

Table of Contents

M27: Winter/Spring 2004 [January 2004].	1
Labouring Under the Lingo	1
Betting on Terror	2
Home Front	4
Dollarise This!	8
Physics Unbound	11
Relational history	13
Hektor	15
Spun Spooks	15
The Opencontent.org Debacle	17
Agribusiness Invades Poland	18
Internet Protocol Pirates	20
War is my Business, and Business is Good	21
Abort, Retry, Fail	23
Securing the Knowledge Empire	25
This is the Public Domain	27
From Pages to Parangoles (Radical Excess, Technology, and the Publicational Body)	28
From Open Encyclop�dia to Distributed Library Project	28
Telestreets	29
Hot-Wire Jamaica	31
Freemasons Of The Future	34
Art Basel 34	41
The Packet Gang	43
Open Source Development	54
Bombs and Bytes	58
Museum Epidemiology	63
Abstract Sex	67
Now that We are Persons	73
Hippoheimer the King	78
The Politics of Verticality	80
The Hollow Land	83
I Break Horses (I don't tend to them)	83
Just Sugaring the Pill?	83
We Saw it � Like a Flash	83
Extremely (In)Different	83
At The Hearth Of Language	83
Alternative Globalisations	83
Not The What But The Where	84
Use Faults; Disturb Conventions; Exploit Indiosyncrasies	84
(Another) Story Of Art	84
Artists in Non-Residence	84
Fashionable Noise	85
The Attic Tapes 1974-1978	86
Domain Errors!	87
Infoanarchy vs. Discordia?	88
Radical Entertainment	89
New Media 1740-1915	90
Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed	91

Peering the Torrent	92
re:Play	93
Shooting Stars / A Lester Bangs Reader	94
Lucy McKenzie's MMIV	95
Makrolab Â North 056? 48' 182Â	96
What the Newsreel Does Not Show	97
Inventing a Future for Art	98

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Labouring Under the Lingo

ByMute Editor

Editorial

Including: Zoe Young on Polish agribusiness; Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite on America's strategic use of bilateralism; Harry Potter on the Wikipedia; Sebastian Olma on Peter Lynds' theory of time; Ruth Maclennan on television and science; Betti Marenko and Miriam Swain on art & science; Luciana Parisi on Abstract Sex; JJ King on Openness; the University of Openness' Faculty of Cartography on the Semantic Web; Artists' projects by Eyal Weizman, Dani Bauer, Anselm Franke and Rafi Segal, Emma Hedditch, and Ron Silliman

George Orwell's novel *1984* has had a good innings over the last few years: in addition to the runaway success of Endemol's Big Brother format and Reality TV in general, our current affairs are now dominated by a vocabulary that appears to come straight out of the more sinister pages of the book.

As if in readiness for last year's centenary of the author's birth, evocatively named governmental agencies (the US Department of Homeland Security), catchy think tank and policy memes (Democracy Domino, Illegal Combatant) and global military campaigns (Operation Enduring Freedom, the War on Terror) have ensured that the fictional Ministry of Truth has been granted yet another lease of life in fact. Many have commented on the similarity between Oceania's infamous Newspeak and the emerging global lexicon of 21st century security-speak now gracing a radio, terminal or television near you. But despite the obvious poetic resonance between Oceania's linguistic domain of state-enforced false consciousness and that of the new military humanists, these confident parallels have often stood in the way of closer analysis.

How exactly do our media guarantee acquiescence in the face of widespread disbelief of the ‘facts’ that form their core product? Truth-value continues to determine public perception of televisual and networked media but does a reliable, consistent relationship really exist between knowledge and the media environment? In this issue, Anustup Basu’s ‘Bombs and Bytes’ (p. 64) discusses capital’s role in the creation of a sovereign sphere of ‘information’ whose capacity to connect disparate narrative elements to imply a causal connection – for example between 9/11 and Saddam Hussein – infantilises subjects fatally, and creates the conditions for fascist forms of rule.

Ali Nobil Ahmad also focuses on the role of the press – in this case the British ‘quality’ variant – in ‘Home Front’ (p. 28), describing the emergence of a differentialist racism in the liberal broadsheets’ coverage of British multicultural society.

