest work does concede that certain artists —like Manet —can be regarded as “heroic” in their inauguration of a new world of art based on “symbolic revolution”. He insists, on the other hand, that, unlike the academic world where the artist is a civil servant of art, the world of the bohemian artist is a world of anomic (unregulated) competing cults. The artist, however is not entirely given up to the other-worldliness of the artistic life. In fact artists who are productive are those whose hours and ethic of work resembles that of other professionals.

Artists, thus argues Bourdieu, are usually distant from the models of disinterested devotion that the bohemian ideal suggests: “One soon learns in conversation with [gallery-owners] that with a few illustrious exceptions ..., painters ...are deeply self-interested, calculating, obsessed with money and ready to do anything to succeed” (1980:266). In terms of their action in their own field, the saint-like hero of bohemia possesses unexpected reserves of anger and even physical violence in defending their stake in the game. His example is of the French surrealists’ circle where force —even broken arms —was the outcome of struggles over competing issues.

Second, Bourdieu argues that becoming “recognised” requires a certain artistic career.



Geographically, it has been virtually impossible for provincial artists or even those who have come from the country to the city to make their mark. Provincial artists have been doomed instead to abandon their projects, and to become merely regional painters or writers. Moreover, only those painters or writers who had families ready to give them allowances in the difficult periods before getting established were likely to be successful. Here Bourdieu is at his most challenging. He is arguing in effect that the whole history of modernism has been one in which only those avant-garde artists who were centrally located and who had the time to spend on their experiments were the ones who won out.

The Rules of Art (1996) bring out the tragic contradictions of art in our period. For Bourdieu shows us that the only effective field of struggle is within the “restricted” field of art, cut off from the “expanded” field where specialised knowledge is not required to decode the relevant imagery. Within the restricted field, collective movements help to consecrate the reputation of individual artists, whose positions, in turn, are that much more defensible the better-secured are their own artistic habitus. Bourdieu suggests that Manet, for example, had an extensive knowledge of art history on which his own works fed; Duchamp had a superb feel for the game, partly because several generations of his family were painters. And, lest he be seen to be simplistically anti-artist, he notes that the symbolic revolutions established by Baudelaire or Manet are in some respects as fundamental as a political revolution. They change permanently the way that we see and classify the world.

Yet the dangers inherent in historical revolutions also apply to such symbolic revolutions. The achievement of mass recognition by an artist is a double-sided victory for it sets in motion a process of routine co-optation —by means of cheap reproductions, profitable “bio-pics”, personality cults and hyperbolic “criticism”. The most transgressive figures can thus be tailored ultimately to the needs of the museum, gallery/ market system and the curriculum. Here the lowest common denominator that draw them together is the artists’ mutual concern for aesthetic form, whatever differences exist in terms of meaning or the political ends their works serve. Through a form of reception that forces them to submit to the *aesthetic attitude* —the supremacy of style —they inadvertently come to underline the dominant class’s hold on power². Bourdieu’s writings in fact disclose a skeletal theory of art which does not always need to serve the purposes of such hegemonic domination, allowing us to go beyond a vulgar critique of pure art. His theory is an attempt to create a sociological aesthetic which might give

back to art its concern with ethical and political interests, which wishes to flee the museum and restructure the role of the art-world within everyday life.

We begin to see, too, why there is no such thing as popular art in Bourdieu's theory. First because the modern artist, bereft of the orthodoxy of the Academic artist, needs the defence of his/her critic, not to speak of a reputable dealer. Second, because the institution of permanent revolution requires the crucial ingredient of the right place (especially presence in the great metropolises of modernity) and also the time when young to experiment. The conditions for these are self-assurance and the financial support that historically has been available only to the sons and daughters of the dominant class (not least the minor aristocracy) by means of an allowance.

We also note that for Bourdieu some arts might be legitimisable (eg cinema or photography or jazz). However, compared with other more securely-consecrated forms they don't bring their potential haute bourgeois public enough returns (in terms of "cultural capital") to reward them for their investment of time and effort. Such art-forms are doomed to be taken seriously only by a tiny "deviant" minority like the junior executives or technicians who make up the members of camera clubs. Photography, therefore, is consigned forever to the outer circle of hell in the form of the mere middlebrow.

I think that Bourdieu overlooked the potential for "consecration" within photography—it might be said that the popular character of photography did delay its legitimisation but that it has now acquired its own canon of great photographers, its own critics and historians and its own educational base in art-schools. However, there is considerable backing to many of Bourdieu's theories, not least in the various British reports of the Arts Council. For example, Moulin's empirical work on the contemporary French art-market (1967), in the *Centre de Sociologie Européenne*, has shown very acutely, by means of interviews with painters, collectors and curators, the precise ways in which critics' aesthetic values are used to bolster exchange values and the paradoxes of the painters of having clients buy their works who are out of sympathy with their views. She indicates the widespread painters' concern for alternative ways of putting their work in the public domain. Gamboni (1989) has shown how being taken up by a wealthy and aristocratic group of clients, as Odilon Redon was, can coincide with a fundamental change of style. This included, in his case, a total change from monochrome symbolist or metaphysical etchings to oil-paintings, suffused with light, and from sombre greys to intense, bright colours. Sapiro's study (1996) of French writing in the period of the Nazi occupation has revealed that many of the organisations of the so-called autonomous literary field, such as the Académie Française, the Nouvelle Revue Française, the Prix Renaudot and the Prix Goncourt, pandered unheroically to the Vichy regime or its German masters, thus displaying in the event the weakness of their humanist rhetoric.

But Bourdieu's theory does have certain problematic elements, following on the poor predictive quality of his research on photography. Let me isolate these briefly. First the concepts of "doxa" or "illusio" tend to suggest that there are no possibilities of moving outside the "game" and beyond the forms of knowledge that prevail within it, knowledge which depends crucially on your location in relation to power. However, unlike Foucault, Bourdieu does suggest that there is a possibility of *lived experience* which may clash with ideology: moreover, in the case of (social) science, this takes the form of procedures for testing reality which are non-discourse-dependent. It is true that despite this there are still certain types of doxa or taken-for-granted assumptions which are ineradicable in a given period because they are opaque, even to social scientists. However, every historian would agree that this is the case to some degree.

Secondly, Bourdieu writes very disparagingly of the "fragile" nature of the alliance between artists and workers, and expects it to dissolve when the artists themselves gain recognition. But in some circumstances, this "fragile" alliance does hold, at least temporarily (eg the Russian and Cuban Revolutions). Artists do suffer exile or even die for their beliefs—I think of Neruda confronted by the Chilean junta, of Lorca in the Spanish Civil War, or Mandelstam, Solzhenitsyn, and others who could have sometimes taken easier ways out. The question here, it seems to me, is to deepen and make more precise our historical sociology of such testing-points. Under what conditions do groups of artists—like Quakers and some early trade-union groups—offer resistance or seriously undertake the risks of "martyrdom"? (Fowler, 1997)

Further, I should refer to Bourdieu's disturbing views about artists' "interest in disinterestedness", which has led one critic to accuse him of having a narrow and unacceptably determinist position, which lacks any room for altruism (Alexander, 1995). My inclination is to follow Bourdieu here: he points even to medieval monks having occasionally come to blows, such was the intensity of their belief in their religion (1998c: 78). Yet he is also aware that monastic communities could reveal considerable levels of disinterestedness. The brothers scourged themselves with consciences more subtle and vigilant than most. The same should be noted of artists, who, after all, deliberately avoid economic capital at the outset of their adult careers. They might quite reasonably want the degree of material comforts which are necessary for work, without being held to pursue economic interests single-mindedly. The problem here is not Bourdieu's theory but rather an "invention" of "the artist" which projects on them idealised human qualities, transforming them into figures devoid of practical needs (Bourdieu 1998 c: 85-8).

My view would also be that Bourdieu does incur some costs in broadening out the idea of "capital" to include social and cultural capital. Economic capital is necessarily zero sum—the more surplus value the employer has, the less the worker has. But it is not clear to me that "cultur-

al" (or "informational") "capital" are necessarily either zero-sum or hierarchical in all societies. These could, without internal contradiction, be more democratised. Equally, artists' symbolic "capital" in the form of reputations does not necessarily have to be exploitative of others, although it may be competitively-based.

It is often said that Bourdieu might be accurate in writing of the centrality of high culture or the aesthetic in France, but in France alone. However I disagree with this view: many of the same phenomena appear in Scotland. I cannot agree with Halle's criticism (taken to be implied by his American study) that Bourdieu has overstressed the significance of the drive for symbolic power in such areas as the possession of abstract art. Nor is it sufficient to show, against Bourdieu, that popular artistic works exist (Shusterman cites the case of rap, 1992), for there have to be sponsors to champion new genres/groups/independent cultural producers, and, as Raymond Williams has argued, such sponsors are often unprepared to defend works that the *general public likes* because they have themselves developed "mandarin" tastes. Yet the modern period has also had a small minority of critics who have sometimes canonised popularly-successful producers, as did Williams himself with Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell, Thomas Hardy and Tressell. In some contexts, works have been unshackled or recycled from a purely formalist optic and the artist has become the visionary of his/her time, expressing ethical/political issues in the form of images—as Blake managed to criticise slavery, and even in the era of modernism, Manet achieved in his lithographs of dead Communards or Grosz pulled off in his satirical cartoons of post World War I inequality.

Distinction and *The Rules of Art* sum up the deliberate disenchantment of art by Bourdieu. By this more scientific exploration of the art-world and its links with the school and the field of power, we can all become more aware of the ways in which educational outcomes are linked to class experience and of the complex nature of the interests which drive agents. But there is nothing biological, akin to genes, that leads to such interests invariably being preserved and passed on, despite the impressive dignity of the dominants which is imparted by their knowledge of poetry and art. A reflexive sociology shows also the possibility for resistance and transformation. Bourdieu in fact has high standards for artists, as emerges unambiguously in his work with the installation artist, Hans Haacke³.

At the end of *The Rules of Art* Bourdieu argues for an *Internationale of Artists and Intellectuals* (344-5), who will aim to advance the project of the Enlightenment and who will need to own their means of cultural production to do so. Recently, he has restated this:

I would like writers, artists, philosophers and scientists to be able to make their voices heard directly in all the areas of public life in which they are competent. I think that everyone would have a lot to gain if the logic of intellectual life, that of argument and refutation, were extended to public life.

And, in his acceptance speech for the Bloch Prize, he argues for a "reasoned utopia" and against the "bankers' fatalism" which is the ideology of our time. Rational utopianism is defined as being both against "pure wishful thinking (which) has always brought discredit on utopia" and against "philistine platitudes concerned essentially with facts... intellectuals and all others who really care about the good of humanity, should re-establish a utopian thought with scientific backing..." (Bourdieu, 1998b: 128).

Notes

- 1 Bourdieu's theories neglect the crossovers between the fine and applied arts. Subsequent to the period of his research, these have certainly become more frequent with artists plundering the "expanded field" of comics, cartoons, graffiti etc. and vice versa. Some recuperation of the popular was always an element of the restricted field (see Varndoe and Gopnick, 1990).
- 2 *Acts of Resistance* notes in its critique of the Bundesbank's President, Mr. Tietmayer, that while he is anxious to bury the expensive welfare state and remove labour movement "rigidities", he, like M. Trichet, the Governor of the Banque de France, no doubt reads poetry and sponsors the arts (Bourdieu 1998b: 46).
- 3 *Free Exchange*, Polity, 1995. Haacke has also revealed the anomalies in the changed location of the most celebrated modernists' works, both through showing the changing ownership of their paintings as they come into possession of the more conservative professions and corporate heads and through revealing the discrepancies between the directors' view of how art museums should be run and those of the general public.

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ARTSCHOOL JUNGLE

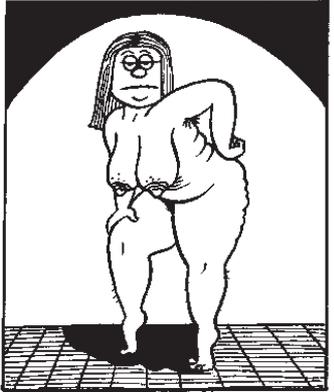
TODAY I WILL BE PLACING THE MODEL IN A WIDE VARIETY OF POSITIONS



DON'T BE AFRAID TO DRAW THE GENITALS IF YOU CAN SEE THEM!



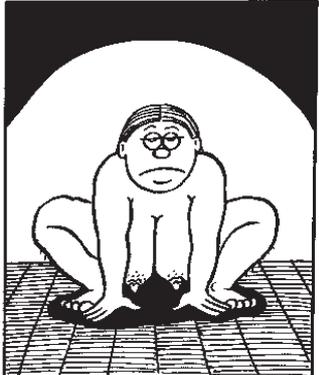
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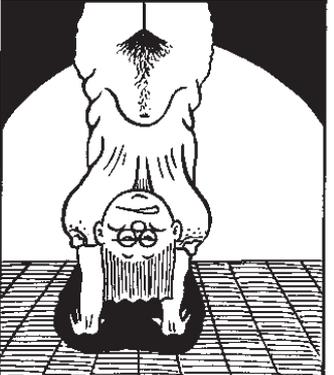
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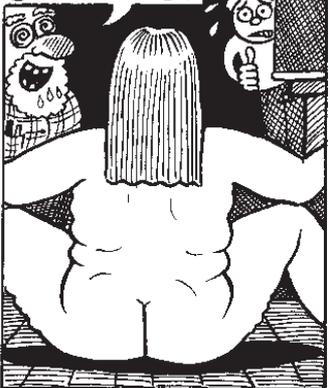
POSITION THREE



POSITION FOUR!



POSITION 5 ~ ISN'T SHE SMASHING!



AND POSITION SIX



EXCUSE ME SIR ~ IS THIS HELPING OUR DRAWING SKILLS OR ARE YOU JUST A DIRTY OLD MAN?



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Ian Brotherhood

Tales from the Great Unwashed

Had a wee flurry just after lunchtime there with a crowd of folk over for a christening up the road, but I don't think they'll be back. I heard one of them moaning about the dust on the top shelves of the gantry, and another on about there being no soap in the ladies. Makes you wonder what sort of crowd the baby's let himself in for.

This morning, about half-eleven I suppose, the doors wasn't long open and I'm standing here looking at the sun on the pavement and wondering if I should get Diane in early and head off down the coast for a few hours, a walk along the beach, a wee bit fresh air for the brainbox. I'm just standing there staring at the pavement, at the shadow of the lamp post across the road, the exhaust fumes blue in the light, and I'm sort of half-dreaming about whether or not to take the binoculars and the wellies and that when a movement sort of snaps me awake and this wee dog, some kind of mongrel terrier I suppose, this wee black and white patched fella goes walking backwards across the doorway. Very strange that, so I pour a coffee from the pot and stand there and drink that and try to remember if Da ever mentioned anything about dogs doing such a thing, but I don't recall it ever being a hot topic. Cats, black, aye, crossing paths and all that. Dogs, no. Cats walking backwards? No. And then I get this picture of a dog and a cat walking side by side backwards under a stepladder, so I stop drinking the coffee and call Diane. She can make it a couple of hours early, so I'll be off right enough, and with luck there might be a decent sunset.

See what it is? It's over having words with Mary again. That's about a dozen times since her sixteenth I've had to talk to her about them so-called friends. Last night she's got them in again up the stairs, that Shona one with her sister Jools. That Shona's too old for a start. Eighteen. That's too old for my Mary. And there's something about that wee Jools one I don't like. She looks at me a bit weird, them big eyes staring at you, but you wouldn't trust her at the baby-sitting I can tell you. So anyway, I go up there, tell them that's their car, 'cos their Da owns Starnight Cars, and he always gets one of his lads to drop by if they're here late. So it's half-nine and the car's there. And when I knock the door I hear Mary shouting come-in, so in I go, and they're about the computer, shoulder to shoulder the three of them, and it's some game they're at.

Have a look Da, says Mary, and she sort of leans back so I can see the screen, and it's like some video effects thing they're about, and Mary's working the controls there, and she's a young man, maybe about ages with herself, and he's stuck in some sort of a dungeon, pure blackness all about him. Watch now, says Mary, and the music's right creepy too, not the likes of your old black-and-whites with the church organs and that, but these mad screams and laughs and scrapes and cutting sounds all mixed in, and I'm getting a bit of the

shivers with this, and the girls all sort of scream at the same time as this thing appears on the screen, and Mary jiggles at the keyboard and makes her man pick up this baseball bat type of thing. This creature gets closer, and you can see now it's a terrible thing altogether, with the body of a big baldy dog hopping about on its back legs, and the face on it is like Lester Piggot, only if you imagine your man with a great long jaw like a donkey and the teeth on him is like the shards of glass along the wall-top, and the whole thing is the colour of dead skin and covered with these big wet warts about an inch broad and high, and the music goes mental and the thing hops right up to the screen, covering about the same distance that I go lepping back over the carpet. Mary jerks back in the seat and makes the fella bring down the baseball bat and she catches old Lester-face right on the side of the head, behind his ear it is, and you hear this crack like a melon hitting the pavement, and the creature lets out a howl and staggers back, but not fast enough 'cos Mary belts it another one with this bat, and this time the whole side of its head caves in and this like snake of blood and brains comes leaping out its skull and lands on the deck like a shot jellyfish, and all the noises is like things popping and farting liquids. Are you wanting a shot? asks that Shona one then, but I'm halfways out of the room already and not feeling too good either.

I wash the face and give myself a wee talking to in the bog and work it out before I go back in. I'm not good at this type of thing, and thank God Mary's been as good as she has 'cos I couldn't have been doing with it all the time.

You girls better get yourselves downstairs. Your car should be here by now. And take that game with you and make sure you never bring anything like that into my house again. Do you understand? I say, and it's like I must be putting on my sternest voice 'cos they're looking well wary and hurt, but they both look up at Mary, and Mary looks at me like I'm daft and says, it's mine Dad, this is the one I got with the birthday money you gave me. I told you about it, remember?

So that was that. They got packed off home and we had an argument. In the end, I lost, and I know she knows it. If I would have been more interested I would have known, but she's still got the receipt so I'll be taking it back to the shop and having a wee word with Peter, 'cos he's the fella with his name on the slip. Makes me wonder if Peter's got any my Mary's age. Better for him if he doesn't.

The drive down is slow and frustrating, and a right shouting match I end up having with a fella behind me who won't make his mind up to overtake or sit halfway up me pipe. The coastline is dirty. The secret bay as we called it isn't as secret as it used to be, and it's not with folk being there, but the stuff along the tide-lines. Old johnnies, womens' towels and weathered parts of children's

toys, a baby's arm sticking out of the sand, and gloves everywhere —ladies' pink gloves, a navy's heavy-duty crimson rubber like an udder, and wellie boots and wheelie bins and all manner of shite in great long lines along the sea-wall as far as I can make-out.

But I walk along anyway, and glad of the binoculars too. A sailing-boat far away is getting tossed about grand-style by the waves, and even the seagulls manage to find out what hovering's like, stuttering up and down in the wind. I reach the dunes where we used to meet when we were over on the holidays. We even managed to build a sort of hut for when the rain was on. I poke around a bit beside a couple of the sandy banks, checking close to see if there might be any trace of the door frame and timbers we used, but of course there's nothing. The dunes I remember have probably long since joined the sea.

There's a sunset happening over behind the islands, but heavy black clouds from the sea obscure it, and grey bands connecting to the sea on the horizon tell me that I've walked enough and should return before the rain hits land.

Back down past the dunes, then the great slope of the sea-wall where there's still the barbed wire and the bunkers for the guns, and right battered it all is too, with slabs of concrete as big as the pub shifted and cracked by the winter waves. I have to sit down. My legs are tired, and that's maybe only six, seven miles at most. I don't want to go home with Mary and me not talking. I can't handle it. And that game still has to go back. It's in the car, back in its box. The picture on the front is of a big veiny red blob, and the only thing that tells you it's a head is these two mad red eyes like glass. I wonder what Mary has inside her head, what she dreams about when she's not well, or when she's scared. The worst I ever got was a witch under the bed. I shiver and have to check behind me, along the cracked ridge of the wall, feeling that something is watching me. But there's nothing there. The furthest of the islands is now behind the wall of grey rain, and it'll be here before long. I'm too weary to start walking again, so I make a smoke before heading off, and sure enough I've the smoke only half-done when the wind turns right powerful and the rain comes in sidey-ways like pebbles, and it's maybe thinking about the likes of that animal in the game, and that thing staring at me out of the box in the back seat, but it's like eyes are all round me, all watching, all chasing me along the beach, and the cloud is over and above and low, blanketing the whole sky, and I don't remember being so scared for a very long time.

I want to get straight upstairs and dry off, and the shivers haven't stopped, even with the heating up full in the car, but Diane calls me across as soon as I'm in the door and says there's a man been waiting to see me since an hour after I left. He looks angry about something, and he's quite drunk, but he hasn't caused any bother so she hasn't warned

him yet, but she doesn't want to serve him any more. I follow her backward nod to where this tall, thin-faced fella is leaning against the bar, hand cupped about his pint, and craning up he is to look at the screen of the telly above him. I don't recognise him at all. Not a regular. It's possible I've seen him passing or in another pub, but there's nothing clear, and that's with a good study at him in his reflection behind the gantry.

I get upstairs and change. I don't even shower, just have a quick rub with the towel and on with a fresh shirt and breeks. I look smart enough, but I know I'm in no fit state to be scrapping. The shivers have got worse, and a bit of temple pain there, and that's always unusual for me, means I might be in for a wee bout. I summon Frank from the end of the bar, careful not to open it too far in case your man should see. Frank is only just in, so he's sober enough. I tell him what's what and he goes back to his seat.

The guy gives a wee bit of a start when I say my name. He's been watching the cricket on the telly, and looks like he was enjoying it too until I turns up.

So you're Mary's father, says he, and I nod and extend my hand. He takes it slowly, and his hand is big, but the shake isn't a showy, dramatic one. It's solid and brief. He's got a good drink in him, that's clear by his eyes, but he keeps his voice clear enough, and straight to the point he is.

My daughters were here last night, he says, they like Mary a lot, and so do I. She's been in our house now three, four times, and every time not a bit of bother. Your Mary's a good lass Mr Doohihan. She's bright and well-liked. I'm glad she gets on with mine. She's a good influence on them. But this stuff they're getting into. You'll forgive me speaking my mind, but it's not right.

So that's it then. Their Dad. Jamie Kelly. Starnight Cars. A lot of stories about this man. A lot. I point at the pint, he looks and nods, hands it over and I top it up from the tap in between us. He sniffs, looks down at the bar. He's not pushing

for an answer, and there was no aggression in the voice. He deserves an explanation. I put the pint before him, and he slides two coins across. I leave them be.

I'm sorry, I say, and he doesn't look up from examining the head on the pint.

So am I, he says then, and raises the glass and drinks, and continues the slow swallow until half of the liquid has been drained.

I know that Frank and Joe and Bobby will be halfway along the bar behind me, pretending to watch the telly—there's no sense that the man will do anything, but that's as dangerous a time as any.

He sniffs again and wipes some froth from his lips.

It's a hard job right enough, looking after them, he says, but we can look after each other's a bit, you know, keep an eye out and that. Know what I mean?

He extends his hand again as he stands up. He's really very tall indeed. I take his hand, and it's the same shake as before, short and firm, but this time I notice a lump and see the wart on his middle finger as his hand goes to zip up his jacket.

Nice pint you serve in here by the way, he says, and off he goes. Frank and Joe and Bobby come buzzing over with questions, but I don't hear them. I go to the toilet.

So it's ten minutes I'm at it there with the nail brush and the green pan scourer, and the flesh is raw but I keep scraping and pour another dash of disinfectant into the basin.

Better safe, that's what Dad always said, 'cos you never knew what some of them have at and about their gobs over a day. Glass carries the fingerprints and a lot more you can't see. People with scabs and ulcers on their lips. People who let their nose run all over their mouth when they've had too much. Stag night? You wouldn't believe it. People who swill their drink rather than drink it, so that by they've got to the bottom of a pint

there's as much spit as there is beer. I smooth on more soap, and wonder where she is, my Mary. She should be back any minute.