Elsewhere, visual languages of objectivity are explored in Ruth Maclennan’s ‘We Saw It – Like a Flash’ (p. 34), which looks at the history of science television; in Betti Marenko’s ‘Museum Epidemiology’ (p. 50), which asks whether scientific techniques inevitably infect even the most avowedly artistic endeavours; and, comparably, in Miria Swain’s ‘Just Sugaring the Pill’ (p. 56), which analyses artists’ projects which transcend the two cultures paradigm that, in spite of itself, the art & science bonanza continues to promote.

The strategic mission of Orwell’s Newspeak was the total colonisation of language and the imagination. Resistance is still demanded precisely here, even if our oppressive lingo appears less rigid than Big Brother’s. Reviewing Russian poet Lev Rubinstein’s collection *Here I Am in Mute’s Rear/View* (p. 128), Cameron Bain points to the lacunae between cliché – language’s exhaustion, in my case the previous sentence – and a nonetheless persistent necessity to speak, express, utter. Beyond the grandstanding of more self-consciously political forms of language, unknown power lies in these cracks, whose furtive path betroths us to the dull yet brilliant magic of the everyday.

Pauline van Mourik Broekman <pauline AT metamute.com>

Betting on Terror

By David Mandl

David Mandl reports on the Policy Analysis Market (PAM), yet another perverse Pentagon brainchild

[IMAGE]

The Bush II administration, with an agenda that makes Ronald Reagan look like a Naderite, and a collective attitude that is a perverse reinterpretation of the situationists’ injunction, ‘Be reasonable – demand the impossible’, isn’t easily cowed by whining opposition liberals. So all eyes were riveted to the Pentagon when negative publicity on an arcane Defence Department programme caused the project’s plug to be yanked within minutes, its website to be wiped clean, and its mastermind John Poindexter – a convicted felon who had previously enjoyed unwavering support from the White House – to be sent packing.

The project, the Policy Analysis Market, was to be a ‘market in the future of the Middle East’ – a government-funded futures market allowing traders to make financial bets on the likelihood of various political and economic events in the region. The general idea wasn’t controversial or new: the Iowa Electronic Markets have allowed traders to bet on the outcome of presidential elections for years, for example. With PAM, though, the administration’s mistake was underestimating the Pavlovian power of the word terrorism, which they’d been using so successfully themselves to further their crusade against constitutional rights. Catching wind of the details of the new project (which was due to become

operational on October 1, 2003), two Democratic senators pounced and, in a press conference, called it 'a federal betting parlour on atrocities and terrorism.' This was undeniably true to a degree. One of the selling points of PAM was its potential use to 'manage risk' – that is, hedge your other investments by taking into account the possibility of a major disruption to business (and in the Middle East, what might that be?). The PAM website itself (which has fortunately been preserved at [<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/linkscopy/PAM/>]) even listed the overthrow of the Jordanian monarchy as an example of the kinds of developments PAM traders might bet on.

It was equally obvious that someone planning a terrorist attack could add insult to injury by placing an insider's bet on PAM and making a couple of million easy bucks on the side. In fact, the added financial incentive might actually encourage someone to commit a terrorist act. The icing on the cake was the claim that PAM traders were guaranteed anonymity, ruling out the possibility that PAM bets by terrorists could even be used to track the perpetrators down. (This claim was admittedly nearly worthless, coming as it was from the same people that had dreamt up the über-surveillance program TIPS – the Total Information Awareness Project.)

Nevertheless, the PAM idea had its fans, mostly among the monomaniacs who believe that Markets are the answer to every conceivable problem. Since futures markets are used to predict the weather, crop yields, and magazine sales, their argument went, why not harness that power (the brainpower of thousands of sophisticated traders with big money at stake!) to forecast the likelihood of geopolitical events? One response might be: Because they are wrong so often. The financial slaughter of the past few years (in which plenty of 'smart money' was lost alongside all the neophyte day-trader wealth), and Wall Street's tainted-research scandals, should have shaken out the last remaining believers in perfectly efficient markets, but some beliefs die hard. Further, being mistaken about GE's fourth-quarter profits is one thing, but being mistaken about an impending nuclear attack is quite another – and based on the speculations of a bunch of futures traders, no less!

Maybe PAM was an implicit acknowledgement of the now-open secret that the intelligence agencies' intelligence is no good. Or maybe it was simply the kind of amusing plaything that a tech freak with a free-market bent will naturally come up with when given enough resources and money (the public's money, that is). But while PAM might have been a hare-brained idea, it would have been small beer compared to any number of other activities being engaged in in the financial world. With my tax dollars, though? I don't think so.

Above >A US soldier comments on the images found on the Ussyorktown.com website [<http://www.ussyorktown.com/yorktown/stennis.htm>] 'Contributed by a former squadron member and CCT guy. Job satisfaction. From pilot aboard USS John C. Stennis. He was the strike element lead on this attack, and received these pictures as a "thank you" from the US Army controllers on the ground. It is an excellent example of a joint combined arms operation. A Taliban al-Qaida armoured vehicle (ex-Russian USSR Bmp) with troops embarked and riding on top, targeted by forward air controllers (FAC's) of the US Army, 4th Special Operations Group. A flight of two Navy F-14 Tomcats are called in by the US Army FAC's and strike the vehicle nearly simultaneously with GRU-16 laser guided bombs. As a bonus, there is a nice secondary explosion in the middle of the road, towards the end of the set. Actual File Footage: US Army 10 December 2001 0730 (Note: this is also attributed to USSR War against Afghanistan photos of USSR Personnel Carrier going over Afghani mine)' Above, inset >PAM logo from PAM website [<http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/linkscopy/PAM/>]

David Mandl <dmandl AT panix.com > is a writer, photographer, and DJ at WFMU-FM in New York City

Home Front

By Ali Nobil Ahmad

The British press is increasingly prepared to identify a new American imperialism in the global arena. When it comes to related domestic subjects however, even its liberal left seems incapable of expressing anti-imperialist interpretations. Analysed together with the generalised hysteria over Islam, the outlines of a new racial ideology start to emerge. By Ali Nobil Ahmad

[IMAGE]

Although immigration and the presence of Islam in the West are by no means historically new social phenomena, the unprecedented centrality they have come to acquire in public debate compels more careful consideration than has been forthcoming. Existing media speculation on the ‘problems’ resulting from the migration and settlement of Muslims in Occidental domains tends to focus either on perceived threats to internal security or the supposed eradication of social cohesion due to the presence of ‘different’ cultures, and feeds into wider anxieties about the general drain on resources caused by the growing infiltration of ‘greedy economic migrants’ posing as refugees. The new common sense dictates that none of these apparent ills get analysed with reference to causality or social context, so that even where the West has a hand in precipitating large scale displacements of populations (for instance, by bombing countries like Afghanistan as part of its ‘war on terror’), those who dare seek asylum within its borders are disconnected from the origins of their journey at the moment they enter European space. Whilst they are by no means the sole victims of this ideological trick, Muslim immigrants in the west occupy a privileged position among those groups variously demonised as belonging outside the West but constantly threatening to permeate, contaminate and destroy what lies within it. Their representation as aliens provides the glue in liberal and right-wing rhetoric that yokes their status as threats to the local/national, to that of a more global menace to advanced capital. This process, by which well established traditions of prejudice are being restructured in accordance with new regimes of capital accumulation, is the latest chapter in an older story of racialisation.

Shifts in the political-economy of imperialism have generated a gradual displacement in the hegemonic discourse of 20th century anti-communism and skin-colour based colonial racism by a more ‘differentialist’ neo-racism of the kind suffered historically by the Jews. The latter is now increasingly mobilised to envelop ‘deviants’ as diverse as Arabs, Muslims, immigrants and asylum seekers. Islamophobia’s victims, in other words, are not just Muslims. Its power, rather, derives from the fact of its deep intertwinement with broader reactionary and xenophobic currents being stirred up to deflect attention from the failings of the post- Keynesian state. Who better to explain the problematic of this new imperial agenda than Francis Fukuyama, former US official and celebrated neoliberal ‘philosopher’, whose pronouncements have taken a decidedly Huntingdonian turn since Al-Qaida’s horrific attack on New York: There does seem to be something about Islam, or at least fundamentalist Islam, that makes Muslim societies particularly resistant to modernity...Islam is the only cultural system that regularly seems to produce people like Osama bin Laden or the Taliban, who reject modernity, lock, stock and barrel. This raises the question of how representative such people are of the larger Muslim community...Certainly the number of people willing to go on suicide missions and actively conspire against the US is tiny. But sympathy for them...extends from the middle-classes in countries like Egypt to immigrants in the west.¹ Whether in the Middle-East or in Bradford, whether suicide bombing or expressing sympathy with suicide bombers, Muslims signify, for Fukuyama, a frustrating, stubborn rearguard force: a unitary block of backwardness between the market and its goal of Ending History.