She'll be with her friends, doing whatever they do when their Da's aren't about. There's anger deep in my belly, just the same as you get before a fight, and I close my eyes and I can remember it all like switching on a light, me and her Mum on the shore that night, and it's a warm, clear memory, how sweet and soft and young she was, the lights of the town in the distance and the coolness of the sand below, and I open my eyes and the anger's away and Christ I wish she was with me, right now.

20th Century Prison Blues

An essay informed by four Novels

Jim Ferguson

Writers and thinkers in this culture and beyond, have long been fascinated with ideas of crime and punishment, freedom and social control. Religion is much concerned with such ideas as are politics, philosophy, and the majority of present day social sciences. These areas of interest form a core of social thought which, in a pure sense, is rivalled only in recent times by the great rise of rationalism and empirical science with its concomitant technological advances. In the words of Herbert Marcuse, "A good deal of the history of bourgeois society is reflected in the bourgeois theory of authority."¹

In Plato's *Republic* (c.375 B.C.) and Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) there is lengthy discussion of justice and how criminals ought to be treated. The punishments advocated generally involve some loss of liberty and More has much to say about slavery being a suitable punishment for most crime.

"...they likewise make chains and fetters for their slaves, to some of which, as a badge of infamy, they hang an earring of gold..."²

Doubtless More was influenced by his reading of Plato; both are at pains to describe highly mechanistic and prescriptive social arrangements, showing them to be for the overall good of the community wherein the individual is subsumed.

It is not my intention here to dwell on the historical development of such ideas but accept that the history exists (and can be argued over) whilst looking at some aspects of prison and punishment in relation to 4 twentieth century texts:

The Star Rover, Jack London, Novel 1915

Men In Prison, Victor Serge, Novel 1930

Darkness at Noon, Arthur Koestler Novel, 1940

Borstal Boy, Brendan Behan, Autobiographical Novel 1957

These Western/North European texts are, in a sense, part of that literary tradition. A tradition which encapsulates a specific set of values and social assumptions about how people live, what governments are and, indeed, what a novel or any

other piece of literature actually (or supposedly) is. However, they illuminate much of the ideological landscape of the twentieth century as well as the detail of individual experiences in the process and circumstances of imprisonment. At the same time, almost by necessity of the subject matter, they are in opposition to both the literary tradition they come from and the institutionalisation they describe.

The main characters in these books believe that, on some level, their treatment embodies injustice; that the injustice has its roots in larger political questions and/or social arrangements but is manifest in the institutions of the prison and justice systems. Each author presents state authority as the perpetrator of unjust punishment and indicts these state institutions simply by detailed description of an individual life, by exposing what happens on the inside. In making these detailed descriptions of prison life the writers are appealing to a higher sense of moral justice in the consciousness of the reader: that is part of the way the novels work. Another way in which they work is by making concrete the details of an experience which is to the majority of people extremely unfamiliar. The more extreme and removed from everyday life the actions described, the more the minute details render them as true. "The mind projects into the concrete its spiritual tragedy."³

During the 1970s Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was on the syllabus in Scottish secondary schools. This does credit to our internationalist outlook and was my first encounter with a "fictional" work about incarceration. I didn't much like the book and have never gone back to read it afresh with adult eyes. What strikes me now though is the fact that there was no other text in the syllabus about prison experience. None of the four books above were ever mentioned, nor were any of many possible alternatives. Why not Oscar Wilde's *Ballad of Reading Gaol*, Tolstoy's *The Resurrection*, Kafka's somewhat more abstract, *In the Penal Settlement*, or even in the Scottish context, Jimmy Boyle's *A Sense of Freedom*? Not one of these books, as far as I know, got anywhere near the syllabus and the school library wasn't much use either.

It is difficult not to say that, as part of its contribution to the Cold War, the Scottish education system was happy enough to throw copies of Solzhenitsyn at children in the hope they assimilated something about the evil Soviets who imprisoned dissenters in barbaric conditions. It was sufficient to get across that message with little in the way of contextual comparisons. Koestler's novel might have given too confused a message about the Soviet Union with its implication that the Revolution of 1917 had degenerated and transformed itself in ways that were not intended by those Commissars unlucky enough to find themselves at "divergence" with Stalin or "No.1."



Convicts Exercising at Pentonville

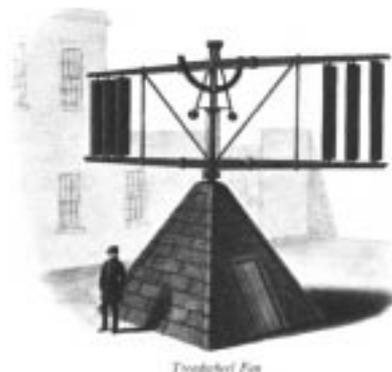
Jack London (1876-1916) wrote *The Star Rover* to highlight, among other things, the inhuman treatment of prisoners in the USA. Darrel Standing, the first person narrator, is stubborn to the point of daring the authorities to kill him by their use of straight-jacketing as punishment for his part in a fictitious conspiracy to blow up the gaol. What Standing recognises is the absolute necessity of adopting an anti-authoritarian stance in order to retain his dignity.

London, thought to be the first millionaire author, born into a poor family in San Francisco, was brought up in Oakland and on surrounding farms. He was a tough, rugged, kind of frontier American who believed in living life to the full.

"A sailor labourer, oyster pirate, fish and game warden, tramp, gold prospector, soap-box orator, war correspondent, rancher, bohemian —all these hats he wore and more —yet still he wrote a thousand words a day for sixteen years, his entire professional life."⁴ London achieved all this in spite of alcohol and drug problems, as well as the difficulties caused by several bad business deals in which he lost large sums of money.

He claimed to be prone to boredom and when something bored him he felt a great sense of disgust with it, due to this disgust he was driven forward. He did not revise any of his work after publication. When asked to do so for later editions he categorically refused. Yet he thought this feeling of disgust which welled up within was a character defect that he would have liked put right but somehow couldn't. Still, for sixteen years he did not tire of writing and produced around fifty books.

Victor Serge (1890-1947), journalist, anarchist and political activist, states in his dedication at the beginning of *Men in Prison*, "Everything in this book is fictional and everything is true. I have attempted, through literary creation, to bring out the general meaning and human content of a personal experience."⁵ Like Jack London, his concern was to communicate through a novel something of the experience of imprisonment and to connect to as wide a readership as possible. "It is not about 'me,' about a few men, but about men, all men crushed in that dark corner of society. It seems to me that the time has finally come for literature to discover the masses."⁶



Tweeldeel's Pen

Serge was born into a political family of impoverished Russian emigres in Brussels. One of his brothers died of hunger. He was highly motivated politically and much taken with the work of Marx, Nietzsche and Stirner. The last seven years of his life were spent in exile in Mexico, where like Trotsky he was subject to harassment by the NKVD. However, he continued to write regardless of the fact that he found it all but impossible to get his work published.

In *Darkness at Noon* Arthur Koestler (1905-1983), describes the incarceration, interrogation and execution of Comrade N. S. Rubashov, taking what can be described in today's terms as a classical anti-Stalinist line. Nevertheless, the novel is not greatly diminished by the ideological axe-grinding. For Koestler the anti-Stalinism was central yet today (January 1999) the form of the political system which devours Rubashov is not central; it is the mechanics of interrogation, humiliation and punishment that come into the foreground through the swamp of ideological information and argument. The arguments are put brilliantly, with lucid cold logic, but essentially it is the delineation of systematic oppression (of Rubashov and others by the prison and justice systems) that now gives the novel its strength. Another reason for the diminution of ideological impact is because from an official, inter-governmental view the Cold War is over.

Without the anti-Stalinism Koestler's project in *Darkness at Noon* is rendered meaningless in strict historical terms; this is perhaps a truism, though as a "novel" the work still succeeds on literary terms: it becomes however, more like Kafka than Koestler. That is, more universally metaphysical and less driven by ideology.

Born in Hungary and highly motivated politically, Koestler was both fascinated and haunted by the Russian revolution. Rubashov is modelled partly on Nikolai Bukharin. Koestler was imprisoned during the Spanish Civil War and drew on this experience to write *Darkness at Noon* among other things.

Brendan Behan (1923-1964), a self-styled IRA man, was arrested shortly after his arrival at Liverpool in 1939. He was aged only sixteen years but such was his background that he had a thorough knowledge of the history of British oppression in Ireland. After initial incarceration in Walton Prison he was sentenced at Liverpool Assizes to three years at a Borstal in Suffolk. *Borstal Boy* is based on these experiences.

Behan, however, was not so concerned with the facts where the embroidering of them made for a better story. Immediately after his arrest Behan was taken to CID headquarters in Lime Street. When asked for a statement he declared: "My name is Brendan Behan. I came over here to fight for the Irish Workers' and Small Farmers' Republic, for a full and free life, for my countrymen, North and South, and for the removal of the baneful influence of British Imperialism from Irish affairs. God save Ireland." 7

He also writes: "In accordance with instructions, I refused to answer questions." 8

Yet exactly what instructions he arrived in Liverpool with is open to question. Certainly, Ulick O'Connor has raised this issue and cites several examples where the version of events given in *Borstal Boy* is at odds with other witnesses. 9 This is why I consider *Borstal Boy* an autobiographical novel.

On his return to Ireland, Behan was gaoled a second time for his part in the shooting of a policeman. The details of this are described by Behan in *Confessions of an Irish Rebel*. His understanding of prison and the life there was born of hard experience.

"Two warders grabbed him [Behan] and took him out kicking and screaming, leaving the priest purple with rage. They dragged him up some iron steps outside, pulling him so that he fell and split his head. In his cell they gave him a beating on the chest and kidneys and hit him with keys in the face. He was to keep the mark of the steel stairs on his forehead for the rest of his life." 10

Victor Serge had similar harsh experiences. Behan, like Jack London, developed an alcohol addiction which eventually would kill him.

Of the four books only Koestler does not use a consistent first person narrative voice. Rubashov and the omniscient narrator are so similar in tone and thought process as to somehow gel in the

mind of the reader producing the same closeness as is evoked by straight use of the first person. 11 Also, Koestler uses extracts from the diary of Comrade Rubashov to move directly into the first person. During the interrogation sequences we hear Rubashov clearly, the logic of his thinking is expressed in his own words. One hears the absurd arguments of the interrogation, where those with power are in complete control.

The others (London, Behan, Serge) use a first person narrative which functions to emphasise the truth of the experience described; the bearing of individual testimony to acts systematically designed to undermine the human spirit. Singularity of viewpoint enhances the sense of enforced aloneness in prison as well as the triumph of communication. Prisoners find ways of communicating with each other. Jack London calls tapped messages between cells "knuckle-rap". There are whispered messages in the exercise yard or at work. Each system of imprisonment is different yet there are huge similarities between what the characters experience in France, the Soviet Union, the USA and England. Behan possibly has a better time of it than the others, being mostly in a borstal rather than a prison for adults.

The first person narration brings the reader closer to the situation of the prisoner; it offers a technical solution to the problems of both voyeurism and authorial distance. Koestler uses different technical solutions to achieve the same effect. This is interesting given the concern with *ends and means* underpinning, to a greater or lesser extent, all four narratives.

The prisoners in three of the books (not London's) are "Political Prisoners". Only in that one particular are they extraordinary. Yet all prisoners are political as in political with a small *p*. All societies make decisions as to what activities are taboo or unacceptable and therefore made criminal, thus the necessity for systems to deal with individuals or groups who indulge in such proscribed activities. In accepting imprisonment as a suitable way for dealing with offenders it then follows that within such institutions there must be rules of behaviour and regulation of the activities of offenders. We logically arrive at what is sometimes termed the *institutional regime*.

The prison regimes in the so-called "developed world" have much to thank the city of Glasgow for and more specifically one William Brebner (1783-1845) who hailed originally from Huntly in Aberdeenshire. Brebner put into practice a system at the Bridewell, on Glasgow's Duke Street, which was to spread quickly through Europe and North America. The Bridewell, governed by Brebner from 1808 until his death, was regarded as a model institution, indeed a House of Commons Select Committee on Scottish Prisons reported in 1826 that "The prisoners are kept silent, and at constant work from six o'clock morning till eight at night." 12 Thus in the early 19th century, the governance of prisons was not left to chance but organised along somewhat industrialised lines.

"Much has been written about the respective merits of the so-called separate and silent systems of imprisonment which were introduced into prisons in the first half of the nineteenth century" 13



Chief Warder, Pentonville



Prison interior, Pentonville

These types of prison regime, carried on the winds of imperialism and industrial efficiency, spread around the globe. The main mode of punishment, whether intentional or not, was the enforced aloneness prisoners had to endure. It has been argued that such systems were likely to have health and character building benefits and that while prisoners were isolated they had contact with the prison chaplain and governor at regular intervals. It is hard to imagine that those incarcerated had much in common with such officials and seems absurd to suggest that such meetings would mitigate the punishment of being removed from one's normal state of sociability. This amount of time spent alone is part of what gives rise to a heightened awareness of the thoughts and voice within one's own mind.

"Introspection opens up the endless vistas of the inner life, shines a penetrating light into the most secret recesses of our being. ...But the invisible companion remains."¹⁴

What Serge calls the "invisible companion," Koestler calls the "silent partner" and London calls the "little death" are all aspects of that same introspection and result from enforced aloneness and the attempt to survive it.

Jack London takes this introspection furthest; when Darrel Standing is in the straight jacket he projects himself through time and space by psychological effort. The other three writers do not get so close to the mystical. Standing has some difficulty in reaching this state of mind but from the very start he has an inner-psychology. Koestler tries to deny Rubashov this inner voice but it comes through almost in spite of the author.

What Comrade Rubashov discovers as the "grammatical fiction" or "silent partner" (that which has been previously buried by logic of political expediency in his ordinary life) is immediately present in the characters in the other books. London, Serge and Behan do not deny the inner voice and the workings of the conscience. In fact, this inner voice is to a large extent no different from the narrative voice throughout. There is for them no possibility of the inner voice differentiating between the individual and the great flow of historical events. Ironically, at their most isolated physically the characters appear to become less reified and more fully human psychologically.

Behan does not hold all the population of Britain responsible for oppression in Ireland. Yet Koestler's attempt to foist the denial of the individual inner voice onto Rubashov results in what seems a very deliberate statement of social and political psychosis. However the dichotomy for Koestler is that the humanity of the inner voice asserts itself, no matter how psychotic or corrupt the political life Rubashov led.

Koestler holds almost everyone who supported the 1917 revolution responsible for Stalinism. This is the logic of this position. Koestler says "having placed the interests of mankind above the interests of man, having sacrificed morality to expediency ...Now they must die, because death is expedient to the Cause, by the hands of men who subscribe to the same principles."¹⁵ It is the historical determinism which says that all revolutionary change must end in a blood bath. He is in effect meeting one death penalty with another. Yet paradoxically, what remains interesting is the concrete detail in the novel: the size of the cells, the window, the grey light.

One has to assume Koestler read Serge, appreciated the detail but disagreed with the outlook. It seems crazy now to think that almost everything about an individual could be determined by

whether or not they supported the Soviet Union and its policies.

Prisons can usefully be thought of as punishment factories, how long is such an industry to flourish?

There is a commonsensical notion that criminals must be punished but how are we properly to ascribe guilt?

How can all be equal before the law when there is inequality everywhere else?

One certain sane aspiration is to happiness with dignity but how in the vast horror of human imperfection and frailty of judgement?

Whether we are or are not in a post-industrial age, the relentless growth of capitalist consumption and the underlying "free-market" politics continues at pace. Whilst many influential thinkers, politicians and media persons thought the threat to freedom came from Communism it would make more sense to suggest that the threat comes from the free-market system itself. (Its judicial system is designed to protect and strengthen free-market principles and practices.) This system is encompassing the globe. From Moscow to Sydney to Glasgow the signs are everywhere. The same multi-national chains are operating. The attacks on indigenous, local cultures continue almost as footnotes to the success of global capital: local populations who inconveniently get in the way of this development suffer terribly. The oil exploitation in Nigeria or the Persian Gulf are illustrative of this, as are the practices of tobacco companies, shipping companies and clothing manufacturers. This is where the question of applying justice to these people comes into play. They wouldn't want the standards applied to a shoplifter in Scotland applied to them. For theirs is barefaced robbery legally sanctioned by world trade and global free-market practices. To apply such standards to even one multi-national would call for the indictment of the whole system. In the same way Serge, Koestler and others indicted systems which undermined the dignity and happiness of human beings, so the present people in power would have to be once more indicted (and not just in works of fiction.)

In these books about prison there is a meeting of social and private anguish. They are very concerned with the experience of one person, in one situation, yet they have an allegorical power which is transcendent. These are super-allegorical texts, there is much to be learned from them and more to be argued over. They touch on major political questions, from the role of the state to the meaning of freedom, to the right of nations to self-determination; major moral questions from political ethics and *ends and means* to individual responsibility for one's actions; as well as questions of psychological and physical endurance. Above all, they are contributions to human knowledge concerning how to create a culture and civilisation in which we attain our natural dignity.

"Culture cannot live where dignity is killed ...A civilisation cannot prosper under laws which crush it."¹⁶

The irony is that the greatest dignity appears to lie in the resistance to all and any oppression. Perhaps it is in the process of the struggle for freedom we find both dignity and civilisation —and so to happiness where and whatever it might be.

The language of the judicial system is designed to depoliticise its function. In fact much of the ritualised processing of offenders is designed to dehumanise and depoliticise what is actually happening to people. Yet there is a need for something, one wouldn't like to have a member of the family killed and nothing to happen to the killer. Human nature cries out for vengeance and if not

vengeance then justice. As with most things, prevention is better than cure, but what do we do if the remedy appears worse than the disease —if prisons are teaming with petty offenders, non payers of fines and other such people who have no business being in prison at all?

The secretive and conservative nature of prisons, the attempted depoliticisation of language and process cannot keep these questions off the agenda for ever. Eventually everyone will know someone who is or has been in prison for something trivial and changes will have to be made. Democracy, however, may not be so responsive. The mechanisms for controlling public thought might not allow such free reform. Still, it feels better to live in a country where the death penalty is not dealt out in a courtroom. Yet, even at that, one does not feel one is living altogether freely; somehow the competitive clouds of smoke and scorching flames of control that rise out from within the anonymous free-market envelop and imprison, driving one back from that real freedom to which civilisation and dignity would direct our aspirations.

Notes

- 1 Herbert Marcuse, *From Luther to Popper*, Verso, London, 1983, Pg. 144.
- 2 Thomas More, *Utopia*, Cassell & Co., London, 1890, Pg. 103.
- 3 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Penguin, London, 1975, Pg. 113.
- 4 In Introduction, *The Collected Jack London*, Ed. Steven J Kasdin, Dorset Press, New York, 1991.
- 5 Victor Serge, *Men In Prison*, Writers & Readers, London, 1977.
- 6 *Ibid.*, Greeman's introduction, Pg. xxv.
- 7 Brendan Behan, *Borstal Boy*, Arrow Books, London, 1990, Pg. 4.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 See Ulick O'Connor, *Brendan Behan*, Abacus, London, 1993.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 The narrative technique employed by Koestler in *Darkness at Noon* might usefully be compared with that of James Kelman in *How late it was, how late*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1994.
- 12 In Andrew Coyle, Inside: Rethinking Scotland's Prisons, *Scottish Child*, Edinburgh, 1991, Pg.31.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Victor Serge, *Men In Prison*, Writers & Readers, London, 1977, Pg. 36.
- 15 Arthur Koestler, *The Invisible Writing*, London, 1954, Pg. 479.
- 16 Albert Camus, *Bulletin of the Algerian Cultural Centre*, Algiers, May 1937



History of the LMC

Clive Bell

Above left: The Club Room with Martin Klapper and Richard Sanderson 1998
 Above right: Feminist improvising group, late 70s
 Below: Derek Bailey, Maggie Nicols, Lol Coxhill 98, Otomo & Eye 94



"It's funny, we do all these interviews with Melody Maker and NME and the fanzines, and we try to talk about this real underground of London, improvisers like Evan and Derek, Lol, Moholo, the whole African contingent—and of course none of them have ever heard this music. It's kind of a bummer. It's such an underground music. It's very serious but it's also very humorous. It's very alive."

Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth in *The Wire* 108, Feb 1993.

At the end of the 90s, the free music world can still seem a wonderfully well-kept secret, a genuinely underground art activity. For 25 or 30 years there's been a scene there, all those club concerts listed monthly on the London Musician's Collective (LMC) Calendar; the LMC Annual Festivals—but is it a musical genre? Sometimes it feels like you can pin it down. At Derek Bailey's annual *Company* series, even though the musicians ranged from classical French horn player to thrash guitarist, you could see a simple listen-and-get-on-with-it approach. But even here the low key presentation, the strange theatre of encounters between musicians who had never met, and the outbursts of completely unplanned musical brilliance all combined to bewilder and undercut neat theory. The qualities of *Company* were often down to Bailey's personality and style. As in the world of jazz, strong individuals stamped their character on musical encounters. And the LMC was born because individuals wanted to band together for everyone's benefit.

"The group of people that were working around the SME (Spontaneous Music Ensemble) at that time—John Stevens, Derek Bailey, Trevor Watts, Paul Rutherford—were working on a method that I could call 'atomistic', breaking the music down into small component parts and piecing them together again in a collective way, so as to de-emphasize the soloistic nature of improvisation and replace it by a collective process. But at the same time *AMM* had what I would call a "laminar" way of working, where although the solo had been lost and the emphasis was on a collective sound, an orchestral sound if you like, it was not done by breaking the music into small components but by contributing layers which would fit together and make a new whole."

Evan Parker, talk at Actual Music Festival, ICA, August 1980.

"An obstinate clot of innovation", was how the *Wire* magazine described the LMC in 1997. The LMC has shown remarkable powers of survival, but it was not the first grouping of its kind. Richard Leigh: "The Musicians, Cooperative was set up as a pressure group for a clearly defined set

of musicians, usually referred to as the 'first generation', of improvisers. These included Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, Paul Lytton, John Stevens, Tony Oxley, Howard Riley, Paul Rutherford, Barry Guy and Trevor Watts" (Quote from *Resonance* Vol 2, No 2). This was around 1971, and concerts were held at the Little Theatre Club in Garrick Yard and the Unity Theatre in Camden Town.

Then, in April 1975, came *Musics* magazine, which Martin Davidson remembers as resulting from a phone conversation between himself, his wife Mandy and Evan Parker. The editorial board in summer 1975 was Bailey, Parker, Steve Beresford, Max Boucher, Paul Burwell, Jack Cooke, Peter Cusack, Hugh Davies, Mandy and Martin Davidson, Richard Leigh, John Russell, David Toop, Philipp Wachsmann and Colin Wood. I remember Colin Wood remarking that *Musics* was the first thing this crowd had found that they could all agree about. And I'm sorry about these lists, but if you want to make enemies with a history like this, all you have to do is leave out someone's name.

"STOP PRESS REVIEW SECTION: Three years ago ten music students from Cologne sat in horseshoe, one end of fine Wren church in Smith Square, sang ninth chord all evening, sound mixed and rarefied by man in nave. Last Saturday ten religious men from Tibet sat in horseshoe on same spot, sang tenth chord all evening, no sound mixer."

Colin Wood in *Musics* No 4, October 1975.

Musics came out six times a year and ran for 23 issues. In its coverage of improvised and non-western music alongside performance art, it reflected the broad interests of a so-called 'second generation' of improvisers, and provided a convivial focus point. Interested outsiders were welcome to share in the work of pasting the magazine together. In those pre-wordprocessing days pasting meant paste, as well as glue, scalpel and unwashed mugs. These days the unwashed mugs are the only survivors of the era.

"The LMC was formed by the slightly newer lot of musicians simply because everyone was fed up with playing in bad rooms above pubs or nowhere at all. Whereas Musicians' Co-op members had briefly enjoyed (?) the hospitality of Ronnie Scott and his club, due to Mr Scott's justifiably high regard for Evan Parker, Tony Oxley, Howard Riley, Barry Guy et al, musicians such as Nigel Coombes, Tony Wren, Paul Burwell or Colin Wood might just as well have come from Mars (or stayed there). There was nothing happening, other than the music."

David Toop, *Resonance* Vol 2, No 1, winter 1993.

A source of continuing inspiration to the younger

musicians was John Stevens' work in concerts and workshops. Maggie Nicols was another improviser who excelled at leading workshops. Within one hour, a roomful of assorted and embarrassed individuals could be led to build a communal musical experience of enormous power. Suddenly the mysteries of group improvisation and experimental music were opened up—veils fell from eyes, and the sheer joy of music-making seemed accessible to all. I recall one musician warning me that after a John Stevens workshop he had observed that most of the male participants had erections. I couldn't really see what was so wrong with this—maybe this music wasn't so cerebral and abstract as some people made out?

In 1975/76 the London Musicians Collective emerged from a series of meetings, and mailed out its first newsletter in August 1976. The Collective was separate from *Musics* magazine, but involved many of the same people. It was hoped that an organisation would carry more weight in dealings with other organisations, institutions and the press. And these musicians had a lot in common: nowhere to play, and no wider recognition of their music.

A major difference from the Musicians' Co-op was the LMC's openness to anyone who wanted to join. Richard Leigh again: "It was always seen as a network drawing more and more people from varied backgrounds into the scene". Improvisers were dipping their fingers into the many pies of mixed media, dance, film and performance art. And in fact at this time, just before punk and its DIY ethic erupted, there was a remarkable burst of energy in the underground arts scene. Dancers founded the X6 Dance Collective and *New Dance* magazine at Butlers Wharf, while film makers started the London Film Makers Co-op. These too have survived and are with us today, in the form of the Chisenhale Dance Space and the Lux Cinema in Hoxton Square. For musicians, the venue crisis was becoming acute. The Little Theatre Club had folded and the Unity Theatre burned down. The usual expedient of hiring a room in a pub, college or community hall was dependent on the whim of the landlord, and would not allow performances to be run on the musicians' terms. A space with maximum flexibility was needed if the work was to develop freely.

"We had been looking for premises (I remember surreal dealings with the Diocesan Committee for Redundant Churches)...Actually a lot of the connections between the LMC and LFMC happened through informal contacts, for instance I had fallen in love with Annabel Nicolson when she and the Film Co-op were still in the Dairy in Prince of

Wales Crescent, and I hung about while she was programming films there, doing odd jobs like selling tea and biscuits, sweeping the floor, and designing a membership card that was also a Thaumatrope... The LFMC wanted to take the space at 42 Gloucester Avenue (Camden Town), but it was too large for them, and I think Guy Sherwin approached the LMC with a view to subletting. I think Annabel might have had something to do with the idea, as the LMC 'office', and meetings were located in her one room flat."

Paul Burwell, Performance magazine.

Even before finding a venue, "LMC events" had been happening all over London, ever since the organisation was founded. Now many of these moved into the Camden building, and a calendar and newsletter were started up (1977/78). The level of activity, and its breadth, were both remarkable, and for the next ten years an average of 200 public performances a year were organised, almost entirely by unpaid administration. Nearly every day of the year the space was in use for rehearsal. This was a musicians' initiative, run on musicians' terms, so the chaos was often high, but there was plenty going on. The National Jazz Centre in the 1980s, by contrast, spent half a decade and untold sums of money not organising a single gig.

By anyone's standards the LMC building was a flexible performance space, little more than a shell packed with potential. Members spent hours clambering all over it, trying to render it habitable. Sylvia Hallett installed electricity and wiring, and Annabel Nicolson contributed a wooden floor from her flat to build a wall. The floor was as hard as you like: you could flood it, light a bonfire on it, bounce rocks off it. And after the show no staff would grumble, because there were no staff, and you would be cleaning it up yourself. Many saw the space as not especially to do with improvised music, but simply "astonishing... a place where you can do things you can't do elsewhere". (David Cunningham, quoted in *Time Out*, 1980)

"Was the real Britain very different from how you had imagined it?"

On my second day here I went to an Environmental Music Festival, where I met some musicians who played on canal boats, and others who played the piano with their feet, and I thought: what a different attitude towards art, so playful and free.

What inspired you to set up the Frank Chickens?

I became involved with the London Musicians Collective after the festival I mentioned, and started performing straight away. I had had this idea that I was an artist since childhood."

Kazuko Hohki interviewed in Japan Embassy newsletter, March 1998.

David Toop's 1978 Festival of Environmental Music & Performance was a nine day event, in some ways a massive celebration of the LMC's new found home, and a major influence on subsequent work. Warming up with a talk from Trevor Wishart and an instrument building workshop. Toop, Burwell, Parker, Paul Lytton and several others flung themselves into a continuous 24 hour concert called Circadian Rhythms. Visiting performers included Alvin Curran (USA), Luc Houtkamp (Holland), Carlos Trinidade (Portugal), and Christian d'Aiwée (France). F.I.G. (the eight piece Feminist Improvising Group, whose performances were renowned for their hilarity) alternated with seminars ("Music/Eventstructure/Context"). Stuart Marshall, Annabel Nicolson and Whirled Music played on nearby Primrose Hill, and guerrilla activities by Lol Coxhill and Michael Parsons could be encountered along the towpath of the Regents Canal.

The festival came at the end of a month (July 1978) which had already witnessed 13 performances, several open workshop sessions, and two meetings: one devoted to the LMC Records label, the other the usual monthly meeting open to all Collective members. Improvisers Mike Hames, Roger Turner, Hugh Metcalfe, Sinan Savaskan and Roger Smith had played. The Alterations quartet (Toop, Beresford, Peter Cusack and Terry Day) had brought over Fred Frith and Peter Brotzmann to perform alongside their own brand of dub'n'din



improv. Dislocation Dance (Manchester) and Reptile Ranch (Cardiff) linked up with local alt-punk duo The Door & The Window. Andrew Brenner's 49 Americans had explored left-field pop "in a relaxed atmosphere of concerned patriotism", sharing their Tuesday night slot with The Majorca Orchestra ("original marches, waltzes, descriptive fantasies, Edwardian disco and Scottish reggae"). The LMC was bursting at the seams.

"BARRY LEIGH'S REPORT:

1. The wall blocking the railway bridge at the rear of the building has been demolished.
2. Jumble leftovers are to be cleared from the loft.
3. Health inspector and surveyors will be contacted about the toilet (to be installed). It was noted that relations with the Film Co-op are deteriorating.

TOILET: The Gulbenkian Foundation say nothing doing, about our application for financial assistance.

DOORS: Stuart Boardman will put handles on the doors to the performing space."

LMC Newsletter, December 1979.

But behind all the glamour and the razzmatazz, what was the LMC really like? Personally I always found it a rich source of friendly and healthily eccentric people. Joining was like running away to join the circus. The place was a model of self-help and an opportunity to experiment in ways impossible elsewhere. As an organisation, it was most riven by factional strife when the membership was most active, of course. And as a building it was a bottomless pit into which you could pour your unpaid time. There was always some administrative headache to do with the ghastly business of running a London experimental venue in a bare loft. Noise: the laundry downstairs and the Kings Cross main line out back ensured there was noise coming in. As for noise going out, there were flats across the road, our soundproofing consisted of closing the windows, and some of the concerts were a little, er, exuberant. I remember watching the Dead Kennedys building an immense PA one sunny afternoon, in preparation for an unpublished gig which had people queuing around the block. I cycled away before the mayhem was unleashed. Then there were fire regulations ("You can't do that in here"), charitable status ("We can't give you subsidy to do that"), and a lack of toilets. There were toilets in the Film Co-op next door, there was a British Rail toilet under the building, there was a toilet in the pub opposite... OK, let's admit there were no toilets. This became a conundrum, a problematic fortress against which successive waves of voluntary admin would charge uphill, only to reel back down in stunned defeat. Benefit concerts, grant applications, sympathetic builders—nothing seemed to work. Let's just hope it added to our beatnik loft-dwelling cred.

"When we joined the LMC two years ago we did so in the belief that it was a collective—built on the political tenet of collectivism. We find in actuality a club set up to celebrate individualism. We feel that the newsletter must call for collective involvement from its 'collective' membership, yet in doing so we are accused of being sectarian. However, under the constant cringing criticism that we receive, we shall continue to co-ordinate the newsletter and until removed by the LMC shall continue to attempt to build toward 'Collectivity.'"

Dick Beard and Tim Dennis, LMC Newsletter, August 1980.

If we accept the liberal idea of art as an autonomous space, where other values can be considered and explored, then the LMC building was like a concrete expression of this. Established by

free improvisers, one of its most distinctive features as an organisation was its openness and inclusiveness. Other musical pressure groups were more closely tied to one genre or style of music making, while the LMC forever had a hankering for the genuine experiment, whatever the idiom. This has contributed to its resilience, and also generated a constant debate about what on earth the LMC stands for.

For many years the LMC was a large collective (200 members), supposedly running itself in an authentically collective manner. Open monthly meetings enabled the entire membership to participate in a lively criticism of any member who had actually done any work. The problems of collectivity are well known. These days we shake our heads and think we know better, but the LMC's factional struggles were a simple result of a large number of musicians all being passionately involved and trying to get a hand on the steering wheel. In this piece I am deliberately giving my personal view of what the LMC was all about—in the early days there were many different agendas. Many British improvisers were, and still are, highly politicised, in all the different Marxist and anarchist hues. For many others, the collective spirit still expresses important truths about the co-operative and non-hierarchical nature of improvised music, and the importance of musicians taking creative control of their own music. A glance at life inside an orchestra, with its composer-driven hierarchy, is usually enough to remind us of the alternative.

"The dynamics of the current magazine meetings depend more on pointed silences, emotional blackmail, mumbled asides and semi-sneers than on direct statements. The *Musics* collective is frightened of growth, frightened of taking and using power. There is no sense of history, of where the music is from and why people play it. The collective is a morass of impersonality. We trivialise each other's contributions."

Steve Beresford, letter to Musics collective meeting, titled "Why we need a new publication", October 1980.

In 1980 factional struggle and good old-fashioned personal rowing resulted in several resignations from the LMC and the demise of *Musics* maga-

*Left: Tilbury
Below: Paul
Burwell on the
beach in the
seventies
Bottom: Derek
Bailey and
dancer*





Left: Eugene Chadbourne 99
Centre: Cusack group
Right: Clive Bell 99
Bottom: Tristran Honsinger 99

zine. The December 1980 newsletter contains scary outpourings of vitriol and the squealing of bruised egos. Frustration is clearly audible. Almost completely unrecognised by the outside world, these musicians were consistently ignored or sneered at by the music press, and regarded as suspicious charlatans by the contemporary music establishment. Arts Council support was indeed forthcoming for larger scale events and it paid the rent, but long hours of unpaid admin and building work were leading to burnout at a tender age. Meanwhile our richer and better equipped neighbour, the Film Co-op, was trying to evict us.

"There is a clear polarisation between 'collectivists' and 'musicians'. Many of the Cs are interested in music, and many of the Ms are concerned to maintain collectivism, but it looks as though the basic differences are insuperable. The Cs resent any suggestion that there are useful musical criteria which give certain examples of music greater value than others. In my view if you can't, or won't, distinguish between a 'good', piece of improvisation and one which isn't, there's nothing to aim for and you might as well watch the telly."

Tony Wren, open letter to LMC, in December 1980 Newsletter.

After patching up the spat with the Film Co-op, the LMC kept up a high level of activity during the 1980s. Some of the founders had resigned, and political strife seemed a thing of the past. Members came forward to do the dirty work, whether it was taking glasses back to the pub or phoning the Goethe Institute. Peter Cusack, Paul Burwell, Sylvia Hallett, Susanna Ferrar, Tom Sheehan and Dean Brodrick all showed astonishing reluctance to pack it in and get a proper job. Those who sat in the little office space overlooking the railway tracks were sometimes accused of being power-crazed careerists, but the truth was that your own music would probably suffer if you spent too much time there. On the other hand, if you leaned on a broom in a corner of the space for long enough, you would see an extraordinary carnival pass through. For example, Dean Brodrick's "Great Little Inuit Eskimo Show" in February 1985: an Inuit drum battle, shadow puppets, igloo building for beginners, a contest where pairs of singers chanted into each other's mouths, the film *Nanook Of The North* accompanied by improvising string quartet, and a discussion led by anthropologist and film maker Hugh Brody. For several months Max Eastley's Aeolian harps were fixed to the roof above the entrance, singing eerily to the street whenever the wind got up. Inside, one of the many "floor percussionists" might be setting up: Barry Leigh with his revolving glass coffeetables, played with chunks of polystyrene, or Roger Turner's junk kits, heavyweight detritus of the Industrial Revolution.

In 1982 Alan McGee, later to be mogul of Creation Records, was running the weekly Beet-Bop Club in the LMC. Possibly the most spectacular and downright life-threatening event was the debut performance by the Bow Gamelan Ensemble, climax of Sylvia Hallett's 1983 "Evening Of Self-Made Instruments". This was also a prime example of how the Collective regularly gave birth to highly original and influential work, which barely fitted within any definition of new music. The place was packed for this riot of pyrotechnics and barely controlled arc-welding equipment abuse, but it was noticeable that Burwell's friends were hovering nervously around

the exit.

"Memories... the Musicians Du Nil changing the Collective into an Eastern Bazaar after their concert, when they attempted to sell the audience their instruments, trinkets, and, I think, items of their clothing... Annabel Nicolson flooding the place in a representation of the Mississippi river (actually quite convincing, but I'd drunk a whole bottle of Southern Comfort and thought I was Huckleberry Finn)."

Paul Burwell reminiscing in Performance magazine.

New, younger members arrived to gaze with respectful awe at a room where Evan Parker had played a trio with Kazuko Hohki and a seven foot inflatable Godzilla. Or to dismiss the past as "a bunch of saxophonists tooting away for hours to an average audience of six or seven" (The Door & The Window, quoted in *Time Out*). Not everyone was happy with the LMC's name; I recall someone suggesting that the building be renamed "Risks", and neon letters should be fixed to the roof. For a while we affectionately subtitled it The Palace Of Living Culture, as we struggled to mend smashed windows and doors.

By 1987 it was clear that professional administration was required, whether we could afford it or not. A hiring out for a private party had resulted in equipment being stolen from our neighbours, the Film Co-op. Recriminations flew. After ten years of concerts, we were informed we had no license for "music and dancing", so were liable to be closed any day by Camden Council. And the condition of the building was not compatible with our status as pioneering arts amateurs, let alone its original function as a British Rail social club canteen.

"A last minute ironic twist to LMC development plans: Today is the launch of the LMC's 'Home Additions' appeal, our plans to carry out major improvements to these premises, starting with the foyer area you are standing in! In total part one will cost £9,000... As long ago as last September we discussed the possibility of a long lease with British Rail. There doesn't seem to be a problem, they replied. Last week they sent us a notice to



quit. By March 24th 1988."

LMC Press Release, September 1987.

The Film Co-op, also given notice to quit, hung on for many years before decamping to Hoxton Square. But a rumour went round that the LMC had already closed up shop, so members stopped hiring the space, income dried up, and moving out came to seem a positive option. The words "albatross" and "neck" were used in discussions about the dear old building. Both brake cables on my bicycle were severed one evening during an LMC concert, something I noticed only after tumbling off at the bottom of a hill in Chalk Farm. This stoked my paranoia, but it had no bearing on the LMC's decision to leave. In spring 1999, 42 Gloucester Avenue still stands, derelict and empty, sadly gazing at railway and canal.

In spite of the end-of-an-era gloom, the final Gloucester Road newsletter in June 1988 publicised some dozen events happening there, including a Musicians Against Nuclear Arms benefit involving 40 players. The LMC's longest surviving inhabitant, Member Number 1 Paul Burwell, having played the premises, first ever concert, also performed at the last. Administrator Dave Matzdorf was now followed by Simon Woodhead and Philippa Gibson. The organisation camped out in Simon's office in the Diorama, Regents Park, and contemplated its venue-less future. Events were organised at the Diorama, Red Rose, Air Gallery and Tom Allen Centre in Stratford, but a proper home proved hard to find.

From September 1989 Richard Scott, a big Ornette Coleman fan, brought a certain jazzy flair to the admin. His "Three Cities" festival in March 1990 featured the first performance by Manchester's Stock, Hausen & Walkman, "the industrial cartoon soundtrack tape manipulation ensemble". SH&W went on to become one of the internationally most successful young improv groups of the 90s.

However, the period 1989 to 1991 feels with hindsight like the LMC's darkest hour. A series of woefully underpaid workers wrestled with a dozen types of administrative chaos. In February 1990 the AGM heard they had been struck off the register at Companies House (not Richard Scott's fault, I hasten to add). Elder members wrung their hands. Susanna Ferrar and Eddie Prevost administered the kiss of life to the accounts. Nick Couldry performed legal emergency surgery. But even Paul Burwell's new computer seemed powerless to arrest the slide.

"In the past year or so, organisations have sprung up (for instance in Manchester and Colchester) which have shown that wider audiences can be achieved with positive presentation which makes no apologies for what improvisation is, but equally does not assume that everyone out there somehow knows about it. I believe that with a lot of hard work and clear thinking the LMC could do the same, in fact the LMC should aim to lead the field, not drag behind it. The LMC's ambition should be to be the principal organisation representing improvised music in Britain. If however the LMC does not have such ambitions, those involved should seriously ask themselves whether it deserves the funding it is claiming."

Nick Couldry, document titled "Does The LMC Have A Future?", September 1991.

"Ambition" is the key word here. The LMC had been lively, angry, wild at heart and wonderfully

deaf to common sense, but maybe it had never been ambitious enough. The first sign that this might be about to change was a small glossy leaflet splashed in orange and white, advertising the LMC "Autumn Collection", a series of ten concerts from September to December 1991.

Someone had invented word processing and graphic design, and the LMC had noticed. Then came the December 1991 newsletter—in place of the one-sheet catalogue of despair, castigating the membership for its lethargy, this was a 16 page magazine bulging with record reviews, advertising and a substantial interview with Alabama guitarist Davey Williams. There was even a trailer for an interview with 84 year old calypso singer The Roaring Lion, to be published in Variant magazine. Phil England and Ed Baxter had arrived.

"The venue was unconventional—a swimming pool, complete with water and hot, chlorinated atmosphere. The number of acts was uncommon—nine, and to describe their repertoire as diverse would be a highly misleading understatement. Judged in brutally logistic terms, the event was a resounding success. The auditorium was packed; the concert started almost on time; the proceedings managed to accommodate the activities of a BBC TV crew without serious disruption. I for one enjoyed the evening, although the overall impression was more reminiscent of a night at the music hall than a concert of leading-edge state of the art experimentation. But that's no bad thing in my opinion."

Forestry Commission employee Robert Matthews reviewing "Fiume" in LMC Newsletter, March 1992.

LMC funding had been devolved from the Arts Council to the London Arts Board. By 1991 I suspect that LAB saw an opportunity to offload a flaky client, and more or less threatened to withdraw funding unless the LMC proved itself to be more than an ageing crew of indignant but impotent improvisers. Nick Couldry assembled a new board of directors, including newcomer Ed Baxter, who had been looking into Camberwell Bus Garage or Butlers Wharf as new LMC bases. Baxter picked up the LAB gauntlet and set about promoting events much more ambitious in scale. "Fiume" was intended to create a splash, as it were, about the potential still within the LMC. United in the swimming pool were new arrivals like Sianed Jones and John Grieve alongside old favourites Charles Hayward, David Toop and Max Eastley, and Frank Chickens. For many the eerie beauty of Lol Coxhill's bald and bespectacled figure playing an almost submerged soprano saxophone remains an abiding memory. This was the kind of crazy avant garde extravaganza the media loves, and the coverage was enormous.

The next step was the First Annual Festival Of Experimental Music, five days in the Conway Hall, Holborn, in May 1992. Fresh-faced youths shared the stage with names from the Jurassic early seventies. Visitors from abroad notably included Ikue Mori (New York drum machinist, formerly of Arto Lindsay's DNA) and Sainkho Namtchhalak (Mongolian throat singer wearing vinyl LP head-dress). Baxter had the vision to see that if the event was big enough it would not only be visible on an international scale, but also more attractive to funding bodies. A hectic plethora of offstage performances, discussions, workshops and video screenings complemented the main concerts. At times the heated debates in the bar seemed as compelling as the music simultaneously bursting

out of the hall. Suddenly journalists and promoters from Europe and the States were hanging out. Older improvisers were fiercely condemning the antics of younger ones, and anyone concerned about the LMC's health could heave sighs of relief.

"Cardew was wise to stake out and defend his ground by spelling out the social dimension to his music. His purpose was not, of course, to defend "his" property rights, but to fight a corner and to express something human, faced with what Phil Ochs called the 'terrible heartless men' who still run our lives. Cardew's music is not concerned with entertainment or self-gratification, and I suppose in the wake of the collapse of communism and the triumph of capital (don't you just hate it when that happens?) few will take an interest in these recordings. Listening to them now, I am overwhelmed, rendered inarticulate and revitalised. Great stuff. The newspaper is full of details of how long 'Starlight Express' has been running. It's all quite clear. There is only one lie, there is only one truth. They hey hey!"

Ed Baxter reviewing Cornelius Cardew's Piano Music in the pilot issue of Resonance, September 1992.

Later that year (September 1992) the burgeoning newsletter finally exploded, supernova-like, into the pilot edition of *Resonance* magazine, under the editorship of Keith Cross and Mick Ritchie.

Picking up the threads 12 years after the demise of *Musics*, *Resonance* has proved more durable. Seven years later its thought-provoking mix of interviews, reviews and theoretical articles now comes with the tempting bonus of a cover CD. Unlike the promotional fluff of most cover CDs, however, *Resonance* features recordings unavailable elsewhere, usually culled from LMC live events. The magazine has been creatively steered through the hands of a series of guest editors by Phil England. By keeping the editorial team small it has avoided the factional gang warfare that crippled *Musics*. And the sightlines have always been aimed wider than the confines of experimental music, trying rather to locate that music within a wider debate about culture.

Phil England became part time administrator in the summer of 1992, as the LMC stopped squatting in members, flats and took office space in Kings Cross. The office moved to Community Music in Farringdon for several years, and has now settled, south of the Thames for the first time, in the Leathermarket complex near London Bridge. Ed Baxter tried to give up his programming post in autumn 1992, and has been trying unsuccessfully to give it up ever since, as the LMC's activities have grown ever larger in ambition.

Meetings open to the whole membership were finally abandoned as hopelessly inefficient—if project coordinators failed to turn up the meeting could be effortlessly hijacked by anyone who fancied a debate on the purpose of the organisation, while practical work would be shelved. A team of directors with particular responsibilities was tried instead. Any member could still put themselves forward as a possible director. Slightly modified, this system continues today, with about eight directors having skills in marketing, law, website management and so on. The AGM remains a chance for all members to kick up a fuss.

There are only four or so musicians currently among the directors, and this is a direct result of the Charities Commission ruling that they cannot be remunerated for LMC activities; in other words, no paid gigs for directors. I suspect this is

actually strengthening and professionalising the organisation, as directors bring in a wide range of skill and experience from the outside world. At recent meetings directors have virtually been queuing up to make professional-style presentations involving laminated boards and highlighter pens. No laptop animations or corporate sweeteners yet, but it can only be a matter of time.

Discussion has been tightly focused, pragmatic and good humoured—as a veteran of Collective meetings it all feels odd, but strangely sane.

Backed up by a team of gluttons for punishment and hard work (Rob Storey, Dave Ross, Mick Ritchie, Steve Noble, Caroline Kraabel et al), England and Baxter have been administering and steering the LMC since 1992, which is considerably longer than any comparable team. Having observed them at work in the office, I have nothing but praise for their ability to combine mind-numbing paperwork with the seizing of initiatives. These are ferociously creative people who would have a major impact on whichever organisation they found themselves in, and the LMC is lucky to have felt their boots on its backside. Of course this tiresomely positive view is my own—feathers have been ruffled and resignations have been handed in from time to time, but the LMC in 1999 has no shortage of vision or ambition.

"Running throughout *Resonance* 107.3 FM was Peter Cusack's London Soundscape. Listeners were asked to send in or tell of their favourite London sounds. Surprisingly some of these included arcade machines and even traffic. From the vast response Big Ben was the favourite, but it was often the case that a collection of sounds was chosen. Who ever hears a sound on its own anyway? The recording of Deptford Creek was particularly memorable with the power station hum and the Thames brought together."