It isn't hard to imagine how, in the context of debates on Britain's immigration 'problem', such vague depictions of Islamic anti-modernity translate into suspicion and hostility against groups such as Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, now increasingly homogenised under the general category of Muslim. As the Bush doctrine reverberates down the imperial chain into Britain, resurgent conservatism claim 9/11 as vindication of its suspicions against the now dominant liberal multiculturalism which rose to hegemony in the 1980s. Right-wing media commentators have sought to restore the esteem of Britain's 'host' population. Now is the time, they feel, for the natives to recuperate territory lost to the aggrandising projects of antiracism and 'political correctness', as Minette Marrin of *The Sunday Times* explains in her column: The massacres of September 11 have brought many extraordinary changes and one of them has been in the way that people talk. Suddenly, all kinds of unsayable things have become sayable. In particular, all sorts of things about multiculturalism are being murmured.² This 'growing national frankness', she asserts, is rolling back 'the assumption of multiculturalism that all cultures are equal and deserve equal respect', 'an idea that almost nobody actually believes in.' It was only ever accepted, we are told, because 'decent people with such doubts have been cowed into silence for years' by 'the bullies of the race relations industry' advancing the interests of a mere '8% of Britons' ('racial minorities') at the expense of 'the indigenous culture of Britain' which has been 'shamed, belittled, ignored'. 'Our national identity', Marrin goes on, 'has been weakened and confused.' 'Our', here, of course, excludes Britain's 'racial minorities' who do not apparently share 'our' history, and possess 'minority cultures' which 'desecrate the sacred western belief in the rights of women.' For guardians of this higher civilisation – those who knew the damning truth about 'minority cultures' all along but had to bite their tongues for fear of being dubbed a racist in the 1980s and 90s – the post 9/11 publicity accorded to female circumcision has conveniently 'shown people in the light'. Now not even those of a more liberal persuasion, who once may have turned a blind eye to such exotic barbarities in the interests of 'multicultural tolerance', can ignore the plain truths of Oriental despotism. Most people would struggle to connect female genital mutilation and Al-Qaida's attack on New York. Not Marrin. Their common roots in anti-western barbaric forces are obvious enough, and allow her to treat the 'problems' of Islam, terrorism and immigration as one.

Her remarks should be understood within the context of Home Secretary David Blunkett's public lamentation of the lack of 'cohesion' in northern mill towns like Oldham and Bradford. Where there was at least some minimal acceptance in liberal circles of the notion that unemployment and alienation lead to the 1981 outbreaks of discontent in Toxteth, Liverpool and Brixton, the current government's reaction to the disturbances in Oldham and elsewhere fostered the view of young British Muslims as 'culturally different' even before 9/11, so that the picture painted is one of an obstinate group not wanting to be part of 'our' society. Blunkett did not go so far as to draw any connection between his own hardening line and more aggressive western foreign policy after 9/11. The timing, however, of his statements on 'abhorrent' minority cultural practices have allowed others like Marrin to make the obvious inferences. (See also Anustup Basu's article, p. 64)

Journalist Lesley White is another who took advantage of the post-9/11 atmosphere to get stuck into 'multiculturalism' in a lengthy front page feature for the *Sunday Times Magazine* which sets up Oldham as the dark heart of Northern England, the object of a courageous anthropological investigation into the causes of 'racial conflict' that led to the apparent creation of 'no-go' areas for white people.³ Daringly, she arranges to be driven around Glodwick estate by a white resident at night past 'a gang of Asian teenagers', recounting the episode in Conradian tones: 'Their smiles contort to an absurdly exaggerated sneer; one holds my gaze in a silent hostile demand: what are you doing here, white woman?...a moment of indignation overtakes my nervousness; why shouldn't I be driving through a street at 10pm in my own bloody country? [her italics]. Now there's a thought for the enlightened multiculturalist.'⁴