Tom Wallace writing about Resonance 107.3 FM radio, in Resonance magazine Vol 7, No 1, autumn 1998.

In spring 1999 it feels like the LMC is pausing to catch its breath after a year of extraordinary activity. It was hard to believe there was not a secret back room packed with full time workers somewhere, rather than the slender part time employment of two people. The Annual Festival, increasing steadily in international stature every year since 1992, finally moved out of Conway Hall to the South Bank Centre. Charlemagne Palestine and Pauline Oliveros visited from the States to great acclaim—their first appearances here in 25 and 17 years respectively. Vainio, Fennesz and Rehberg divided the audience with their fierce brand of Powerbook-driven electronica. Canny fundraising ensured that for the first time the Festival actually came in on budget.

Resonance 107.3 FM was the Collective's very own radio station, broadcasting for four weeks in June 1998 as part of John Peel's Meltdown Festival. This colossal and unique project, instigated by Phil England, was London's first station dedicated to Radio Art. Over 300 people took part in creating 600 hours of material, including live broadcasts, children's shows, drama and historical works of radio art from station archives around the world. Described by New York's Village Voice as "the best radio station in the world", *Resonance* FM was nominated for the Sony Station Of The Year Award. Provocative and often wild, this was the LMC at its most reckless and visionary.

Fifty programmes were specially made for

Left: Filament: Otomo & Sachiko 98
Middle: The Ex, Tom Cora and friends
Right: Sachiko M 99





Above Left: Keith Rowe 94
 Above Right: Alan Tomlinson and Sainkho Nemchylak 92
 Left: Paul Burwell & Steve Noble 93, Elliot Sharp & Zeena Parkins 93, Maggie Nicols & Pete Noble 93



Resonance FM at LMC Sound, the LMC's new studio in Brixton, which opened formally in November 1998. A carefully nurtured Lottery funding application has resulted in a fully equipped digital studio, which now bids in the market for commercial work and enables Collective members to devise recording projects there, or simply master their CDs. A small team of enthusiastic engineers is kept under control by project manager Mick Ritchie. As I write, the studio is in the midst of recording 30 hour-long shows dealing with London's alternative music scene, to be broadcast weekly in the New York area by WFMU station. A sharp learning curve for all involved, hopefully these shows will be taken up elsewhere. Also launched in November 1998 was the website <www.l-m-c.org.uk>. This is not only a source of information about concerts and current activities, but also a potential arena for creative work. The first live webcast by LMC musicians took place in February 1999, and the appointment of a website Artist In Residence is imminent.

"But again you see, John Edwards has a repertoire of sounds—a language which tries to subvert the instrument (double bass) in a way in which most classical players don't ever engage. If I am working with improvisers I don't want them to sound as if they improvising. This is the frustration about being a control freak. For instance, when John produces these fantastic sounds, I would rather place them exactly where I want them as opposed to where John might place them at the time. This is in no way a criticism of John's playing, his playing is wonderful. But it is the idea of placing a particular phrase and perhaps repeating it or putting it in a different area."

Sampling composer John Wall interviewed in *Resonance* Vol 6, No 2, July 1998.

While writing this piece I arranged to meet LMC administrator Phil England to find out what was currently on his mind. Not so much an interview, more a rumination over bowls of yogurt soup in a 24 hour Turkish café. England stressed the strategic thinking behind much LMC activity in the last seven years. Fighting against any tendency to parochialism, the strategy has been to raise the profile of the music to the highest visibility possible, as a way of benefiting the alternative musical community and its individual constituents. Rather than talking always to its own audience, the emphasis is on reaching out and placing LMC activities in a wider context of cultural debate. The way that improvisers work and collaborate locks in to many other cultural subgenres and tiny currents in society, and music must be part of that wider picture.

This strategy becomes all the more crucial given the chronic undervaluing and underfunding of this musical area. Inviting saxophonist Evan Parker onto a TV arts programme to react to a Jackson Pollock painting? It makes perfect sense to me, but it's unthinkable because Parker's entire musical genre is virtually invisible. Phil England points out how the Arts Council's own reports recommend exactly the type of musical activity promoted by the LMC, and how these reports are

then ignored by Arts Council panels. This music, so distinctively British in some ways, is supported by a fraction of the funding offered to contemporary composition or electronic music. Is it because it's a little more working class? Because it doesn't use as much sexy technology? Or simply that it deals too much in the provocative, the unexpected, the damn weird?

At a grassroots level the music carries on all year round in a gaggle of club spaces run by persistent promoters. A new LMC initiative aims to help out with publicity or PA equipment for these small but established clubs. Established, but not necessarily cosy—the last time I played one was at Hugh Metcalfe's long running Klinker, in an Islington pub. After some initial confusion (Hugh was convinced his van and PA had been stolen, having forgotten where he had parked it), the evening's mix of performance, poetry and music ran smoothly enough. I played a delicately coloured duet with violinist Susanna Ferrar, enjoyable chamber music if I say so myself. Then the final act was so ear-bleedingly loud I had to flee the room, and immediately a fight broke out: broken glass, a wet floor, a half-strangled promoter. As I stepped out into the cool night air half a dozen police rushed past me into the performing space. At least no one accuses the Klinker of opting for the easy life.

Thanks to Peter Cusack, Richard Sanderson, Sylvia Hallett, Paul Burwell, Ed Baxter, Phil England.

'tun yuh hand and meck fashion'

The Container Project

Mervin Jarman is co-ordinator of the Container project, an operation to take a mobile media centre to the streets of Jamaica. The Container is represented at: <http://www.container.access-it.org.uk>.

Jarman is also part of the London based Mongrel collective. He was interviewed by Matthew Fuller.

Matthew Fuller: Can you let us know what the Container project is? In simple, straightforward terms — what is the actual physical make-up of the project? The technology?

Mervin Jarman: The Container is an effort to take creative computer technology to ghetto people and deep rural communities in the Caribbean. The physical thing is made up of a shipping container on wheels converted into a mobile workstation/access unit. Transportable by truck, it'll be equipped with some 14 workstations and a server networked with local area network access and remote Internet connection. The Container will make its maiden voyage into the Caribbean where its first port of entry will be Jamaica. We are then hoping to move into Trinidad, St. Lucia, Monserrat, St. Vincent and a number of other Islands over a 5-year period. This of course is subject to negotiations...

As far as the people goes... We are aiming to engage people effected by various divides — be that political or social. It is true to say that a vast majority of the Island's underprivileged won't deliberately stay in that scenario if given a choice, and this is absolutely what this is about. It's about giving people incentives to feel good about themselves without being patronised.

Most of the people that will gain access to the Container are no different to you and I except that they have no significant reasons to interact with computers, as it is not presented to them in a meaningful way. This is to say in a way that it becomes relevant to their every day activities as determined by them.

Our main target group is therefore going to be some hardcore bad boys/girls. People from a non-digital low-educational background who have not been working with other types of artforms. Thus never had the time or incentive to investigate what computer technology can or can't do for them in a constructive and creative manner.

MF: What is going to happen in the Container? What might be going on on a typical day? What is its relationship to say the different music scenes in Jamaica? At the same time you're going to be pulling in digital art stuff from all over? It sounds like a crazy mix.

MJ: Crazy and mix-up it will be indeed — thing is as a youth growing up in Jamaica we had a kind of figure head in folklorist Mrs. Louise Bennet-Cobally affectionately Miss Lou — now Miss Lou always say fe her Auntie Rochi used to say 'tun yuh hand and meck fashion' which is the mentality responsible for Jamaica's creativity and dynamic energies. So yes indeed the Container shall see a very interesting explosion of creative flair, I can't give you any specifics but I can guarantee a dynamo of exciting activities.

The technology will emphasise interactive digital media plus some basic life skills thus the technology is about resourcing humans with communicative skills and tools.

My hope is to get more ghetto people to develop an appetite for using computers productively and if I can pass on the little that I have come to know to at least one person then I would be grateful.

MF: Why is it important for you personally to do this?

MJ: This is as significant to me now as football was in my early development. As a socially recreational activity football kept me out of many mischief and strife. It also expanded my social group taking me into places that would otherwise be inaccessible to the likes of me. The same is true for computer technology — especially interactive media where now I am celebrating in circles that's usually the domain of the reserved. Whilst there most people see me as unique, exotic, all kind of shit. Not to say I don't appreciate all the attention, but there is something inside that keeps reminding me that this is only happening because I got a chance and this chance was the privilege to work with some brilliant computer artists and technicians at a time when I had no knowledge or experience with computers. This also came about because, before that, Artec's programme at the time allowed me to investigate my own resolves based around topics that mattered to me.

So in a sense this is what I would like to achieve through the Container project: a lot more "socially acceptable" outcasts or outsiders. People who have a hell of a lot more to contribute to society than the misery that gets strapped to us.

MF: So, what kind of effect do you see the project having for other people?

MJ: Hopefully, in terms of the non-computer-educated participants, it will stimulate them into using computers as a tool to enhance their craft. For the learned digital artists and others that will participate in the project that this experience helps to rejuvenate their creative genes and influence them in a more communal outreaching approach to their work if this is not already the case.

MF: How is the Container being put together in terms of sourcing finances, material, computers, satellite time and all the many other things that you need to get the thing done?

MJ: This again is another milestone in the dynamism of the media that I now have the privilege to work in and the kind of people that I get to work with or meet as a result of my work. It is largely based on their good sense and generosity, where people have given time to help to administrate, donate equipment, and just to share ideas or contact details of people who they think might be able to help out.

So most of the efforts so far have been from donations of some sort or another. However, we are still hopeful that we will be able to attract some kind of sponsorship from business or anyone else. The container and the shipping costs have been donated by JP Fruit Distributors, and various amount of time and effort by a group of people already too numerous to mention in this interview.

For all the other things, we are still seeking sponsorship commitments from companies or other kinds of organisation that will be offered advertising profile as a result of their participa-

tion.

MF: What kind of kit do you need?

MJ: Along with the kit for use in the actual container we are asking people, companies, organisations etc. to donate material. A basic unit should be a PC with 166 Mhz Pentium processor, 32 MB memory and 15" monitor capable of 800 x 600 pixels — 16 bit colour. Or a Performa Mac/ Power Mac with similar capabilities with a baseline modem speed of 28.8kbps connectability. These computers along with peripherals like printers and scanners will be given to community groups that have participated in the Container project on its tours. These will provide connection to the Container project team and the World Wide Web and allow the community to continue to push things after the Container has left a site. If anyone has anything like this, or access to resources we'd love to hear from them!

We are also advocating for sponsored connection for public access and are focussing on both local and international telecommunications companies to assist us in this quest. Satellite time, or other ways of connecting to the net, is going to be important.

MF: What should people do if they can support the Container with resources?

MJ: Get in contact with me immediately <mervin@mongrel.org.uk> or any one you know that is affiliated with the project.

MF: What is the situation with regard to the net in Jamaica? Any good initiatives worth checking out? Are there any organisations or groups of people that you will specifically be collaborating with?

MJ: In Jamaica there is a number of interesting developments taking place around the media however many of these take a kind of corporate approach to their initiative and that is primarily because these users/ developers are from uptown so that's what is accepted by their peers. But by all means — type Jamaica into any search engine and you will be bombarded with a catalyst of interesting sites.

MF: This is a very informal model of going about getting it done. It's a different way of going about things than most people would try in say, the UK and the rest of Europe where you'd get jumped on by x-amount of bureaucracy before things could get moving. On first hearing, the idea of just getting on and doing something this major, sounds almost unfeasible. Is Jamaica any different?

MJ: When we start talking bureaucracy, in Jamaica it's no different from anywhere in the world. The thing is what would seem normal time span for as huge a land as Europe or even the US seems like eternity to the average man in the street and we are not known for our patience. My old lady used to say 'always take the bull by the horn' — so when you see the need to do certain things you just have to go out and do it.

Comic and Zine reviews

Mark Pawson

Pick of the bunch this time around is the long awaited new issue of Detroit's **Motorbooty** modestly subtitled 'The Better Magazine'. Imagine a cross between *Weirdo* Comic and *Grand Royal* magazine with articles like a 'What to do when good guys join bad bands'



advice column and the something to offend everyone '100 Worst Albums of the 20th Century Chart'. The Beastie Boys were, shall we say, very heavily influenced by *Motorbooty* when assembling their own magazine... Highlight of *Motorbooty* #9—the *Graphic Violence Issue* is editor Mark Dancey's comic strip about the Insane Clown Posse (a band). These fellow Detroit residents revealed themselves to be even stupider than their name implies when they took exception to a mildly satirical *Dancey* comic strip about them that appeared in SPIN magazine, and instigated a hate campaign against him, and the publisher, thus generously providing *Dancey* with material for a much more critical follow-up comic. Both are reproduced here, and you'll learn much more than anyone, anywhere needs or wants to know about the Insane Clown Posse...

Other *Dancey* highlights this issue are a merciless set of 'Unoriginal Gangsta Trading Cards'—efficiently demolishing every White Rapper you've ever heard of and a few more besides. The story of the 'Louvin Brothers'—genuine mandolin-smashing hellraisers, in the 'Illustrated History of Pants' centrespread is an inspired mix of ridiculous trousers and social history, which deserves to be printed as a full-size poster. Almost-believable is the piece on the punkrock gig re-enactment scene, organised along the lines of Civil War re-enactment Societies, authentically complete

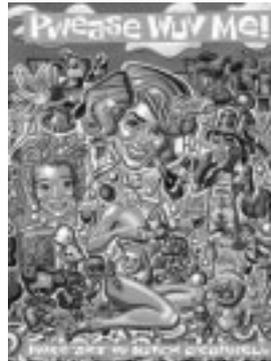
with police confiscating compact discs and mobile phones!—now all 5,000 people who claim to have attended seminal gigs that took place in 200-capacity rock-'n-roll toilets can be there!

Somehow *Motorbooty* and its hometown of Detroit have escaped the grip of Spice Girl Fever, which on the evidence of **Spice Capades** seems to have affected the rest of America! In this totally unauthorised 48-pager, a plethora of comic artists and zinesters explore their hideous fascinations with the all-conquering Fab Four (or Five) and provide their own reinterpretations of the Girl Power message. The rather obvious monster/sci-fi stories are as unnecessary as *Spice World—the Movie*. With such strong material to start with, the best comics are the true-life ones, grown men desperately trailing round branches of Toys'R'Us trying in vain to find a Scary Spice to complete their sets of Spice Girls Dolls, and New York Punk scene vet Peter Bagge taking his daughter and a car-load of screaming prepubescent spice-alikes to a Spice Girls stadium concert, and thoroughly enjoying every minute of it!

For a glimpse of Comics' History check out a few **EC Comics** titles. The complete reprint series of seminal 1950's EC (Entertaining Comics) Comics have been coming out steadily over the last few years, and are still as fresh and exciting as they must have been when they were originally published. I would have loved to have my mind warped by these when I was a kid! Full of time-machines, spaceships and gooey slime-oozing tentacled alien invaders, **Weird Science** seems to contain the plot-line of every Sci-Fi film ever made. The magnificently grisly EC horror titles, **Tales From the Crypt** and **The Vault of Horror** were cited as inducing



moral panic, leading directly to the introduction of an over-censorious Comics Code in the USA. Undaunted, EC sprang back with a whole library of 'New Direction' titles; Aces High, **Valor**, Piracy and Tales designed to carry an Impact. Particularly worth looking out for currently are **Psychoanalysis** and **M.D. (Medical Drama)**—two totally inspired original series which, surprisingly, only survived for a few months. Nowadays the EC formula of obligatory surprise twists and shock endings feels dated and gets predictable after a couple of issues, but I'm sure I would have been a total EC fan if I'd ever seen these comics as a kid. Maybe I should buy extra copies to hand out to schoolkids.



Pwease Wuv Me—More 'Art' of **Mitch O'Connell**, is the second collection of Mitch O'Connell's hyper-kitsch Paintings, Illustrations, Comics and Tattoo designs. M O'C is quite obviously an Image Junkie in the advanced stages of addiction with an insatiable appetite for images of Betty Page, Tiki God Statues, Big-eyed Waif Kid paintings, Cheesecake Pin-ups, 60s and 70s Baby Boomer toys, Mad Magazine, Wacky Packages bubblegum cards, Hippie memorabilia, Beatnik Poodles and just

about every other manifestation of kitschy, cheesy pop culture forgotten by the rest of society. Taking this over-sugared array of source material M O'C lusciously redraws it into a multi-layered fruit-cocktail, trifle-like designs crammed full of bright rich goodies, and best served up in small portions, its all just so darn pretty to look at! Self published, I can't help thinking that this exhausting to look at visual feast could just as well have been published by Dover Books as one of their clipart collections.

In James Kochalka's **Quit Your Job**, Magic Boy, his goofy elf-slacker alter-ego character trips up in the snow and misses his bus to work. Whilst fretting that he'll be in trouble for missing work he finds a magic ring in the snow. His head reeling with thoughts of what he can use the ring for, Magic Boy enjoys a day of unexpected freedom from work and fun in the snow, never actually getting round to using the ring's powers. This whimsical story is drawn in Kochalka's loose relaxed style, using large panels mostly taken up with giant snowflakes. Everything's back to normal by teatime, Magic Boy realises he's happy enough without needing a magic ring, and returns home to find an answerphone message from his boss telling him to take the day off work anyway!

Also currently available from the prolific J Kochalka are *Monica's Story* (yes that Monica) and various issues of *James Kochalka Superstar Comics*.



Japanize is a good old fashioned A5 photocopied comic, put out by Toko whilst she's been living in the UK, containing her impressions in a distinctive kid-die-manga style of such quaint British activities as chanting along whilst watching the Jerry Springer show, taking worthless pieces of junk along to the Antiques Roadshow and eating bread and (baked) beans! *The Hayashi Corporation* is a loopy meandering tale of a multi-ten-



tailed dutch-husband supplying business and there's some traditional manga-style sex and violence thrown in as well, plus a cookery page. *Japanize* issues 1-4 seemed to come out at weekly intervals, but Toko's visa has run out and she'll have to return to Japan, so passport-sized *Japanize* #4 may be the last.



Dishwasher ...one guy...fifty states...lots of dishes...plenty of time...

Dishwasher Pete's chosen job allows him the freedom to roam around the USA in the knowledge that wherever he fancies staying for a couple of weeks he can easily find a job. In *Dishwasher* issues 14 & 15 Pete's long term quest to wash dishes in each of the 50 American States takes him to Louisiana and New York City together with a detour working on an Oilrig. We also get his account of 'appearing' on the Late Show with David Letterman, 'appearing' because media-shy Pete wasn't in the slightest bit interested in being on television so he obligingly let a friend go along instead, as a Warhol-style stand-in! Dishwasher also has plenty of dishwasher related press clippings, cartoons, book extracts and movie reviews, with a particular focus on dishwashing in literature and Labour Activism among Dishwashers, past and present.

Can't find a decent cravat anywhere these days? Want to catch up on all the latest styles in cable-knit sleeveless pullovers



Contacts

Motorbooty , £4.50
Available from Tower Records
/Disinfotainment
www.motorbooty.com

Spice Capades , Fantagraphics,
£3.75
Available from Comic shops
www.fantagraphics.com

EC Comics , various titles
Available from Comic shops
www.gemstonepub.com

Pwease Wuv Me , £12.95
Available from Disinfotainment
www.mitchoconnell.com

Quit Your Job , \$6.95
Alternative Press
www.indyworld.com/altpress

Japanize , £1.50
Probably available from GOSH
comics, Gt Russell St, London,
WC1
or c/o 37 Stephendale Rd,
Fulham, London SW6 2LT

Dishwasher
Available from Disinfotainment
or \$2.50 inc p/p from
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The Wilson plots

Robin Ramsay

The 'Wilson plots' is a portmanteau term for a collection of fragments of knowledge about intelligence operations against the Labour governments of Harold Wilson and a great many other people and organisations. 'The Wilson plots' are about a good deal more than Harold Wilson and his governments.

The British state —and the secret state —had never trusted the British left and had always worked to undermine it. The Attlee government came out of the war-time coalition and was considered mostly safe and reliable by the state: and by safe and reliable I mean it did not seek to challenge either the power of the state nor the assumptions about the importance of finance capital, the British empire and Britain's role as world power which underpinned it.

Harold Wilson, a most conservative man, made one large mistake while a young man as far as the state was concerned: he was not sufficiently anti-Soviet. During the 1940s and 50s, while many of his Labour colleagues were accepting freebies from the Americans and going to the United States for nice holidays, Wilson was travelling east fixing trade deals with the Soviet Union. He was perceived by the secret state —by some sections of the secret state, notably but not exclusively, sections of MI5 —to be someone who, in the words of the General Sir Walter Walker, 'digs with the wrong foot'.

In short, Wilson was perceived by some to be a dangerous lefty and his arrival as leader of the Labour Party was thought by some of the professionally paranoid Cold Warriors in the British and American secret states to be deeply suspicious. Wilson had been to the Soviet Union many times: was he a KGB agent, they wondered? Had he been entrapped and blackmailed?

Asking that question was enough for MI5 to begin obsessively investigating Wilson and his colleagues and friends. Nothing was found. But to the professional paranoids, nothing found simply suggested it was better hidden than they first thought. And so they carried on. Meanwhile, the left in Britain was on the rise: trade unions got more powerful. The professional paranoids, noting the influence of the Communist Party of Great Britain in some trade unions, began to see the shift leftwards in the UK in the sixties and early 1970s as somehow under Soviet control. In 1974 Conservative Prime Minister Heath had his fateful show-down with the miners union —and lost —and the Tory right and their friends in the secret state began a series of operations to prevent what they believed —or pretended to believe —was an imminent left revolution in Britain. Some of these operations were done by the secret state; some by people close to but not in the secret state. Bits of the CIA also shared this view and got involved. The South African intelligence service (BOSS) was running parallel operations against Labour and Liberal politicians it perceived as South Africa's enemies, notably the Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe and the then leader of the Young Liberals, now the Labour MP, Peter Hain. It is worth noting here that similar operations were being run in this period against mild, reformist, leftish parties in New Zealand, Australia, Germany, in Canada against the Quebec separatists, and, most famously, in Chile.

This extraordinarily complex period of British history saw covert operations of one sort or another involving serving or former personnel from MI5, MI6, the CIA, Ministry of Defence and the Information Research Department, plus assets in the media and the trade unions, plus allies in the Conservative Party and the City. That it tends to

get summarised as 'MI5 plots against Wilson' is due to the way the information about these areas emerged in 1986-88, through former Army Information Officer, Colin Wallace, and the former MI5 officer, Peter Wright. They both talked about MI5 as the source of plotting against Wilson (though Wallace's allegations were much wider than that) and for much of the left-liberal media and politicians in this country this fitted straight into their vague understanding of the intelligence services and British domestic history which told them that the bad guys were MI5. By the time we had educated ourselves sufficiently to understand what Wallace and Wright were saying, the perception —the false perception —that the story was just MI5 plotting against the Labour government had been established.

The Pencourt Investigation

It is largely now forgotten that the first attempt to get 'the Wilson plots' story going was made by Wilson himself.

Wilson was aware of the various attempts to get the media to run smear stories about him and his circle, and aware of the stream of burglaries afflicting himself, his personal staff and other Labour Party figures in the 1974-76 period. But he chose to do nothing in public while he was in office. In private he tried to get the Cabinet Secretary, Sir John Hunt, to do something, though quite what Hunt did is still unknown.

It seems clear now that Wilson did nothing publicly for four reasons. The first was that he didn't have anything substantial to go on —merely suspicions and a lot of little wispy bits and pieces of rumours and tip-offs. The second reason for his inaction was his distrust of MI5. Had Wilson instructed Whitehall to do an inquiry, it would have turned to MI5; and it was MI5 that Wilson and his personal secretary, Marcia Williams, suspected of being at the root of their troubles. The third reason Wilson did nothing while in office was his knowledge in 1974 when he won the election, that he would only serve two more years and quit. Wilson, we now know, was afraid of Alzheimers' disease: it had afflicted his father and he told his inner circle in 1974 that he was going to resign in 1976 when he was 60. In 1975/6 ensuring a smooth hand-over of power to his successor —and Labour was a minority government, don't forget —was a much greater priority than finding out who was behind the burglaries of his offices and the rumours about him. Wilson was a loyal member of the Labour Party to whom he owed everything. He didn't want to make bad publicity for the party —and his successor. And the fourth reason Wilson did nothing was his memory of the previous time he had tried. In his first term in office, encouraged by George Wigg MP, he had tried taking on the Whitehall security establishment in the so-called D-notice Affair —and had got his fingers badly burned.

As far as we know Wilson had very little real, concrete information about what was going on in 1976 when he retired. He knew that he and his circle were being repeatedly burgled. He had watched the campaign being run against Jeremy Thorpe, the leader of the Liberal Party, by BOSS, and that is why he made his first public remarks not about MI5, the objects of his real suspicions, but about BOSS. But those comments produced all the negative reactions he feared —not surprisingly, since he had almost no evidence —and he let it drop until he resigned.

He then waited a couple of months and contacted two journalists, Barry Penrose and Roger

Courtour (who became mockingly titled 'Pencourt') gave them the little he had and hoped for the best. But without any decent leads into the MI5 material, Pencourt stumbled —or were led: it isn't clear which —into the story being run by BOSS of Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe and his brief affair with Norman Scott —not the story of MI5's campaign against Wilson. There was a brief flurry of interest by the media, notably by the Observer which had paid a lot of money for the serialisation rights to the Pencourt book, but nothing happened and the story disappeared. Wilson tried to get his successor James Callaghan to do something but Callaghan declined.

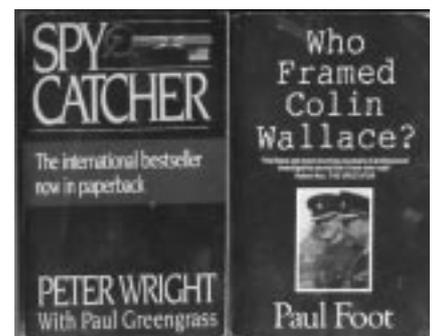
The story disappeared for two reasons. The only journalists or politicians in the late 1970s who knew anything about the secret state were currently or formerly employed by the secret state or were mouthpieces for it. There was no investigative journalism in 1978 in the UK worth mentioning; there were no former British intelligence officers to show journalists the way; there were no whistle-blowers, no renegades. There were no courses being taught in universities. There were almost no books to read. In 1978 the British secret state was, really was, still secret.

After the failure of the Pencourt investigation nothing happened for five years. Harold Wilson became a Lord, presided over a long inquiry into the City of London which was consigned to the recycle bin as soon as it was published, and duly developed Alzheimers' as he suspected he would. His personal assistant for 30 years, Marcia Williams, became Lady Faulkender and has said nothing of consequence since. Barry Penrose and Roger Courtour made a lot of money. Penrose was last seen working for the Express, telling lies for the British state about Northern Ireland. Courtour is in the BBC somewhere.

Colin Wallace & Peter Wright

By 1979 the extraordinary events of the 1974-76 period —events which included The Times seriously discussing the right conditions for a military coup in the UK, and a considerable chunk of the British establishment wondering if the Prime Minister was a KGB agent —had just slipped by, unexamined. In came Mrs Thatcher with her GCSE understanding of economics and proceeded to wreck the British economy, creating 2 million unemployed in 18 months, and the entire story —or group of stories we know as the Wilson plots —simply ceased to be of interest to all but a handful of people.

One of that handful was Colin Wallace, who in 1980 began a ten year sentence for a manslaughter he didn't commit. Wallace was interested in the Wilson plots story because he had not only been a minor participant in the plots, and had knowledge of other areas of secret activities, he





Wallace had the job he said he did in Northern Ireland. Wallace claimed to have had access to secret intelligence material in his capacity as a psy-ops officer for the British Army. Since the psy-ops/ war unit was officially deniable, i.e. officially didn't exist, the MOD line was that Wallace was simply a press officer —his official, public role — and the rest was fantasies. We were trying to establish the veracity not only of his claims about events but also his claims about his own CV.

The jumping log book

Wallace was a sky-diving enthusiast and eventually the Army in Northern Ireland began including sky-diving in its psychological operations. Wallace formed a free-fall team which did displays all over Northern Ireland and was used to try to create positive feelings about the Army —basic hearts and minds stuff. Wallace's speciality was descending dressed as Santa Claus and giving out presents to kids. Sky-diving in this country is very tightly controlled: every jump is recorded by the British Parachuting Association. As you do more jumps you get differing kinds of licenses: beginners, intermediate, advanced. Wallace had an advanced, 'D' license —or so he said.

In the summer of 1987 rumours began spreading through this little group of journalists that Wallace's claims to have been a sky-diver were a fake. He was a fantasist, a Walter Mitty. These rumours arrived at Channel Four News via an old colleague of Wallace's who knew an ITN journalist. The rumours seemed inexplicable at first: we had lots of pictures of Wallace sky-diving with and without his Santa Claus outfit. But when I finally rang the British Parachuting Association to check their file on Wallace I found they had no record of him. Eventually Paul Foot, also working on the story, discovered that a duplicate set of records were held by the international parachuting body and Wallace's records were there, confirming that he was what he said he was —as far as sky-diving went, anyway. Undaunted by this, a journalist now with the BBC called John Ware, still ran the 'Wallace-is-a-fake' parachuting story some months later in a double page spread in the Independent smearing Wallace and Fred Holroyd.

The point here is, we can now work out some of what this MOD-MI5 operation against Wallace consisted of. First, they picked one area of Wallace's CV, his parachuting, and set out to discredit him with it. If they could show he was lying here, they believed, journalists would not believe his other claims. They burgled his house and stole his jumping log book; they burgled the British Parachuting Association and removed his file, substituting a fake file for the one with his number on it. Then they began spreading the word through their press contacts that Wallace was a fraud, knowing that Wallace didn't have his jumping log and knowing that —eventually —some journalist would ring the British Parachuting Association

knew he was in prison to stop him talking about them. The other interested party was the former MI5 officer, Peter Wright. He had also been a participant in the plots and had also been maltreated by his erstwhile employers in the secret state. Not framed and imprisoned like Wallace, but denied a decent pension on a technicality after a lifetime's service to the state.

Here is one of the outstanding lessons of this episode. The British secret state is an astonishingly inept employer of people. None of those who became well known whistle blowers in the 1980s and 90s, Wright and Wallace, John Stalker, Captain Fred Holroyd, Cathy Massiter, David Shayler and Richard Tomlinson wanted to be whistle-blowers. They were converted into whistle-blowers by the stupidity of their employers in the state. Wallace, Holroyd and Wright, for example, were loyal Queen and Country men to a fault, right-wingers through and through. Unfortunately, our secret state has only one response to internal dissent or the possibility of public revelation of its own errors: smash, crush, smear, destroy, frame, cover-up and lie. The secret state perceives itself to be defending the national interest and in the national interest anything is permitted.

In prison in the 1980s Colin Wallace began writing letters about his wrongful conviction and accounts of his experiences working for the British Army's psychological warfare operation in Northern Ireland. In that capacity he had witnessed some of MI5's attempts to smear Wilson and other politicians as communists, drug-takers, homosexuals etc. The major media took no notice. Duncan Campbell at the New Statesman, did take notice but had an enormous amount on his agenda and did nothing. So Wallace ended up working with me instead.

Despite Wallace's allegations made while in prison and published by me in *Lobster* and distributed all over the British media in the months preceding his release from prison, the media took almost no notice. They only sat up and paid attention when the first rumours about a book being published in Australia by a former MI5 officer called Peter Wright began circulating in the UK. One nut-case talking about the Wilson plots could be ignored; two, apparently, could not.

We now know, from a senior civil servant called Clive Ponting —another whistle-blower in the 1980s —that in the months before Wallace's release from prison, the Ministry of Defence set up a committee, with MI5, to deal with him. It is worth noting here that this committee did not simply order his murder. Outside Northern Ireland our secret state seems to kill people very rarely. But it is also worth noting that the committee was set up to pervert the course of justice. Precisely what this committee did is not known, but its general remit was to discredit Wallace and so discredit his allegations. Two of its operations were detected and they show what can be done with unaccountable power.

By mid 1987 despite the huge amount of space devoted to the allegations filtered back from Australia from the Peter Wright book, *Spycatcher*, there were only three groups of journalists actually trying to research the complex tales Wallace told: Channel Four News, where I was briefly; David Leigh and Paul Lashmar at the *Observer*; and, a bit later, Paul Foot at the *Mirror*. Other journalists dropped in and out, did odd stories, but only those three groups were seriously at it. We all had the same basic problem: Wallace had been described as a 'Walter Mitty' by Ministry of Defence briefings during his trial in 1980 and the Ministry of Defence was simply denying that

and ask about his record. Finding nothing, because his file had been removed, such a journalist would consider the allegation that he was a fantasist proven and would thus dismiss him as the 'Walter Mitty' figure described at his trial. This operation was certainly run at Channel Four News and John Ware, then working for the BBC. In effect, the MOD tried to convert Wallace into the 'Walter Mitty' they said he was. Unfortunately for the MOD, Paul Foot was a better journalist than that and found the duplicate set. Without Foot we would have been struggling to rebut the Wallace-is-a-fantasist line. Another disinformation project about Wallace was fed through Professor Paul Wilkinson, then at Aberdeen University. A former RAF officer, Wilkinson was ITN's official consultant on terrorism. Somebody in the MOD or MI5 fed him some material about Wallace which accused him of trying to get a man in Northern Ireland killed so he —Wallace —could have the man's wife. This smear story had been created just before Wallace left Northern Ireland —presumably in case they ever needed to get at Wallace. Wilkinson wrote a letter, passing this derogatory material on to ITN. Fortunately, by this point, Channel Four News' management were pretty sure Wallace was telling the truth and showed us journalists Wilkinson's letter. The allegations it contained were refutable, and Wallace wrote to the University authorities. Wilkinson was reprimanded and apologised and lost his job as ITN's consultant on terrorism.

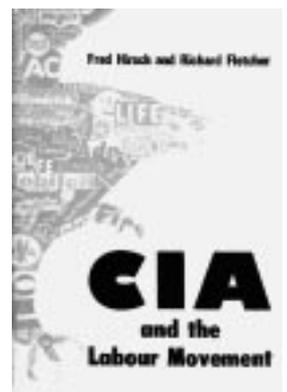
The point here is this: Wallace had already been framed for manslaughter and convicted in a rigged trial. Having failed to shut Wallace up with six years of imprisonment, the secret state then set about discrediting him. If you could get to the people on the MOD/MI5 committee which planned this and asked them why they were doing it, they would simply say, it was in the national interest to prevent Wallace talking. In the minds of the secret state the national interest —as defined by them —overrides the competing claims of justice and democracy.

Politicians and the Secret State

I offer these anecdotes by way of introduction to some comments on the relationship between the media, politicians and what we might call historical truth. Many people vaguely assume, as I did at the beginning of the Wallace affair, that politicians and journalists are concerned with 'the truth'. This simply isn't the case.

Most journalists —at least 99% of those I have met —are interested first in their careers, and aims subsidiary to that, such as getting a story or doing better

Colin Wallace in Northern Ireland: image from Paul Foot's book.



Above: MI5 HQ
Below: MI6 HQ



than their rivals, or having a good time or padding their expenses. Journalist are just people doing a job. They have mortgages and families to support; and theirs is now a very insecure business. All the unions in the media were smashed in the past 15 years. Contracts are short. You can be fired on the spot.

Politicians, most of them, are simply interested in power or aims subsidiary to that, such as getting re-elected, getting re-elected; pleasing the whips to get promotion; or simply getting press coverage. The pursuit of the truth is not on the agenda of most politicians; the pursuit of the truth, when it means going against prevailing media opinion, or the wishes of their party's leaders, or the wishes of the state, is on the agenda of a handful. This is particularly true of stories in the field of intelligence and security policy. Nothing makes MPs more nervous than security and intelligence issues.

In the first place, if they've got half a brain, MPs simply won't go near subjects about which they are ignorant—which is sensible enough. And to my knowledge other than those who have worked for, or have been close to, the security and intelligence services, there are no MPs who have a decent knowledge of this field. Not even Tam Dalyell. In the second place, MPs all have a healthy respect for the damage to careers tangling with the spooks can inflict. You might think that MPs then have a massive vested interest in bringing the security and intelligence services under their control. But this hasn't happened yet and, in my view, short of some massive, earth-shaking scandal, never will.

In the House of Commons in 1987 we got some help from Ken Livingstone, Tam Dalyell and Dale Campbell-Savours. These days Dalyell is still at it, as is Norman Baker a Lib-Dem MP, a new member of the so-called awkward squad. Livingstone has moved onto other areas and Campbell-Savours has become a Blair loyalist. The British political and media systems are not equipped to deal with major issues concerning the behaviour of the secret state. In the political arena the Intelligence and Security Committee setup under the Tories is a joke, without investigative powers. But it is a joke useful to the secret state. When the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee was conducting hearings into the Sierra Leone affair last year it asked for an interview with the head of MI6. Foreign Secretary Robin Cook denied them access on the grounds that that the security and Intelligence Committee was the appropriate forum for such questions. MPs are still unable to ask questions about the Security and Intelligence services: the House of Commons Clerks simply will not accept them. The secret state is still, officially, not accountable to Parliament. At its heart, the Wilson plots story was the attempt by a handful of people to persuade the

major print and broadcast media and parliament that their view of the British political universe was false. I was writing articles which implied: you—the media, the politicians—do not know what you are talking about: the world isn't the way you say it is. At the beginning, before the major media took any real interest in the Wallace story, this was a peculiarly difficult message to sell. Who was I to tell experienced journalists they didn't know what was what? I was on the dole, living in the sticks, in Hull, producing a magazine with a tiny circulation. In the weeks before Wallace came out of prison I had circulated a great deal of material to the major media about Wallace, his case and his explosive allegations. I got only one response, from a journalist at Newsnight. As big-time journalists are prone to do, he said, don't tell me over the phone, come down to London. So down I went to Newsnight's office. It was my first exposure to the major media. I delivered the spiel and the journalist was interested and said he would take a camera crew down to the prison to interview Wallace when he got out.

I had been told by Wallace that among the visitors to his secret psy-ops unit, Information Policy, in Northern Ireland, had been Alan Protheroe, who at the time of my Newsnight visit, was Assistant Director General of the BBC. Nicknamed 'the Colonel' in the BBC, Protheroe was, and may still be, a part-time soldier-cum-intelligence officer, specialising in military-media relations.

But unlike the journalists I had been talking to up to that point, Protheroe knew who Wallace was and what the Information Policy unit had been doing in Northern Ireland. To Newsnight I therefore said something like this: 'Protheroe's a spook; you'll have to watch him. He'll try and block anything you do with Wallace in it.' 'Really, old boy,' said the BBC people I was talking to, 'it isn't like that in the BBC'.

Their response was comical, really. It was then only just over a year since there had been several weeks of intense media interest in the revelation that the BBC actually had its own in-house MI5 office vetting BBC employees (still there, as far as I know)—prima facie evidence that, au contraire, the BBC was exactly 'like that'.

The Newsnight journalist, Julian O'Hallorhan, interviewed Wallace the day he came out of prison and then had his piece yanked out of a programme at the very last minute. I was actually watching Newsnight at the time and saw the confusion in the studio as the running order was rejigged while they were on air. We subsequently heard that Protheroe had indeed blocked the Wallace interview, and when asked, the BBC denied that they had ever interviewed Wallace. (Paul Foot has seen a bootleg of the film—which didn't exist.) Protheroe's action in blocking the Wallace interview was reported four months later in the Sunday Times and has been confirmed since by a senior Newsnight staffer who has now left the BBC.

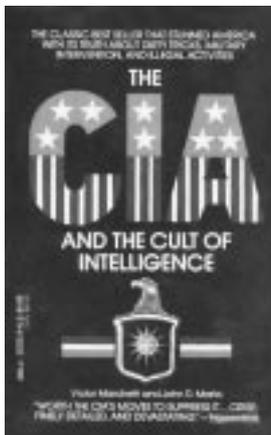
Thirteen years later, have things improved? Yes and no. The media is potentially more difficult to manage for the state than it used to be. The Ministry of Defence employs 150 press officers to spin-doctor the media and even MI6 has a media department whose job it is to wine and dine journalists and editors to get the departmental line across. The days when a quiet word in the ear of a handful of editors would ensure a media blackout are gone. And there is a good deal more information available than there was in 1986—if journalists could be bothered to read it—which, mostly, they can't. But the fundamental attitudes of the media towards the state and secret state remain the same as far as I am aware. British journalists—and, more importantly—British editors, do not see themselves in an adversarial relationship with the state and secret state. If the secret state says 'national security' to them, most journalists and virtually all editors will still back away. And in some ways the situation today is even worse than

it was then. Investigative journalism is expensive, offers no guarantee of publishable articles, or broadcastable TV programmes, and there is less of it now than there was then. There has been a visible dumbing-down of the few TV documentary series, such as World inAction, into consumerism programmes. Not counting the journalists who are simply mouthpieces for state, who go under the titles of diplomatic or defence correspondents, there is currently only one journalist in the whole of Britain who is seriously interested in the intelligence and security field, and that's Paul Lashmar at the Independent.

In 1990, I think it was, a resolution of mine, became the North Hull Labour Party's conference resolution. It called for a full-scale public inquiry into Northern Ireland, the dirty war there, the Wallace affair and the Wilson plots; it called for the introduction of a system of real parliamentary accountability for the secret state. The resolution went to the Labour Party conference where it was passed without opposition. As such, according to the rules of the Party, it became party policy. Of course nothing happened, the whole thing has been forgotten and we are where we were in 1986 before the Wilson plots story got going. Short of a bug being found in Tony and Cherie Blair's bedroom with 'please return to MI5' stamped on it, New Labour is not likely to challenge the secret state—and maybe not even then.

Although Britain is a democracy in some senses, the 'will of the people' has never been extended to cover the key areas of interest to a state which was developed to run and service an empire. Defence, foreign policy, security and intelligence policy—in none of these areas can MPs or their constituents have access to official information or have any input into policy. During both World Wars the state co-opted the mass media of the day for its propaganda; and this continued to some extent after the war in the Cold War with the Soviet bloc when large chunks of the media were co-opted again to run anti-Soviet propaganda—this is what is described in the new Paul Lashmar book about the Information Research Department; and is presumably the reason it has been so widely ignored.

At the end of the day, as the cliché has it, its down to the politicians. As long as the politicians remain content not to have any influence over foreign and defence affairs—and the intelligence agencies which service them—the media will remain relatively impotent and the subject will remain off the agenda. And, unfortunately, this present intake of Labour MPs shows every sign of being at least as supine before the state as those who came before it.



The British political and media systems are not equipped to deal with major issues concerning the behaviour of the secret state.

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Dragster and drag queens, beatification and beating off Simon Herbert

There was a brief period at the beginning of the Nineties in the United States, partially fuelled by a presidential election contest desperately looking for defining issues, when the matter of whether taxpayers monies should be used to support public artworks that offended (some) mainstream sensibilities was whipped up into a coast to coast media circus by a number of high profile conservatives, including Senator Jesse Helms and Reverend Don Wildmon of the American Family Association. As George Bush discovered to his chagrin, it was the economy, stupid, that was foremost in voter's minds, and not whether photographers displaying self-portraits of rectally challenged whips or performance artists covering themselves in chocolate and alfalfa constituted a capital offense. Nevertheless, for a short period the marginal and the mainstream found themselves in a strange and frantic arm lock, a magnified coalescence of all the mutual distrusts and loathings that continue to bubble through the two polarised camps. Performance artists took to the streets and pleaded their case, stigmata arrayed against stigma, preaching words of compassion, whilst crazed southern gentlemen strode marbled floors, theatrically ripping up 'obscene' photographs and casting them to the four corners of the senate. It was the Sixties Lite; protestors encamped outside the gates of power, bloated incumbents sending out the attack dogs, both parties fighting for the spiritual futures and bodily fluids of the people.

Steven Durland, then editor of High Performance (based on the West Coast of the United States), neatly summed up both the passion and the farce of the period in his observation that "the performance artists had become the evangelists, and the evangelists had become the performance artists." It was a typical observation, characteristic of a consistent editorial style during the twenty year run of High Performance (from the late Seventies to the late Nineties) that usually cut to the heart of serious issues whilst retaining a sly objective distance; an analysis of the theatre of the absurd with a concomitant sense of absurdity. High Performance was a revolutionary magazine in a number of ways. It embodied founder Linda Frye Burnham's commitment to the

political and philosophical underpinnings of the counter-culture, a mapping of guerrilla activity that erupted from, and then fed back into, the cultural fractures of the Sixties onwards. Each issue covered as wide a range of activities as could fall under the rubric of experimental art, mixing review and information sections with extended essays on thematic or social concerns of the time. It was utterly unique as a magazine; as an organ of analysis and advocacy for the kind of marginal art that was not normally covered, its priorities shifted over the years, both as a matter of editorial imperative and as a nod to the chameleon nature of its core constituency.

In the introduction to "The Citizen Artist —An Anthology from High Performance Magazine 1978-1998" Durland

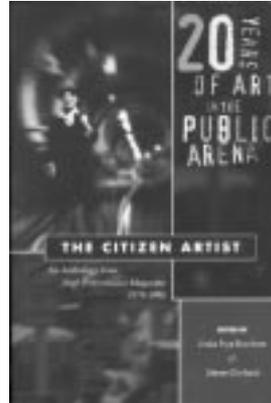
sums up the magazine's mission statement as follows:

"Throughout its twenty year history High Performance magazine has been a journalistic home for new, unrecognized and innovative work in the arts. From its beginnings in performance art to its last few years covering community-based art, the magazine maintained a steady focus on art that was serious in its personal artistic intent and underappreciated in public perception... We considered our editorial approach to be a useful foundation for, and precursor to, the development of critical discussion around the art we covered. And when the form such as performance art became validated to the point of being part of the critical discourse, it was time for us to look in new directions."

His conclusion that "Our editorial journey took us down some roads that later became freeways, and some roads that are now overgrown with weeds", and that the cover of the first issue featured artist Suzanne Lacey sitting on a dragster, sums up the metaphorical tone of this anthology. The majority of artists included demonstrate the kind of hope that lies at the heart of that most American of myths: the road movie. Most have worked, or are working, in a US context —whether this be within the diaspora of race or the advocacy of health issues —and, although the individual contexts may be radically different, they share the commonality of a personal artistic quest.

The title "The Citizen Artist", with its suggestions of responsibility and a causality between personal and communal activity, is both provocative and contentious. After all, much art activity that has come from the live art and multi-disciplinary arena has not exactly been fuelled by notions of benign participation or the democratisation of creative processes. The destructive urge —or at the very least a kind of interrogative nihilism — has been referenced in critical analyses of the field almost as a matter of course. The controversial live works of Chris Burden, which interrogated aspects of obligation by the creation of direct risk, or the grotesque debasements of Paul McCarthy, which were both regularly covered at length in the pages of High Performance, are significantly absent from this collection. However, any fears that "The Citizen Artist" is a form of selective cultural neutering are allayed by a number of factors. Firstly, as Durland points out "...we realised that there was no one anthology that could both reflect the history of the magazine and at the same time exist as a coherent book. So we settled for the fact that this is an anthology... not the anthology from High Performance". Secondly, there is already a profusion of reference books on the viscerally subversive aspects of live art (such as the excellent series of Re/Search publications which also emanates from the West Coast).

Frye Burnham and Durland's criteria for reprinting essays seems to have been motivated by a desire to address questions of artistic production that are far more interesting than retreading the familiar paths that chart ad nauseum the schism between the provocative art guerrilla and a reactionary mainstream. The real issue, whether voiced explicitly or hinted at, is how, through one's practice, to self-determine and, by extension,



assist in the self-determination of others. In effect, what constitutes radical practice now, and how has this been effected by what was previously considered radical practice?