'Anti-immigrant racism', asserts White, 'is something of the past.' Now Britain's besieged natives are the 'ethnic minority'. The communities she describes are portrayed as strong and aggressive rather than biologically inferior, as were young black men in the 1980s, when the social problems triggered by de-industrialisation first kicked in. With the deepening of this malaise under New Labour, the same trope is being remobilised to frame a new scapegoat. This time, in accordance with the logic of neo-racism, the old skin-colour term 'Asian' is used in Oldham 'to describe only Pakistanis and Bangladeshis' ('The Indians aren't Asian, you're confidently informed'). Of course older racial ideologies directed against other non-white groups continue to operate alongside the dominant Islamophobia that White discovers. But the geographic concentration of South Asian Muslims in the poorest former industrial districts of the North (and East London) alongside the bitter white working classes abandoned by New Labour, together with the emergence of visibly integrated Indian middle class, has indeed strengthened the perception that religion rather than skin colour is the primary site of 'difference'. Hardly surprising then, that the BNP, who took votes from all the major parties in the last election, concentrated its efforts in areas heavily populated by Muslims who, for party leader Nick Griffin constitute 'the biggest problem at present.' This is not only because 'Islam is an aggressive religion', but also because they 'have a high birth rate' and need 'living space'.⁵ Similarly Malthusian references to British Muslims, deemed to be 'importing poverty' by Labour politicians like Anne Cryer, underline the irritation caused by their stubborn refusal to sever ties with their communities of origin in the South, and do much to expose the real concerns that lie behind a good part of the talk about social cohesion – if this wasn't obvious enough following Blunkett's drive to curb transcontinental marriages. Marrin puts it frankly: 'Any arranged marriage is unappealing, perhaps even shocking to people within the host culture,' but what 'causes real resentment' is the suspicion that 'the point is to get a prized British passport for the foreigner and to enable people to jump the immigration queue.'

There are, of course, genuine issues of gender oppression at stake in forced marriages. And one has to agree with the left liberal Guardian journalist Ian Buruma in the bankruptcy of cultural relativism: the notion that 'all customs and habits must be tolerated, regardless of their merits' is, few would dispute, misguided.

Problems with Buruma's benevolent concern for the plight of oppressed immigrant women, however, emerge as early as the title of the article, 'Why Blunkett is right about curbing arranged marriages', which simply conflates 'forced' and 'arranged' marriages even more clumsily than does Marrin in her more hostile rantings.

A decontextualised 'feminist' analysis of the psychological process they supposedly perpetuate then allows him to conclude:

'It is humiliating to force a young woman to marry a stranger from a far away village, with whom she has nothing in common apart from her race. The father chose to live in a strange country. The daughter was born here...discouraging long-distance arranged marriages helps to promote integration in Britain and thus the chance of individual happiness.'⁶ Once more, Buruma's assumption that 'longdistance arranged marriages' are always forced upon unwilling victims by an all powerful patriarch is not necessarily sound, but let that pass; we shouldn't dispute the existence of harsh forms of patriarchy within impoverished migrant communities. The problem is more that his touching concern for the 'integration' and 'individual happiness' of migrant daughters subjected to 'humiliation' by patriarchal fathers rather conceals the historical context in which this scenario was produced in the first place, namely state sponsored migration put into effect to meet British demand for workers in those segments of the labour market evacuated by poor white women.

Moreover, that some of the greatest humiliations undergone by migrant women, particularly in the British context, have historically been perpetuated by the imperial state. The infamous virgin tests, in which brides arriving from the subcontinent were subjected to medical examinations in order to prove their virginity and thus their status as authentic Asian brides to British immigration officials spring most immediately to mind.

Without conflating the Far Right with these liberal intellectuals and politicians, it seems legitimate to point out that what we see after 9/11 is merely a respectable version of claims made by the former entering the mainstream. If Buruma's feminist discourse is subtle in colluding with this process, Marrin's assertion that 'we have been embarrassed out of standing up to those who despise our values, the book burners, the terrorists' casually conflates Al-Qaida and Britain's Muslim communities (who for many came to be signified by the trope of 'book burners' after a few Bradford mullahs torched some copies of The Satanic Verses in 1988) in a manner that is little different to BNP leader Nick Griffin's sweeping claims about Islam. She too regards the latter as a homogeneous global entity whose content can be reduced to the sum of the actions of its most extreme manifestations.

Along with Buruma, she attributes the clouds of suspicion gathering over 'moderate' Muslims to their regrettable failure to distance themselves from the Jihadis. Just how many of Britain's one million Muslims either of them consulted before reaching this conclusion remains unclear. Within the British Muslim public sphere, condemnation of terrorism has in fact come from virtually all quarters. Its shortcoming as far as the mainstream is concerned, one suspects, is that it tends to be directed at terrorism in all its forms, including that perpetrated by western governments.