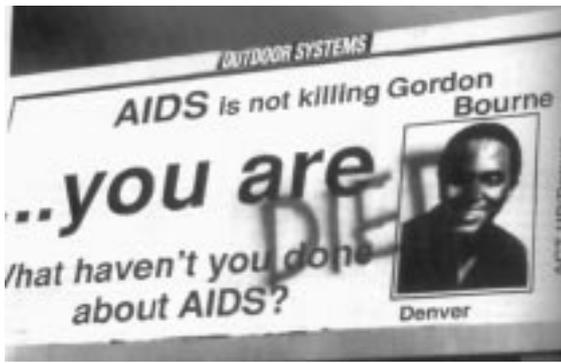
"The Citizen Artist" attempts to broadly depict the changing definitions of the margins over the last twenty years by structuring the anthology in three distinct sections: "The Art/Life Experiment", "The Artist as Activist", and "The Artist as Citizen". Each section is general-

ly chronological (although Durland is quick to point out that such a linear approach is overly simplistic, and certain motifs recur throughout): "The Art/Life Experiment" covers the early pioneering work of artists who for the first time attempted to break down distinctions between Art and Life, resulting in projects such as the body art of artists Linda Montano and Tehching Hsieh (who spent a year tied together by an eight foot length of rope), the rise of eco-art, and most significantly the initial development of feminist art practice: "The Artist as Activist", charts the following phase, when artists began to engage with the development and maintenance of ideologies specific to both a variety of identities —multi-cultural, gender, sexual —and objectives —empowerment, protest, education, advocacy, etc: "The Artist as Citizen", the final and most expansive section, contains what one imagines is Frye Burnham's paradigm —an artist or artists located in a specific community and working in tandem with its members in a microcosmic sense in which relationships are finite and local. As such, interviews are featured with artists working at a grass roots level; in the contexts of prisons and community centres, or organising workshops for doctors and nurses ("Caring for the Carers").

The arc of the three sections is one which reinforces the editor's prejudices in suggesting a gradual sea change of artistic consciousness over two decades, from the establishment of artistic communities and the process of self-realisation, to the use of interventionist practice to either represent or involve communities traditionally perceived as distinct from —or ignored by —historical Eurocentricity, through to surrendering at least some measure of artistic autonomy in preference to initiating more organic forms of collaborative practice. As a scenario it has its attractions, but it remains a wistful blueprint, full of inherent stresses. Whilst "The Citizen Artist" does not attempt to disguise that a kinder gentler artist is the preferred role model du jour, it also allows individual contradictions or disagreements to become apparent (thereby maintaining the flavour of the original High Performance magazine).

The central irony of the concept of the Citizen as Artist is that even those artists who are committed to leaving their ivory tower often have to contend with a certain amount of initial mistrust or hostility in the bigger badder world. The label of citizen may be adopted autonomously by any old artist, but it only becomes resonant when conferred, in part, by the external benediction of non-art communities. What is fascinating is how the terms and conditions of these negotiations have changed over the last two decades, and why this anthology very nearly ends up confirming popular





prejudices about crazy artists as much as it demolishes them. The general urge of artists who wish to be 'contemporary' has been to hitch their wagons to the nearest zeitgeist, and as new zeitgeists come along the older ones tend to become a little creaky. Inevitably, the passing of time has been less charitable to some artistic pronouncements than others. This is most evident in the first section of the book, the grand Art/Life Experiment, in which quotes such as: "Thus we have passed into a new worldview where we have gone beyond our anchor in the solar system to an even more integrated connection in the galactic core" in Barbara T. Smith's investigation of shamanic practice; or Rachel Rosenthal's description of her weekend workshops, in which: "For a weekend, two days and a half, I am a saint. My aim for that one weekend is to really take the spirit of the people who are there and give a bath to the spirit." —tend to (at least to a thirtysomething like myself) reinforce the cliché of the barking mad performance artist, complete with West Coast Dawns, Harmonic Convergences, Beautiful Natives, Earth Goddesses, Cheesecloth, Group Hugs and Candles.

It is easy to take these quotes out of context, and paint a picture of desperately earnest artists struggling in the tar pits of history (damned if this West Coast/American stuff doesn't come with a helpful metaphor every other sentence!), but whilst it is difficult to avoid observing that other similar examples form a wish list of crackpot aspirations that would sound cheesy in a Miss World contest, a steelier picture also begins to emerge as a flipside to the epiphet. Earlier in her interview Rosenthal paints a vivid and prescient picture of eco-rape that is both concise and articulate, describing a world that is at least as crazy as her own artistic universe. Cheri Gaulke's history of "The Women's Building" may put an inordinate amount of faith in the metaphorical power of an eight foot papier-mâché woman, erected on the building's roof as "a beacon of women's power to the community", but then maybe that was the kind of morale-booster that women artists needed when attempting to establish self-sustaining women's groups at a time when there were no precedents (let alone state funding).

Certainly, the editors seem confident enough to surrender their charges and let them take their own chances with the forces of history, and seem to think that the reader is big enough and stupid enough to draw his or her own informed conclusions.

The cumulative realisation that gradually dawns whilst reading through all these documents, testimonials and anecdotes is that what "The Citizen Artist" achieves most effectively is the way in which it illustrates just exactly how much artists position themselves in relation to the

realities of their respective time. Priorities shift and rhetoric changes. Cause and effect is a familiar notion to artists, because they generally have so many causes and fear in the early hours of the morning that they may have so little effect.

"The Artist As Activist" section deals with artists whose moral compass had not significantly shifted—all the same ethical concerns are evident—but was certainly being pulled by a different gravitas. This was the era when the issue of identity—who had it, who didn't have it, who had an inalienable right to proclaim it, who had better keep his mouth shut—became a key issue for artistic analysis. Identity could be problematic as well as being positive. How did the identity of an artist relate to the identity of a non-art community? Could the former represent the latter? With or without that community's sanction? Lucy Lippard's coverage of the AIDS awareness projects of David Nash includes a quote from critic Douglas Crimp which pretty much sums up the feelings of the time:

"Art does have the power to save lives... But if we are to do this, we will have to abandon the idealistic concept of art. We don't need a cultural renaissance; we need cultural practices actively participating in the struggle against AIDS."

Artists of colour were also working to achieve a level of visibility, creating broader awareness of the politics of ethnicity and colonialism. Artists such as Native American James Luna purposefully sought to avoid the tag of the "exotic", a stubborn refusal to be co-opted easily by institutional sentimentality:

"That's why I dislike the movie *Dances With Wolves*. It did nothing but glorify all the good. It didn't show any Indians mad, or upset... any Indians fucking up. We're still beautiful, stoic and pretty. You see the movie and you go out and see a fat, overweight, acne-covered, poor uneducated person—is that the real Indian you want to see?"

This was a time when the artwork of artists tended to reject the metaphorical optimism of its predecessors and became more specific, more pragmatic, more willing to cause offence to some if the process of alienation made a potent point—all necessary approaches when faced with the disintegration a singular authentic voice or homogeneous creative creed. As celebrated performance artist Karen Finley observes:

"Reality is always more shocking than art. I think that shock in art is followed by some kind of transformation that happens because of the artist. I mean, you could say that [experiencing the poverty of] Second Street between Avenues A and B is an artwork, and that's not so. It's not enough just to have the shocking thing, disassociated from everything. The artist frames it or mirrors it with brilliance or timeliness. I don't know that there's a clear line between what is an atrocity and what's art. I do know that when Chris Burden shot himself in the arm it was art, but when my father shot himself it wasn't."

The activist urge sometimes necessitated the identity of the artist to be almost completely subsumed, as in the work of Mexican artist Felipe Ehrenberg. When the Tepito district of Mexico City was devastated by earthquake, Ehrenberg undertook a project of reconstruction, organising a volunteer brigade (Tepitos) to comfort survivors, distributing food and clothing, opening a bank account administered by the Committee for the Reconstruction of Tepito. Emily Hicks observes that:

"For him, the goal is not to be a pop star, but a responsible citizen/activist."

Such a goal is at the heart of the final section, "The Artist as Citizen". It is not necessarily a popular one (savaged by critics such as Robert Hughes in his critique "Culture of Complaint") or a desirable one for many artists, not least because it calls for different modes of critical evaluation to

be formulated. The essays in this final section tend to avoid manifestos in favour of specific detail, and are far too complex to summarise here (this section alone contains 17 case studies). Suffice to say that projects such as Marty Pottinger's multimedia record of the lives of the people involved in making New York's City Water Tunnel #3 (the largest non-defense public-works project in the Western hemisphere), intergenerational arts coordination projects such as New York's Elders Share the Arts (ESTA), or Grady Hillman's "arts-in-corrections" residency schemes, undertaken in over 50 correctional facilities since 1981 (containing the best damn hard nosed economic riposte to those who believe that prisoners shouldn't benefit from the arts as school programmes are simultaneously closed down), are, whilst not quite enough to convince a congenial loner like myself to enter into the dreaded ambiguity of collaboration, certainly testament to the diversity of committed and—in its own terms of reference—clear-sighted public art methodologies.

If I have a specific caveat against this anthology it is that the issues it raises are so huge that it cries out for a little external contextualisation. The editors have purposefully focused on interviews with artists, often by other artists, or first person essays by artists; consequently, as Durland admits "...sometimes the analysis one expects in an anthology is left up to the reader." This might be a minor point (although I would have liked to have seen a few more devil's advocates prodding their forks into these angels...), given that this is made clear from the start, but it does impact on certain sections that need clearer contextual and explanatory text, or even images (maybe not a problem in the original magazine format). Also, there is a missed opportunity to re-examine the efficacy of artistic methodologies in retrospect, and test the claims of artists. For instance, there is mention off the hugely influential cross-country San Diego/Tijuana artists' collective Taller de Arte Fronterizo, but no postscript explaining the circumstances behind the group's break-up and how this impacted on subsequent post-colonial strategies. Similarly, I was curious as to how artists working as activists in the field of AIDS-related health care will have modified their approach in the late Nineties, in respect of factors such as more efficient medicinal filter blocks, or increased public apathy towards an epidemic that is now over a decade old.

Sadly, such questions would still be raised if journalists from High Performance were still darting around asking the right questions of the right practitioners, but the magazine ended its run in 1998. This is a shame for too many reasons to list here, so I will mention just one. Whether one agrees with some or all of these artistic voices, what is evident is an intention to create relevant public art that is created from the bottom up. This anthology is timely given the current UK context of lottery money for the arts, which is creating definitions of "socially useful" artists from the top down by attaching conditions of audience development and youth participation.

The Citizen Artist — An Anthology from High Performance Magazine 1978–1998

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A Cut and Paste Conversation:

Renée Turner, the De Geuzen Foundation, and Jason E. Bowman

De Geuzen is a foundation for multi-visual research which was established in Amsterdam in 1996 out of the necessity to create a forum in the Netherlands for critical inquiry, reflection and production with regards to visual culture. De Geuzen has three core initiators, Riek Sijbring, Femke Snelting and Renée Turner who operate as a collaborative art and design team which creates context specific projects. Its intention is to promote an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural dialogue that opens up new positions and perspectives with regards to visual culture. De Geuzen's practice includes curation, art, design and programming in the form of symposia, exhibitions and educational workshops. Its goal is to initiate situations where visual practices are viewed and understood as an integrated social process.

Jason Bowman: Now that I've seen your mission statement I want to ask a blatant question: I know what that means but how does it function on an organisational level?

Renée Turner: Our structure is hybrid to say the least. De Geuzen as an entity has three different capacities. It houses studios and a place for public events and we also operate as an agency.

De Geuzen came about through a mixture of events and interests. There is a thin line between hybridity, flexibility and confusion and when we began, we were closer to the latter. Riek, Femke and I studied together and during our post-graduate studies we worked in various configurations, curating exhibitions, creating installations and visual interventions. Although our affiliation with each other was not formalised, the roots of our current collaboration began there. Things became more solidified when I started renovating a space in Amsterdam with two other artists, Marco Cops and Cesare Davolio. As I was reaching the end of my studies, I thought perhaps different agendas could be combined and accommodated by the space. So the building's interior has been constructed with flexible usage in mind.

De Geuzen has separate yet interdependent functions and I guess it would suffice to say that the culmination of all these functions constitutes the foundation as a whole. The overall rent of the complex is covered entirely by renting out four individual studios. Not all occupants share the public face of De Geuzen but we see them as integral nevertheless. It's a mix of both public and private. When the agency is hosting a public event, two of the studios are emptied out and a dividing wall opens to create a larger public space.

JB: So what are the immediate benefits offered by the structure of having a foundation which incorporates an agency and a studio complex?

RT: There are many benefits, but most important is the fact that we, as an agency, do not have to depend on government funding for the use of our space therefore we have a guaranteed forum. Our programming can shrink or expand depending on our financial situation. Although the Netherlands has more funding for the arts than most other countries, we felt this flexibility was an indispensable safety mechanism.

JB: The agency practices both at its own location and in other contexts. Is the space also responsible for generating the necessary income to fund your projects?

RT: No, we don't generate a profit from renting

the space, and our entry fees tend to be pretty low. For programming and projects, we have to fund raise for operational costs.

JB: I know that you have recently started to receive funding from the Mondriaan Foundation but that previously you were self financing. How has the receipt of state funding altered the practice?

RT: In the past we really relied heavily on donations of time, energy and money from our friends. And I have to stress that there was not that much money circulating among us. After a while however there were limits to the amount of begging, borrowing and stealing that we could do. Plus all of these negotiations took time and much was left up to chance or luck. Because we had a desire to push our projects further and find ways of bringing in broader audiences, soliciting funding from the Mondriaan was one way of preserving a degree of continuity in our programming.

JB: Has the receipt of Mondriaan funding changed the way you operate in terms of pace?

RT: Yes, to a degree because when you receive state funding, you're held accountable to an external body. Before our only accountability was to ourselves and our audiences. There was a sort of an intimate and immediate response in terms of programme planning. Now with subsidies we have to plan and apply in advance. I would be lying if I said that does not affect our practice. However it has also opened up other possibilities which were not previously available to us.

JB: Beyond these structural elements, De Geuzen represents itself as a foundation for multi-visual research. Can you expand on how you understand your practice as being researched based?

RT: Well, first of all let's incorporate the term 'multi-visual research' into the equation. It plays with the very tenuous relation between art and theory, there is a degree of contradiction. But at the same time it sets a tone for our activities. The three of us are visually trained. Femke is a designer and Riek and I are artists. Our individual practices have always included a visual means of acquiring and disseminating information. Admittedly, our definition of what that means is amorphously broad and manifests itself differently within each of our projects. And from the beginning we wanted our projects to be investigative, similar to laboratory or field work.

JB: Do you mean in terms of art experimentation?

RT: Not really, experimentation seems like a bankrupt term in relation to art now. It is a word that is often used and seldom actualised. Basically through the matrix of research we wanted to allow for rehearsals. It has been our aim to create a space where the unfinished or speculative could be tested with audiences. Outside of academic structures, there are very few venues, if any, where this can happen. And although playing with this notion of research, I think we have always understood our work within the frame of art and therefore we don't necessarily look towards achieving the sense of conclusion which other forms of research may be held accountable to. Despite this, it is very important to develop methods of analysis within our practice, a kind of internal and exter-



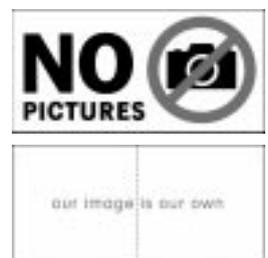
nal check. We have to continually scrutinise our own work and process with an eye on how our projects resonate beyond our own interests.

JB: Can we move on to talk about De Geuzen in practice? The first work of yours I saw was 'The Walk-in Reader'.² While many of the other works in this exhibition were centred on architecture, your work seemed much more expansive and escaped the limitations in representing urbanism solely via architectural or design vocabularies.

RT: Yes, thematically the exhibition looked at the processes of urban transformation taking place in the Netherlands. And I think Hou Hanru was struck by the post-Koolhaas generation and their almost utopian drive to address social problems through design. For us however, it was crucial to shift or contextualise the debate on buildings and urban planning in order to look at the social forces and networks that have and continue to shape the city of Amsterdam.

JB: So how did you assume this position within the context of an exhibition?

RT: We set up a kind of temporary resource. It included an archive where books, videos and internet URLs were collected around related themes ranging from the ways in which people make themselves feel at home in the city, to how so-called illegal or black economies function within the structure of mainstream economies, to how people map out their living environments, circumscribing the communities they belong to. Everything we gathered was made available to the public and there was a photocopier where people could copy books for free. Besides the more librarian ethic, we programmed weekly events based on our selected themes. The events took on different forms from round table discussions to tours through the city. We involved a variety of people from diverse backgrounds and specialisations, ranging from Joke van Kampen, the chief editor of the homeless newspaper in Amsterdam, to a social geographer, Dr. Rob van Engelsdorp Gastelaars. And with every event, more information was amassed and added to the archive. For us, it was an act of gradual social contamination. The space soon operated as a point of convergence where people returned or became regulars.



JB: One of the things which really struck me was the way that 'The Walk-in Reader' did not attempt to become responsible for accuracy of representation.

RT: It was never our ambition to be accurate, in fact we tend to do a lot of dancing around issues. Our approach rarely aims for a direct hit so to speak. 'The Walk-in Reader' was a forum, a resource and a podium that not only addressed various social networks but became one, a nucleus of activity within the exhibition.

JB: This notion of being or activating a nucleus of critical activity seems to punctuate the identity of De Geuzen generally...

RT: Yes, I think it has always been our aim to create sites where various social texts intersect or even collide.

JB: In terms of the exhibition at De Appel, De Geuzen's work seemed to be simultaneously servicing the context of the exhibition and, for me, also problematising how social contexts were represented by many of the other works.

RT: It was never our intention to provide a discursive bridge between the other works and the public, but there was an element of wanting to contextualise the larger debate which Hou Hanru was raising. So in that regard we did occupy the very ambiguous position of facilitation.

JB: I wanted to ask you more about your relationship to facilitation. In Britain facilitation by attaching interpretative or pedagogical methodologies to art works within the extant ideologies of the museum, gallery or theatre is developing into a burgeoning service industry. To me, many of the British forms of facilitation seem to be opaque—in that there is frequently a loss of critique or a tendency towards homogenising audiences. You appear to be traversing this by assuming a position as a research based foundation which also practices agency and is consequently able to develop and promote a less conclusive and less reductionist sensibility...



tial to enliven interest. Ultimately there is something disturbing about using discourse to legitimise or explain art, and reductive is the right word, in that neither art nor theory benefit from such a model.

JB: But at the same time much of your practice does appear to be looking at the relationship between art and theory and consciously advocating discourse and debate.

RT: The relation is there but not the same as the standard institutional use. Here I want to go back to the idea of multi-visual research and what that could mean. Between the visual and the verbal we try to establish a series of relays, a kind of dynamic exchange between the two.

JB: De Geuzen also produce 'visual objects' as part of these internal relays such as the pop corn funnels, made from the script, which you distributed when you screened Guy Debord's 'Society of the Spectacle' at De Geuzen or the series of take home quotes. Are they used in some sense to orientate the more conceptual or theoretical elements of your practice?

RT: In a strange way your question reiterates the perceived divide between these practices and I think that they are more mutually bound through the relays we establish. We use visual elements which are playful and others which are instrumental and on some occasions they also surf beyond the rational, therefore traversing between what is conventionally referred to as theory and practice.

JB: So is there any common aim in your uses of such 'visuals'. To me they seemed to be centralising around notions of distribution. This seemed particularly apparent when you mailed out 'the inventory' after 'The Walk-in Reader' closed.³

RT: Distribution is an undeniable aspect and so is accessibility or creating multiple points of entry.

JB: Do you mean in a directional sense?

RT: In a way yes, but rather than a sign it operates as an evocation. For instance, the modular glossy red table at De Appel was designed for multiple uses; it gave the space an area of concentration and continuity.⁴ The design sets the tone, acclimating audiences. Depending on the arrangement of the table in the room, people were enticed to either sit and privately read and view, or it was

clearly arranged for discussion and direct encounter. On other occasions the visuals took on a performative role, activating audiences. At the opening of 'The Walk-in Reader' we served a cake with the map of Amsterdam printed on it. The result was an almost carnivalesque atmosphere with people scrambling to cannibalise their own street.

JB: This role of evocation seemed to change with your more recent work 'Our Image is Our Own'?

RT: In the context of 'Midnight Walkers and City Sleepers', an exhibition which commissioned artists to work in the Redlight district in Amsterdam, we were initially invited under very specific conditions to be a part of the debates surrounding the show⁵. However, we were conscious that it may be more appropriate to employ and deploy other strategies and skills within this context. One of the things which is problematic with that area is that most of the time it is defined by its tourist industry, the sex industry, which is of course the most visible. We didn't want to reiterate that very clichéd or surface perception of the area and yet we didn't want to evade the omnipresence of that industry. For this reason we decided to initiate a collaboration with The Red Thread (De Rode Draad), the prostitute union which occupies a significant position both physically and socially in the area. As three women, we were also intrigued by their operation as a prostitutes' rights organisation and what that entails.

JB: When you're working in socially engaged practice many of the invitations to work are placed into the context of a thematic exhibition for a limited period of time and within the auspices of the curator's selected themes and sites. This format may appear to also relocate the artist as tourist.

RT: I completely agree on both accounts. It seems that if you take on social issues there is a perception that there is an easy transferability from issue to issue, one week a critique of the museum the next queer theory. For clarity of argument let's separate, however crudely for the moment, two bodies of reception. First there is the commission by the curator or curators. Then there is the second context which is the concrete social or physical environment about which the commissioner has asked you to work. By second here I don't mean to distinguish these realms hierarchically. And I guess our attention is often directed towards that second context, the one that reaches far beyond the premise of the exhibition.

JB: So, it seems that you're suggesting a reconceptualisation of how exhibitions are used and received...

RT: Well, I can't really address this as a general modus operandi but through the format of 'Midnight Walkers and City Sleepers' we were able to seize the opportunity to work with The Red Thread. The exhibition offered a means of entry and we were able to reroute both intention and attention. And no doubt, the inevitable question of longevity arises. Certainly it would be ridiculous to hop from theme to theme according to the curator's choice. If social engagement is a part of an artist's agenda, it is important to ask: How and should we sustain that connection after the exhibition, or temporary highlight, has taken place? In terms of this particular collaboration, it was very clear after our initial meeting with The Red Thread that our involvement would have to be long term in order to come to grips with the complex social and economic dilemmas these women face. More importantly we would need



RT: I think it's important to look critically at the trend of using discourse as an interpretative or translative device. My suspicion is that institutions want to become "user friendly", levelling the productive tension between art practice and discourse. Undoubtedly this desire comes out of a very real pressure to attract broader audiences with the hopes of securing funding. However, I am not sure if eliminating complexity, or using discourse as a process of distillation for art is the way to attract broader audiences. In fact, the complexity and controversy raised through the friction between art and theoretical debate has the poten-

time to examine how those issues reflect upon the position of women in general.

JB: I frequently view exhibitions or commissions of socially engaged practices as 'host contexts'...

RT: Host is really the appropriate word, but rather than being a guest, I consider our relation to be somewhat parasitic.

JB: So did you find a way of successfully limiting the overall objectives for the context of this exhibition whilst recognising the more long term process orientated objectives. Also how did this initial engagement manifest itself in a particular product?

RT: After our first discussion with The Red Thread a very practical need emerged. On the windows of the rooms in which the prostitutes stand there is usually a sticker reading "No Pictures". The Red Thread has become the distributor of these stickers and quite simply they had run out. We discussed the possibility of a kind of message of solidarity among women from The Red Thread and De Geuzen. But that is not an easy task because the union is not actually looked favourably upon by the proprietors of the brothels. Our solution was to come up with a sticker with the no pictures icon, a simple image with the camera with a red slash through it and the words NO PICTURES. But on the back we had silk-screened in florescent pink the text: OUR IMAGE IS OUR OWN. The slogan, normally the focus in politically oriented work, in this case is disposable. In order to use the sticker the slogan must be split apart and peeled off. The slogan becomes a moment in use, a temporary comment or thought, a way of incorporating a degree of fragility into a political situation. There is another element which we haven't discussed with regards to the exhibition which is the hijacking of funding which went on. We were able to redirect attention and money.

JB: One of the issues which seems to continue to confront socio-specific art practice is that it needs to traverse a degree of suspicion from certain partners with whom it wishes to consult or collaborate. How did De Geuzen strategize in relation to this?

RT: It was made very clear that although we are all women, there is an element of exoticism or tourism which cannot be eradicated. And I think it



was important to acknowledge that dynamic from the beginning. At the same time, although none of us have been prostitutes, there was a connection in terms of being women concerned with the ability of women in general to have control over their bodies and representation. Most importantly, women should have the right to set the perimeters of the use of their own bodies. It is fair to say that prostitution is at the edge of female representation, but it is nonetheless a condensed or concentrated formulation of those issues relevant to all women. Their position raises the very fundamental question of where the border of "NO" is drawn. Also, I think it is important to say that the relation with The Red Thread is not one way. We were interviewed in their magazine "Blacklight" which then recontextualises our own practice and connects us with a very different audience from that of the exhibition.

JB: I see how this element of detour or rerouting operates outside of the De Geuzen space, but how does that element function in relation to events held at your building?

RT: In our own space we set the perimeters of our projects so detour is not the word I would use because we establish the route. Our building provides the space for things to move or be processed at a slower pace, there is more of a laboratory feeling where controlled research, or reflection can take place.

JB: But in some sense the space also advocates a facilitatory role. Recently I saw four presentations here on the theme of 'the real' which were all inconclusive and constituted presentations of research in progress by artists, essayists or cultural critics⁶. How do such events influence the direction of De Geuzen?

RT: Through events held in our space we are able to broaden the base from which we work. By this I mean, we use our events to expand and push our own research plus we extend our collaborative capacities. Our space is relatively intimate and our programme format is closer to symposia which allows us to establish an active and interactive dialogue between speakers and audience. The question which has now arisen is how to extend that research further, beyond the immediacy of an event, and towards extended invitations to participate, confront and inform.

JB: I know your organisation like many in the Netherlands at the moment are developing their funding applications for new projects and organisational restructuring. Can you say something about how De Geuzen plans to capitalise on its existing research base and how this will influence its parallel activities?

RT: Our aim is to make follow-up publications to our events, not in the sense of a catalogue or documentation, but as a continuing forum, an extension of our enquiry. Through generating printed matter and creating a web space our goal would be to tap into other audiences who might challenge the limits of our thinking. In fact, these forms of distribution and access might well be the accountability check that I spoke of earlier.



Notes

1. The Mondriaan Foundation is one of the largest funding agencies in the Netherlands offering both structural and project support for Dutch cultural organisations and initiatives.
2. 'The Walk-in Reader' is the title of an installation made by De Geuzen for 'Unlimited.nl-2' an exhibition at De Appel which was curated by Hou Hanru.
3. Following the exhibition, De Geuzen mailed and distributed a booklet listing the entire contents of 'The Walk-in Reader'.
4. De Geuzen collaborated with Apolonija Sustersic in designing the space of 'The Walk-in Reader'.
5. 'Midnight Walkers and City Sleepers': on location in the Red Light District, was a multi-site art event in Amsterdam which was curated by Hedwig Fijen, Maria Hlavajova and Theo Tegelaers.
6. 'The Mediated Image: Testing the Surface of the Simulated, the Virtual and the Real', was De Geuzen's most recent in-house project.

Renée Turner is a Texas born artist, based in Amsterdam and is one of three core members of De Geuzen. Jason E. Bowman is an artist who is currently undertaking the Scottish Arts Council's Amsterdam Studio Residency and conducting a series of interviews on organisational frameworks of contemporary arts practices. These extracts are from conversations which took place in June 1999.



Art Activism and Oppositionality

Essays From Afterimage

Ann Vance

In *Art Activism and Oppositionality*, Grant H. Kester presents an anthology of texts from the American magazine *AfterImage* roughly spanning the years between 1980 and 1994. *AfterImage* is a product of the Visual Studies Workshop Rochester, set up in the late '60s by Nathan and Joan Lyons as an "open-ended" space, a challenge to existing centres of practice and education. Since its inaugural issue in the early '70s, *AfterImage* has aimed to pose the same challenge to institutional hierarchies, widening the remit of art criticism and theoretical debate and engaging directly with context, community and issues of accountability. Not much criticism or theory can (or is even willing to) account for its stance or reveal its ideological bias, preferring to cloak itself with a detached, moralistic rhetoric. The "bias" that emerges in the pages of *AfterImage* is one that works against the grain of convention, focusing on structures and discourses of power and control embedded in the realms of culture and politics.

A key aim of the magazine was to present "informed criticism" on the media of photography and independent film and video. Providing coverage of these media in the '70s was one means of supporting the work of artists excluded from the apparatus of the mainstream art world. As these media expanded, so too did the cultural diversity of artists and groups who employed them and the interests of the magazine's diverse pool of writers converged around these new forms of practice.

The essays are sectioned under two headings, *The Politics of Patronage and Activism and Oppositionality*. This thematic division serves no more than a formal purpose since there are very distinct crossovers and references between the sections. Indeed, Kester concedes in his introduc-

tion, that having set up this division it was necessary to challenge it. It would have been more helpful if the essays were tagged with dates and issue numbers in which they first appeared.

In the opening essay *Enlightened Self-Interest: The Avant-Garde in the 80s*, Richard Bolton embarks on a critique of conservatism and the effect the economic and political environment of the time had on art practice. "Inevitably, those with power in a society will strive to create a culture that reflects their interests and aims." Power often goes hand in hand with wealth and Bolton alarmingly demonstrates how art and the fluctuations of the market confirm this equation. He makes apparent the stark contrasts in sales value between works produced by artists at different stages of their career. What emerges is a disturbing system of control where collectors can effect and change the status of the work (the value invested by audience and critic) by deliberately manipulating the market; and artists posing against dominant culture as the new Post-Modernist Avant-Garde come under attack. Bolton reveals how some artists, motivated by self-interest, collude with advertising corporations in a process which impedes the development of alternative readings and new audiences for art. Art is detached from daily life and its transgressive power is harnessed in the play between commodity culture and the leisure and lifestyle industries. He warns that "artists interested in social critique and change must consider and respond to the entire system that produces them and their work."

A number of texts in this anthology tackle the discourse of multiculturalism and the conflicting effects it had on cultural/political theory and practice. Arising in the early '80s in a climate of reactionary conservatism and fragmentation of the Left, "multiculturalism" became an adopted buzzword of artists, cultural institutions and arts organisations. Cross-referencing different perspectives and criticisms, the reader can easily deduce how this discourse functioned to camouflage both Left and Right wing reactionary agendas.

In *White Men Can't Programme: The Contradictions of Multiculturalism*, Darrell Moore asks "who benefits from multiculturalism?" and while asserting some of the positive results, concludes that it is all too easy for arts funders and government organisations to obscure their control over minority interests by adopting the liberal ethic of multiculturalism. Coco Fusco, in her review of two conferences, *Celebration of Black Cinema* (Boston '88) and *Sexism, Colonialism, Misrepresentation: A Corrective Film Series* (New York '88), takes a highly critical stance against the avant-garde's fascination and misconception of the Other. From her own perspective, she attacks the hierarchy of Eurocentric thought: psychoanalysis, feminism, post-colonial doctrine and western aesthetics in an attempt to expose the over-simplified terms of multiculturalism. "Western cultural institutions, such as the avant-garde have a history of rejuvenating themselves through the exploitation of disempowered peoples and cultures."

Identity politics has become another marker of '80s cultural practice and political activism. A simplistic bracketing of identities and subjectivities is disputed by Lorraine O'Grady in *Olympia's Maid: Reclaiming Black Female Subjectivity*. As an artist, she remains "wary of theory".

"Nature: culture, body: mind, sexuality: intellect, these binaries don't begin to cover what we sense about ourselves".

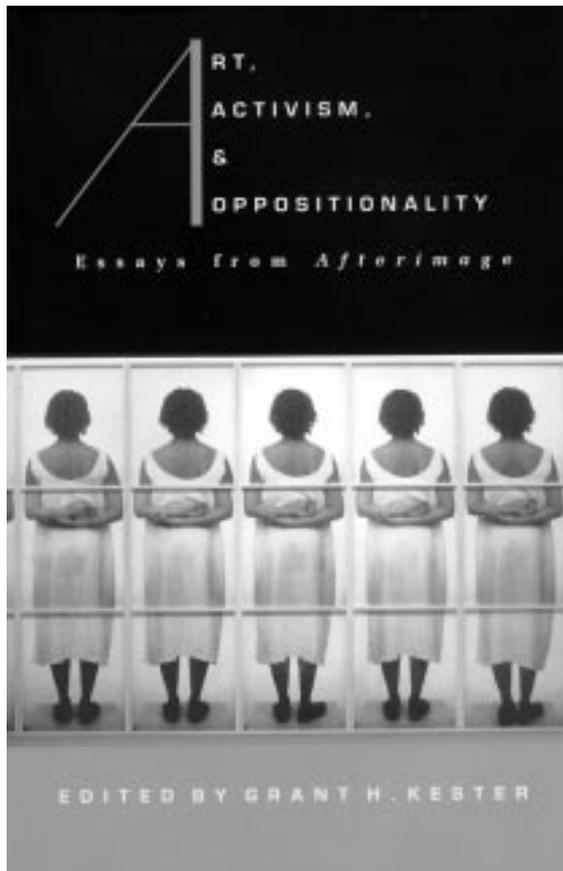
Some artists and media activists joined forces around these issues of identity, collaborating with community groups and educationalists. They produced works which challenged repressive legisla-

tion (e.g. *Proposition 6* in US, *Section 28* in UK) and stereotyping of gays, non-white peoples and the working class. Charles A. Wright's review of the 1993 Whitney Biennial looks at the controversy caused by the inclusion of new "issue-based" work. He is critical of the museum's curatorial strategy and claims that the exhibition "projects a mercenary gloss on issues of difference as its thematic impetus, incorporating 'others' in an effort to idealize an alleged egalitarianism".

The need to celebrate cultural diversity and to bond as minorities was diffused by specific demands from individual groupings to maintain autonomy, self-determination and political cogency. The dangers of overlooking the historic specificities of oppressions are starkly laid out in Ioannis Mookas' review of the video *Gay Rights, Special Rights*. Produced by a christian fundamentalist company principally for use by the Traditional Values Coalition, *Gay Rights, Special Rights* exploits the African-American fundamentalist voice in its attack on the gay and lesbian movement as a "fraudulent trespasser upon the hallowed ground of civil rights struggle." In this case, Mookas illustrates how effectively video operates as a propagandist tool for anyone in a position to access it.

In the mid '80s the proliferation of camcorder technologies multiplied the sites of cultural struggle and gave rise to a new video activism. Brian Goldfarb discusses the censorship of curricular video produced by artists and progressive educationalists dealing with AIDS and safe-sex issues. Patricia Zimmerman explores reproductive rights, focusing both on alternative and mainstream media; commercials, news stories, pro-choice activist video, right-to-life and experimental video. She praises groups like *Paper Tiger TV* and *Deep Dish Satellite* for their use of low-tech technologies in their struggle to de-centralize broadcast media: "The amateur camcorder could be retrieved from the private confines of the bourgeois nuclear family—the gulag where all amateur media technologies have been deposited to stunt their democratic potential." With her assertions concerning the representation of the female body and the imaging of the foetus, she raises important questions, echoed elsewhere in this anthology, about the formal qualities of an activist art. In this case, she criticizes political documentary theory and practice for its redemptive pose against the spectator, characterized as ignorant and passive.

In his introduction, Grant H. Kester elaborates a sound argument for the re-evaluation of the aesthetic in the context of an activist art practice. Moving away from the rigidity of aesthetic liberalism which confines the authenticity of art within the parameters of social disengagement, he reinstates the viewing subject, "not as an anonymously transcendent subject, but as the product of particular social, economic and geographic conditions", with the power to generate new meanings and definitions for art. Ann Cvetkovich's *Video, AIDS, and Activism* highlights the difficulties audiences confront in deciphering codes of aesthetic "quality" and related meaning in works which fuse different modes of cultural practice with political activism. She reviews Video Data Bank's compilation package *Video Against AIDS*, Act Up's *Diva-TV* and a number of other works produced in the late '80s/early '90s, considering the impact on a diverse range of viewers. What transpires is how information is mediated by form. In general, audiences viewed the experimental works as appealing to a more personal, non-activist sensibility. Recognizing the conventional, representational codes of documentary, viewers conflated these works with the "real" politics of



direct action.

These dilemmas of spectatorship and representation are historically sited in Michael Renov's study of *Newsreel* and its involvement in the construction of a political imaginary for the Left. *Newsreel*, born in the '60s, was a production and distribution collective whose mostly "un-authored" output included weekly news shorts, longer political documentary works and informational reels. Any re-conceptualization of standard film and TV practices was sacrificed to serve radical aims. A blurring "romanticism of the Barricades" prevailed across the spectrum of '60s cultural struggle. It fuelled audience solidarity and the revolutionary imagination in the spirit of the times but, in the long run, hindered the progression towards a broader understanding of the varied languages of oppression and how they interweave to form what we often blindly accept as "truth".

Audiences unaccustomed to film/ video works intent on exposing the stylistic conventions of Hollywood and the mainstream media have little chance of fully digesting that which appears, on first viewing, obscure, self-indulgent or superficial. As Patricia Thomson points out in *Video and Electoral Appeal*, artists too, in their choice of subject matter, succumb to the lure of mass media iconography. Hardly surprising, she concedes, given the ever-increasing sophistication of the tools and techniques of new politics. "In the process of critiquing the media campaign ... (video artists) watch politics on television like the rest of us". She laments the demise of the artist to "artist-as-spectator" as opposed to "producer-as-participant". This demise can perhaps be linked to the general erosion of the counterculture by the machinery of the Right throughout this period.

One manifestation of the Right's reactionary powers was the assault on the National Endowment for the Arts. The origins of the NEA are laid out in Kester's *Rhetorical Questions: The Alternative Arts Sector and the Imaginary Public*.

"At its inception, arguments in support of the Endowment, particularly those designed to persuade and cajole skeptical congresspeople, were founded not on a definition of art as a public good in and of itself, but on its potential usefulness within the matrix of state policy and ideology."

Focusing on the creative and political stagnation of the alternative/ artist-run space, he points to the striking similarities between what came to be known as the Professional Managerial Class and the artist/ administrator of this alternative sector: A strategic alignment with the disenfranchised (which saw artists posing as victims of the system) led this new hybrid being to adopt the mantle of the "cultural worker" and the moral rhetoric of the artist as transcendent subject.

"The experience of an artist whose work is rejected by the gallery system is simply not interchangeable with that of the poor or working class, whose relationship with the market economy has far more profound consequences".

At this point, the reader may shudder with recognition. The closed cycle of artist - arts administrator/ organiser - arts funder, clouded with indistinct and ever-changing definitions of 'professionalism' is all too familiar. With this new discourse fully embedded in the fabric of cultural exchange, Kester shows how alternative spaces sited more often in poorly developed areas, flourished with the onslaught of gentrification and posed a very real threat to the survival of communities falsely constructed as their 'public'. The needs of this "imaginary public" are renounced while the identity of the alternative artist remains cushioned by privilege and material wealth.

Echoing these sentiments, David Trend in *Cultural Struggle and Educational Activism* calls for a popularizing of the forms of cultural practice and the need for artists to "engage the institutions that utilize and reproduce state power". This essay and that by Mable Haddock and Chiquita Mullins, examining the Public Broadcasting System in the States are good examples of the 'rallying call' fea-

ture of much *AfterImage* writing. Not merely bemoaning systems of oppression, they advance concrete strategies for change.

Almost twenty years on, the ideas and contentions manifest in this book are still lingering beneath the surface of the latest 'post-isms'. Problems of race, class and sexuality are not resolved because politicians purport to be addressing them, if anything, they fester under this deception and erupt to no ones surprise but those duped by the language of the state reproduced in the media. (Witness the recent report on the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the attacks on the multicultural communities of Brixton and Brick Lane and the gay and lesbian community in Soho.) Neither are issues of context, audience or accountability resolved because artist-run-spaces or the 'alternative sector' have bigger international profiles or bigger budgets to develop programmes. Adrian Piper, interviewed in this anthology bluntly states: "If art isn't allowed to address and transform the conditions of real life, I don't see the point of it".

The discussion *Alternative, Mainstream, Mainstream Alternatives* in Variant 7 (Vol 2) touches on many points covered in this anthology and concern is expressed over the spectre of "historical amnesia" and the danger of repeating outdated arguments. To read *Art, Activism and Oppositionality* as both a historical document and a contemporary analysis may help redress these "crises" in understanding, forging a model for the development of art practice and critical thought that acknowledges the past as it looks forward to new challenges in the future.

Art Activism and Oppositionality: Essays From Afterimage
 Edited by Grant H. Kester
 Duke University Press 1998
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FESARS

The First European Seminar on Artist Run Spaces

The Stockholm based artist-run-space Konstakuten invited similar initiatives from across Europe (and beyond) to gather for *The First European Seminar on Artist Run Spaces* (FESARS). Over thirty initiatives participated, in addition various speakers were invited to further the discussion on the history, reality and future of artist-run-spaces. Per Hüttner, one of the organisers, explained that the initiatives present had come out of the informal artists' networks in place across Europe, the old snow ball principle. The main interest of this seminar therefore was to explore a shared and/ or synchronised future of artist-run-spaces across the continent, but at no point was this seminar meant to be representative of the entire European scene.

From the organisational point of view: structure, culture and charisma in bureaucracy

The long and extensive weekend might well have been more generally concerned with artists' initiatives, instead a strong focus on 'the spaces within which activity happens' emerged. While not explicitly formulated or made part of the proceedings this issue certainly underlined most of the presentations made by the initiatives. It is precisely this concentration that structurally and content-wise made FESARS something very different, even so, sitting through over thirty presentations the seminar attendant did encounter moments of suppressed hyperactivity.

Everyone is an individual, for sure, nevertheless there did seem to be inherent stages and processes which most of the spaces present had gone through. Being more than just a collaborative project — in fact becoming a bureaucratic body seems to follow inherent rules which are shared across many forms of business, not only the arts. When combining efforts and taking on the task of establishing their own institutionalised form of presentation and representation, artists are clearly shifting from the stage of being one-person enterprises. In doing so they accept a level of bureaucratisation which is inherently counter-productive to the bare process of practice. It is important that this should not be mistaken with collaborative projects, which have proven to be advantageous to artists who are pooling resources and knowledge as a means to achieving goals —making work. Instead we are dealing with artists taking on the management and

restraints which come with the task of running an institution — an artist-run-space.

The artist-run-space in its minimal form will only be in existence for the one and only group of artists who set up the organisation. Their charismatic leadership and curatorial as well as artistic vision not only determine the place, but also the driving force behind it. At this level things 'just tend to happen'. In managing to establish the space within the local and sometimes international art scene, however, it tends to fall into a routine. The organisation will undergo the process of setting up more or less flexible structures within which the individuals running the joint can place themselves and a 'written constitution' most often follows simply because funding applications demand it. Once all this has been laid out, the doors can open for the generations of artists to follow the initial momentum of spontaneous self-determination.

As new members enter the institution they carry their expectations and hopes with them, nevertheless, the individual will very soon be in the process of defining their space so as to manoeuvre within the institution. To some extent this process is self-determined, to some extent it is brought towards the newcomer in terms of the structural realities laid out by the organisation. An example of this is the necessity of book keeping, which while it may be done in a looser way than the business world might expect, the bare necessities are the same, and seemingly acceptable to funding bodies.



In becoming part of a bureaucratic body, the individual in this environment additionally faces another quality of the bureaucratic structure: by default the individual needs to be replaceable. It is no good to have somebody keeping the books for two years, just to leave an inaccessible pile of paperwork for the next generation of ambitious artists that comes through — though this seems to be one of the main problems across artist-run-spaces that continue for more than one generational cycle, in other words spaces

which really do enter the logic of bureaucracy.

But it would be limiting to restrict the effects of artist-run-spaces to the structural problems of maintenance and continuity. One of the main excitements of artist-run-spaces lies on the side of curatorial practice, assuming that artists will do the art thing yet differently from the commercially biased gallery or the museology biased institution. At this point, the structural reality of the institution is secondary, and the cultural, or even charismatic quality comes into play. It is obvious that this is the point at which bureaucratic structures and demands, such as replaceability, are being turned upside down. In fact, I believe that the individual qualities of the artist entering an organisation, at some point will leave their individual and irreplaceable stamp. And they do.

From a funding point of view: policy-making in the cultural industries

Running a space of any kind lifts the term artistic practice onto a different level. Many artists involved in artist-run-spaces express their resentment at the amount of logistic and managerial tasks which need to be taken care of, in some cases those structural forms of labour substitute their individual artistic practice altogether. Nevertheless, the initiatives present in Stockholm were all doing it. So it can't be all that bad...

Those collective efforts to become more than the sum of individuals are extremely important in the climate where the 'flexible workforce' has become the euphemism for potential unemployment at any given moment in one's average rocky biography. Concurrent to the attention of the 'cultural industries' as an economic sector, a broad range of arts activity has received an incredible amount of interest from the business world over the past years. In part this is due to an attraction to the very flexible structures in place within the arts that enable artists to operate as they do. Despite the reality that few artists really have steady and regular forms of employment the mortality rate is comparably low. Good enough a reason to put this system of self-maintenance under the economist's microscope —along with the funding bodies for the arts.

Tim Eastop and Eileen Daly from The Arts Council of England (ACE) put a strong emphasis on the development of appropriate policies in the field

of public arts funding. In their presentation "Strategies for Funding Artists in England" they pointed out that over the past few years an effort has been made by the Arts Councils and associated agencies to research the field of artistic practice throughout the UK and develop funding policies accord-



ingly. Moreover, a participative environment for policy development where artists are involved in the process of policy making was said to have been established. Such initiatives are even more interesting when put into the context of the restructuring of the funding body itself, namely The Arts Council of England. The most recent history of ACE seems to indicate that a restructuring of the process of policy development was not to be detached from the bureaucratic body itself. ACE has undergone a severe restructuring process, cutting management and departmental specification with various sections of responsibility being handed on to the Regional Arts Boards across England.

Further devolving to the regions the realising of funding policies within a framework set by central government seems an inevitable process in the present political climate. More interestingly, coupled to this regionalisation of fund distributing bodies we are also experiencing a shift to different parameters by which the 'quality' of artistic practice is being measured: social inclusion, audience development, cultural diversity, legacy and skill development to name but a few. Such funding policies being attempts to generate a check-list of acceptable artistic practice, a yardstick for qualifying art as 'good art'. This task seems ridiculous, but there seems little else funding bodies can do, or —come to that —have to do. Apart from the facade of regional autonomy, another restriction on such reallocation of money is the actual small amount of revenue available. The resulting situation is where funding policies and priorities come in handy, in the form of

gatekeeping.

In this situation it seems to be vital that artists have the right to participate in the process of policy making. Who else should know about where to put the money than those involved at the sharp end of grass-roots activity? But in the framework of FESARS the issue of funding policies is being taken much further. Whereas the participative models of policy-making for artists has gained a justified currency in funding bodies across Europe with a pronouncement of dedication to supporting individuals, artists, there is still no mechanism in place which would be remotely comparable when it comes to actual artist-run-spaces. At present funding for an artist-run-space might be reasonably consistent as long as the space manages to maintain itself through project oriented funding (gaining dedicated support from project to project). Support for the costs which come with simply running a space are being neglected by governmental agencies or incredibly hard to access. Capital funding might be a starting point, providing substantial coverage of buying/renting/renovating a space and supplying initial material and equipment, but receiving funding to keep going in providing such a resource is increasingly difficult.

This might be one of the most promising futures of the FESARS initiative, developing a lobbying group across Europe which will be in the position to establish a policy-making environment for artist-run-spaces. Outside of unshared government structure and policy, the main obstacle of such a lobbying group would of course be the fact that the individuals in such spaces tend to change comparatively quickly. This was expressed at the seminar when the issue of a possible second event arose. Not only was it unsure what artist-run-spaces could be present, but additionally it became obvious that some of the spaces might not be in existence, or alternatively a new set of individuals would meet with the same label attached to their presence.

The future is bright, the future is orange? Sponsoring

"If you take 'no' for an answer, then you are in the wrong business." Which business would that be? Yours or the one you rang up in order to receive equipment or money from for the next project? Bill Rubino, fund-raiser at The Life Foundation from Stockholm was

talking straight, and rightly so. Sponsorship from private industries seems to be gaining in importance for artistic practice as 'match funding' —a requirement to generate income from other sources to match with public funding —is the term on everybody's lips. New funding policies of the European Union as well as the SOROS Foundation for the remaining part of Europe that include match funding criteria means that money coming from the private sector has become a necessary source of income. Despite the ethical issues at stake, there is an immense interest amongst artists to understand what makes industry tick, and then pull the right levers. Rubino, addressing the nature of the presentations at FESARS, stated: "all of you were given five minutes for your presentations. Most of you went over time and most of you failed to provide a clear outline of what it is you are doing, why you are doing it, and —in relation to receiving money —what it is you could do for them." Apart from the fact that FESARS was not a sponsorship drive, it would seem artists working in artist-run-spaces not only need to adjust themselves according to the bureaucratic necessities within their organisation, they now apparently also need to develop additional skills in order to sell their products, this is after going through the process of 'understanding' —that is aligning —their work as product oriented.

There has always been an ongoing debate about accepting private money. The ethical issues at stake for the integrity of politically motivated art are just too sensible to be messed around with, one could think. On a more pragmatic level it has been argued that public funding is just easier to deal with. With private funding you are just complicating the issues as they want to get something more material out of the deal.

Both arguments could be justified to an extent. Within the political framework that comprises of the most recent 'Europe at War' spectacle, governmental money could be perceived as ethically questionable by default. In addition, the money for governmental art funding is not being printed inside the funding institutions themselves, there being a direct economic link between art subsidies and industrial development. As it is, 'culture' is formulated as a luxury commodity within economically developed countries and as restricted public funding for the arts has reached a point of saturation —beyond the simple question of re-allocation of resources through further governmental

intervention —in place of governmental support there is now a calculated drive to support through private sources. In this environment the concept of 'attention economy' has truly reached private industry. If you take a closer look at the activities of companies such as Glaxo Welcome you quickly arrive at the depressing conclusion that they tend to buy or support anything that will carry their name, however controversial it might be, simply for the sake of attention. And for them that makes sense. When dealing with dodgy ways of making money, the company can easily use art to associate itself with a critical platform of debate, so connecting their own product line to the process of discourse while maintaining a safe distance from any self questioning, as such having little to lose. Critical work bought by the person you intend to throw a brick at says more about the art system than the company. Keep on moving...

Artist-Run-Spaces, Unite!

At the end of the weekend there were clear plans to continue the tradition born through the event. What form such a continuation should take is unclear at this present moment. There were thoughts to carry the initiative towards East Europe, but it might be just as interesting to carry it South. At this meeting the constellation of spaces present did represent the wider network of where it was held, Stockholm in Scandinavia. In doing so FESARS managed to stay realistic. Any attempt to plan such a European wide event and keep the question of equal representation in mind would be bound to fail. So the further development of this loose network will mainly need to deal with issues of inclusion on an organisational level. Given the reality that most of the participants will have changed their commitment by the time the Second ESARS takes place, and most likely that some of the organisations will have ceased to exist as well, the continuation of this seminar will depend on the outline which it intends to give itself. This year in Stockholm a grand gesture was made. The next step would possibly require what had been stated earlier about the reality of artist-run-spaces: Institutionalisation. With the bureaucratic burden which would come out of such a European network, the most essential objective would be the definition of a clear purpose, and the development of a pragmatic way of how to achieve this.

<http://periodafter.t0.or.at>

<http://www.yourserver.co.uk/crashmedia>

<http://www.art-bag.net/convextv>

<http://www.konstakuten.com/Konstakuten%20material/fesars/fesars2.html>

<http://www.konstakuten.com/Konstakuten%20material/fesars.bilder/fesars.grupp>

Return to the Far Pavilions

Daniel Jewesbury

Something is always missing in a translation. However perspicacious the translator, some nuance will always be neglected, some particularity left un conveyed. The verb 'to traduce', originally meaning to transport, convey or translate (and related to the modern French verb traduire, to translate) now means to slander or calumniate — to misrepresent. The desire to render all knowledge into a commonly-accessible code leads, conversely, to a canon of decontextualised signs, which float or drift, reverberating dully in new contexts. The modernists' utopia, enabled and epitomised by perfect communication, never arrives, because they failed to account for the fragmentary character of language itself.

Does all this sound like a lesson in things we already know, that we hardly need to be reminded of? Then consider the rationale and ambitions of the 48th Venice Biennale (which has the catchy title "dAPERTutto / APERTO overALL / APERTO partTOUT / APERTO überALL"). This year's event, the biggest so far, attempts to represent everything in late twentieth-century art, before the Three Zeros finally arrive, and to fabricate from it (and for it) a uniform narrative of 'international art now'. It is one which, predictably, privileges the slight and the banal. New terminologies have been found to articulate and perpetuate the old yearning for a True Story of Art: the dual rhetoric of 'globalism', both as a nostalgic recollection of the ideal of Socialist Internationalism and as a metonym for the 'real' internationalism of global capital, is invoked repeatedly, often almost mystically, by the various organisers and national commissioners of the Biennale. Overall curator Harald Szeemann writes in his press release that in this year's Biennale the "national ghettos will be abolished"; yet the idiosyncratic logic of the Biennale depends on those ghettos, on the seemingly random cluster of pavilions gathered in the Giardini, empty for eighteen months until the circus once again rolls into town.

As the dismantling and re-organisation of Modern sciences of classification continues, institutions are attempting to align with the spirit of the supposed 'new democracy' under spurious banners like 'respecting difference' or 'celebrating diversity'. It's easy to 'celebrate diversity' when that simply means devising a few new sub-divisions of the existing categories: the 2001 census in the UK, for example, will attempt to include definitive categories for all people of mixed race. Similarly, the supposedly benign rhetoric of 'multiculturalism' is now widely denounced as a ruse, a barely-disguised reiteration of the status quo. Rather than seeking tangible shifts in power, such strategies attempt to assimilate 'difference' into the existing structure, even when that structure has no place for difference, or rather can only offer subordinate places, as fragmentary traductions of the monolithic centre.

The number of national pavilions establishing themselves outside the main Giardini site has certainly grown, but if you try to find any of them you'll have trouble; the Biennale organisers, some-

what churlishly, refuse to print full addresses for them on publicity material. Wander the labyrinthine alleyways of Venice looking for one of them and you'll quickly see through the rhetoric of openness and equality clinging to this year's event. The Irish pavilion has been in the Nuova Icona gallery for several years, down one of those inauspicious-looking alleyways on the island of Giudecca. This year's representative, Anne Tallentire, presents a body of work that resists traction into the globalist miasma of Szeemann's überBiennale by insisting on its own specific contexts. The show, *Instances*, pulls together three curiously jarring elements (a series of short performance videos, a backlit transparency and a half-hour video projection) and with them addresses the concerns that have occupied Tallentire for several years: translation, communication and authorship. In the first room a small colour monitor rests on a flight case and shows a series of hand-held single-edit sequences that fade up from black. In them, the artist is engaged in various activities, pulling up a floorboard, arranging small pieces of wood, spreading broken glass on the floor until it fills the monitor screen. The way the camera frames the performances, concentrating solely on the act and cutting off even the performer's body, prevents any external contexts from becoming visible, except that it's clearly the same room in all the shots. Every so often, the normally-silent video breaks into sound, just for a second or two: the sound of glass scraped across wood, of a floorboard banged back into place. In the back room of the gallery a wall is taken up with a video projection. Walking into the space at the beginning of the loop one finds it almost completely black, save for one pinpoint of light. Gradually the space gets lighter, but it's not just your eyes that are getting used to the darkness; the half-hour video shows dawn breaking somewhere over the nondescript inner city. The process of elucidation (literally) that the video records is ultimately pointless: there is no landscape for us to survey, since all that can be discerned of this 'grand vista' is a steel fence that occupies the whole of the foreground, and an unremarkable tower block. Taking the shedding of light as a metaphor for the explanation of intrinsic meaning, both these video pieces are about narrative, about our desire to make stories of ostensibly unconnected events, and yet each refuses to be narrativised. The third element of the piece, which sits between the two video rooms, is a large colour transparency of a woman's ear pressed up against concrete, listening where there is no hearing to be done. Writing in his catalogue essay, Brian Hand suggests that a translation is not simply a corruption of an original text, but that the original is itself always infected with omission, that the communicative act is always partial, approximate. Tallentire's deftness lies in drawing this out, making out of it a body of work that is insistent, but which clings to its own partiality. Leaving the gallery and the contemplative space that has been constructed in it (in contrast to the rest of the



Biennale), I was put in mind of the right to silence and its gradual removal from British law. Silence itself, the absence of information, can now be an implication of guilt.

Tallentire's work draws out considerations of space as well, by figuring the construction of narrative in four dimensions. Several artists in the Biennale explored our contemporary relationship with urban space and built landscapes, most notably Doug Aitken. His video installation *Electric Earth* is divided into three consecutive 'rooms', with images and sounds overflowing from one chamber into the next. In the first room a young black man lies on a bed in a motel room or apartment, endlessly changing the channels on his TV, which we then see is showing only noise. His glazed expression contrasts with the voice-over: "A lot of times I dance so fast I will come... It's like food for me". In the second room two mirror-image projections are shown at right angles to one another; in the third another three screens form three sides of a square. In these two spaces the same young man dances in the deserted streets at night. The familiar signs of the city —barbed wire fences, abandoned shopping trolleys, empty parking lots —litter Aitken's beautifully filmed environment, while the soundtrack mixes shadowy hip-hop beats with the character's narration: "It's the only now I get". His peculiar autism, his alien-





ation from the city which surrounds him, recall Frantz Fanon's disturbed subject of European colonialism, fragmented and re-inscribed by intangible processes of power located far away.

In the Italian pavilion, three artists collaborate to explore the spatialisation of narrative, with an elaborately-constructed series of three interwoven films. In the first, *Jump-Cut*, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno present us with a clip from a French film of the early 1970s. A moustachioed character mutters urgently down the phone, agreeing to come over straight away. He leaves his apartment block, and emerges from the building 25 years older, the same actor in the Paris streets of today. He salutes the camera and begins to walk across town... The piece concentrates on a single break in continuity in the original film, in which the character was shown standing in a building in one part of town and emerging, miraculously, in a completely separate area as he leaves that building. In this 'remake', the same actor has been engaged to walk the distance between the two shots, re-uniting a space that had been fragmented, but at the expense of



the 'linearity' of time, of narrative. As he reaches his destination, the film reverts to the original, the break 'sutured'. Watching the video, one gradually becomes aware of another layer: the projection is itself a re-presentation of another projection, the film having been projected in the same room some time previously and re-filmed with a handheld camera. The people walking in front of the projector are themselves part of the film. As the loop comes to an end, the camera leaves the room, walking out into the night-time desertion of the off-season Giardini; just as we think that we've returned to a simple projection, that the re-filming

has stopped, the camera pulls back once more to reveal the picture framed, re-filmed, on the wall that we are watching now...

More literal approaches to space are found in the large-scale black and white aerial photographs of Balthasar Burckhard and in Frank Thiel's colour photos of the enormous reconstructions underway in Berlin. Both concentrate on the 'given-ness' of the urban realm, on its seemingly random (but actually tightly controlled) development and growth.

The Biennale features a large number of Asian artists, particularly young Chinese artists. Speaking at a discussion organised by Audio Arts magazine in the British pavilion, Charles Esche suggested that it may be more than coincidence that at a time when China is the only Other superpower in the world, when its international relations are continuously headline news, European and American curators have decided to discover Chinese 'culture'. Many works concentrate on re-articulating the myths of Socialist Realism, most notably Cai Guo-Qiang's Venice Rent-Collecting Courtyard. The piece is a slightly-altered replica of a series of sculptures originally commissioned by Mao during the Cultural Revolution. However bad things are now, the sculptures tell us, look how bad they were before: peasants toil, their backs bent under their loads, while the landlords extort their rent and the bosses stand by ready to beat anyone found shirking. The lifesize sculptures were toured around China in the '70s and copies made for various eastern European cities. Harald Szeemann wanted to exhibit them in Documenta in 1976. Figures were added whenever politically expedient: heroic soldiers when the army were needed to maintain 'order', virtuous workers when there were shortages. The piece re-emerges now as Guo-Qiang's personal remembrance of recent history. A straw panama is added to one landlord, a wooden sword placed in the hand of another, in an attempt to re-locate (or dislocate) the figures. However, the piece sits uneasily between irony and poignancy in the surroundings of the Biennale. Nearly all the Chinese political art shown (there are several exponents here) suffers from its translocation, from a situation where contexts (history and politics) are immediately available, to the glib neo-Orientalism of the international art show.

Some of the work seems to comment wryly on precisely this condition, particularly Zhou Tiehai's painting *The relations in the art world are the same as the relations between states in the post Cold War era*. Or as Szeemann puts it, "The large number of Asian artists this year will facilitate an encounter with a history that is very different from that of Europe or North America".

To return finally to that claim of non-territoriality, let's end with an anecdote, one which, obviously, proves nothing. A friend from Dublin, another freelance writer, asks for a copy of the Gary Hume catalogue at the British pavilion, showing her press accreditation. She's told she needs a union card to get any press information. When she says that she's a freelance, that art writers in Dublin don't need press cards, the new internationalism is explained to her immediately: "You're not in Dublin now. You're in Great Britain." Roll on the abolition of national ghettos.

When you care enough to be the very best

Leigh French

Littering the living room floor is the residue, some truly detritus, of the processes of ongoing 'service reviews', 'consultations' and 'research' of the Arts Councils, Local government and associated arts agencies in what has become an endless game of central government 'Cultural Policy' deployment, validation and marketing.

While ingratiating programmes of 'Cultural Policy' advocacy escalated as part of the build up to the Scottish Parliament, given its new custodial mantle of cultural overseer, the phenomenon has to be seen as an effect of a broader intensification of an imposing of market philosophy across the public sector as a whole. Within this the specific focus on the arts is becoming increasingly technocratic, that is the arts are being seen exclusively in terms of their 'use value', having a 'cultural purpose' in regard to 'social inclusion', 'education' and 'regional development' criteria as defined by government.

To synthesise a few recent documents:

The Scottish Arts Council's *Scottish Arts in the 21st Century* is an attempt at a promotional/lobbying life belt for the SAC in the face of calls in Scottish parliamentary manifestoes for a euphemistic overhaul of the SAC. Hiring the 'out-of-house' 'celebrity' services of Ruth Wishart (see *Variant*, vol. 2, issue 7 editorial) it attempts to position the SAC as both a free-market advocate as well as an integral part of the public-service-sector accountable to 'the people'. Defending itself as committed to the demands of 'consumer access' is undoubtedly also an offensive against ceremonial accusations of elitism and media inspired controversy, real or otherwise, of where and how the public purse is being spent.

The *Creative Scotland: The Case for a National Cultural Strategy* circular, produced by an amalgam of agencies including COSLA, SAC, Scottish Screen, Scottish Museums Council, and the

Scottish Library Association, is designed to buoy their position regarding the focus already on the 'Cultural Sector' as a driving force for a talent driven society and the much vaunted entrepreneurial spirit, calling for a dedicated Ministry of Culture within the new parliament and a National Strategy for the arts. Once again a restrictive view of "cultural action", experimentation and innovation assures the arts are resigned to stimulating market growth.

Similarly there is the *Towards the New Enlightenment: A Cultural Policy for the City of Edinburgh 1999*, an Edinburgh City Council coffee-table brochure couched in the rhetoric of relieving the vulnerable whilst soliciting industrial partners. This is a sepia toned cheerleader for the instrumentalisation of the arts as an acceptable face of commerce within the city.

Best Value Service review: Museums, Heritage and Visual Arts, is Glasgow City Council's first stage report in an obligatory exercise for all Local Authorities as stipulated by government. Far from exploratory the document in verbiage of efficiency succeeds in drowning the scope of activity blanketed by the construct 'Culture and Leisure Services' within the cadre of market enterprise and regional (business) development. 'The arts' are to be sequestered to play promotional fiddle to the city's business community and 'Band-Aid' to an ailing social services —to be technocratically utilised for deterministic social, educational and economic purposes, confining funding to the ends of 'strategic planning'.

The SAC Lottery's *Summary or Responses to New Directions Consultations* [sic] is a marvel of efficiency. Its lack of substance as to how the priorities for the Lottery's New Directions were arrived at is simply awe inspiring given their repeated bulwark of an extensive consultation procedure. This has to be contrasted with the roving, full

technicolor press launches of its *funds*: funds and schemes available from SAC in 1998/99* pack. Of course, it is stressed that the numerous suggestions within the guidelines of the kinds of projects that might be eligible for funding are merely illustrative. What this does underscore however is that 'cultural activity' is to be 'on message', that the agenda for funding is not 'discursive' but 'prescriptive'. As such, 'equal opportunities' and 'equality of access' are enunciated in terms of consumer development, the arts rather than a catalyst for social change appropriated as a constituent of job 'training'.

Open Access Provision and Facilities for Artists in Scotland: The Review is a SAC commissioned "investigation" into artists' workshop provision within Scotland by Peter Davies of the Arts Council of Wales. His responsibility was to assess current needs and provisions and recommend possible change, however these changes were principally as having to be done within the euphemistic "present financial climate". While the report acknowledges the necessity of workshop provision and the work done to date, it also concedes a lack of international standards and substantial gaps within areas of provision. The fetter of the "present financial climate" instructs the scope and thrust of the document and the resulting suggestions are predictably for an extension of market principles professed as a cure-all.

Such documents claim to make the process of discourse central to either their construction, as in the transparent and benign representation of the results of consultation, or as documents whose function it is to stimulate comment and feedback, asserting consultation as an integral agent to policy outcomes. It could be stated that since bodies such as the SAC are courted for funding, the relationship between them and those they establish to consult is often illusory, i.e. by the nature of con-

sultancy those consulted ultimately have a vested interest and as such may be reluctant to openly criticise. These can then become ritualised performances, purely formal exercises, leaving the real processes of decision making as being open and transparent questionable. Such knowledge produced for official use and funded accordingly rarely questions the fundamental aims and objectives of the client organisation and any such research is by definition subject to pre-existing agenda of policy and policy implementing bodies. A synchronous action in this process is the exposing of the public sector to marketing rhetoric where manipulation of 'market imperatives' as 'cultural imperatives' is a pedestrian constituent.

An initial argument for public subsidy of 'the arts' with the creation of the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1946 was to protect 'the arts' from the ravages and tarnishes of the commercial market — "not to teach or to censor, but to give courage, confidence and opportunity"¹. The understanding that 'the arts' (initially consisting of the arts of drama, music and painting, broadened out in 1967 to encompass a wider remit of activity) could not exist without subsidy was of course never a sole reason for such support, other prime elements being the 'cultivation of the masses' — the political objective of social control through cultural discourse — and the use of public money to build institutions of national and international prestige — a cultural player on a world stage. The Arts Council's position was thus intended as an 'intermediary' body between the state and civil society, avoiding the view of direct government control over day-to-day practice as well as the perceived insidious pressures of an otherwise exclusive commercial arena.

In this sense 'Culture' was determined as consisting of a particular field of government, a broader sense of government than just governing the state, encompassing the mechanisms of social management — 'Culture' here referring specifically to the practices and institutions that make meaning. The very operation of policing 'Culture' through 'Cultural policy', aside from the etymology, raises questions of regulation, control and censorship, the tendency being to treat culture as though it were either a dangerous law breaker or a lost child.

In *Culture and the Public Sphere* (1996) Jim McGuigan traces the move from 'state' to 'market' within the public sector as a 'discursive shift' to "an administrative philosophy as a set of ideas for managing all institutions in the public sector; involving devices such as internal markets, contracting out, tendering and financial incentives... [which] coincided with the incessant promotion of a loud yet diffuse rhetoric of 'enterprise culture' which was not only about organisational change in both the private and public sectors but also about the cultivation of an 'enterprising self', a personal way of being contrasted with bureaucratic time-

servicing and vested professional interests in maintaining the status quo of public service."

He describes the fostering of 'market strategies' as a 'discursive shift' within bodies such as the Arts Councils as 'the arts' have not actually been abandoned to the ravages of the commercial sector; instead there is still a persistence of state intervention in the cultural field and public subsidy of 'the arts'. However he sees it not by chance that the total abolition of state-sponsored culture has not yet occurred, instead he sees a "continuing use of the public sector in the construction of a new common sense, the 'social-welfare-state' swept aside and replaced by a pervasive 'market reasoning'." Whereby "[t]he effect of certain discourses is to make it virtually impossible to think outside of them. In a society of discourse there are control procedures for what can be legitimately thought and enunciated: exclusion procedures that mark the boundaries of a discourse, defining that which is permissible and impermissible to say; internal procedures that regulate the distinctive operations of a discourse; and access procedures that regulate entry to a discursive field. Where once was 'the state' there is now 'the market' in discussion of cultural policy." It is then no small matter that such attempts to dictate the parameters of discourse through a pervasive managerialization of 'culture' threatens the outright commodification and privatisation of information through the total commercialisation of the public sphere.

The traditional discourse of 'quality' as a determinant of public subsidy was primarily the consumption of class 'taste' by naturalised arbitrators of cultural competence and aesthetic disposition². Capitalising on not unfounded aspersions of elitism, these capricious 'qualitative values' have now been re-inscribed within a seemingly objective 'common sense' discourse of 'value'. That value and worth, as well as having monetary implications in the sense of 'value for money' have been equated as 'the right of access to cultural consumption', and that consumption has itself become evidence of 'cultural action'. The language of the market is deployed as the residually good intention of a 'constructive advance' towards a more 'cultured' nation, that being a nation with equitable consumer access to cultural goods — so much for cultural critique as an instrument for changing consciousness. Ultimately concepts of 'quality' and 'value' are utilised to function as qualification for encouraging and (willingly or unconsciously) suppressing cultural activity. Within the states' feigning of indifference, these are employed as mechanisms in the veiling of an imposition of a distinct market ideology.

The arts are currently 'marketised' to such an extent that their circulation now resembles that of the non-state sector; the 'private' market of cultural commodities. However, McGuigan makes clear that 'marketisation', as he uses it, "is not strictly to

be subsumed under the concept of commodification since the important point is to do with the *resemblance* to the market rather than a direct *identity* with it... insofar as the state continues to hold some responsibility for cultural provision through the collection and disbursement of tax revenue." There is of course a contradiction between the promotional ideology of individualism and choice, and the evidence of actual conditions. that this endless propaganda vastly exaggerates the power the 'consumer' has over their daily lives. As McGuigan asks regarding Pierre Bourdieu's writings on the field of cultural production: "How far is the real problem for Bourdieu the unequal social distribution of cultural dispositions and competencies or how far is it the power of those with cultural capital to impose a system of cultural value which fits in with their own tastes?"

"The most profound accomplishment of the New Right in Britain may be not that it literally rolled back the state in order to release the full blast of market forces but, rather that it inserted the 'new managerialism and market reasoning' into the state-related agencies of the public sector, in effect calling upon organisations that are not themselves private businesses to think and function as though they were.... The public sector has been required to function pseudo-capitalistically, which is not only an organisational phenomenon but a deeply imbibed ideological phenomenon and one which has enormous impact on cultural agencies and the network of arts-subsidising bodies."³

The Left and Right have coalesced in imbuing 'the arts' with the rhetoric of the market. However, in spite of this deployment oligopoly, the rule by a few, rather than 'free-market competition' is ultimately the driving force in order to operate a governmental pedagogy organised by the technology of moral supervision underscoring the promotion of 'market values'. In so doing the dissemination of critical ideas is suppressed. The implications for democratic debate and diverse cultural experimentation in the face of the censorial criterion of pan-promotionalism hardly needs spelling out...

Notes

1. John Maynard Keynes, *The Listener*, 12 July 1945; Raymond Williams, *The Arts Council: Politics and Policies*, An Arts Council Lecture, 1981.
2. Described as "timeservers in the turgid little canister of Scottish arts" — Norman Lebrecht, *Daily Telegraph*
3. Jim McGuigan, *Culture and the Public Sphere*, (1996), Routledge