What, then, is the material effect on policy of this distortive media debate on 'terrorism' and the loyalty of British Muslims? Although difficult to measure in precise terms, the latest Tory proposals aimed at curbing immigration suggest it fosters an atmosphere in which ever more draconian policing of borders will become the norm. Outflanked by New Labour's increasingly hard line on these matters, the Conservatives are left with little strategic alternative but to drag the political centre of the debate still further to the right, as is clear from their proposal to introduce health screening of those who wish to enter Britain as part of a bid to stifle 'NHS tourism'. The latest statistics, allegedly, betray an increase in numerous infectious diseases in Britain on a scale unseen in years, a fact which apparently reflects the growing tendency to migrate here for free health care. London, according to Liam Fox, Tory Health Spokesman, is 'the TB capital of the western world.' The London borough of Newham, a chief recipient of asylum seekers, has been repeatedly singled out as an example by reference to its high rates of TB. (The 15 per cent or so of Newham's NHS nurses poached from poor countries, however, seldom figure in such calculations of the cost of migration to 'our' welfare system which, like a good many other public services, owes its very existence to migrant labour.)

That the renewed spread of infectious diseases like TB is a global problem that will not be solved by keeping 'them' out gets lost in the simplicity of such bile, as does the irony of the Tories and right-wing press joining forces to protect the welfare state. Concern for the plight of fellow human beings who are sick, needless to say, does not enter. It is simply presumed right and good that that these people should go off and die somewhere else. In a different world, statistics which confirm that the health of refugees deteriorates in a wealthy country where they reside in overcrowded and rat infested accommodation would be more a matter of shame for the host nation than those who seek its protection, but such is the logic of the current debate.

1 Francis Fukuyama 'We Remain at the End of History' The Independent October 11 2001

2 Minette Marrin 'At last, a debate that will penetrate the racial fog' in The Sunday Times February 10 2002 p21

3 Lesley White 'Britain's New Ethnic Minority' Sunday Times Magazine 13.01.2002 p48

4 48

5 Jeevan Vasgar 'Far Right aims to gain foothold in Oldham' The Guardian May 30 2001

6 Ian Burma 'Why Blunkett is right about curbing arranged marriages even if it means stepping on extra-sensitive toes' The Guardian 12.02.2002 (G2 p5) population. Now is the time, they feel, for the natives to recuperate territory Without collapsing together the Far Right with liberal intellectuals and politicians, it seems legitimate to point out that what we see after 9/11 is merely a respectable version of claims made by the former entering the mainstream

Images>'The Summer of Discontent'; Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, 2001. 'The current government reaction to the disturbances in Oldham and elsewhere fostered the view of of young British Muslims as 'culturally different' even before 9/11, so that the picture painted is one of an obstinate group not wanting to be part of 'our' society.'

Ali Nobil Ahmad <Ali.Ahmad AT IUE.it > is a doctoral researcher at the European University Institute in Florence. His Phd is a comparative study of migration from Pakistan to London and Algeria to Paris

Dollarise This!

By Natascha Sadr-Haghighian

Natascha Sadr-Haghighian presents *meinebank* where artists are educating themselves about economics. Includes *meinebank*'s interview with Behrooz Abdolvand and Matthias Adolf on the petrodollar

The relationship between economics and art is thankfully not just a one-way street entailing art's ever-increasing commodification and imitation of the forms of business. Artists are educating themselves about their assimilation into the knowledge economy and the perfection of creativity's conversion into value within the bigger picture of economic deterritorialisation. Here, co-organiser of the Berlin-based *meinebank* project Natascha Sadr Haghighian introduces their work. A transcript of *meinebank*'s interview with Behrooz Abdolvand and Matthias Adolf about the petrodollar follows

[IMAGE]

Why is cultural practice so successfully deployed as the role model for the neoliberal workforce? In September the Berlin-based collective *meinebank* organised *Crashcourse*, a one month symposium where cultural practitioners gathered in Berlin to discuss their ideas and strategies for dealing with monetary dilemmas. Apart from discussing people's personal financial situations, different topics were examined including copyright, inner city development, debt, ethnic marketing and the petrodollar. *meinebank* started off as a collective approach to providing regular exchange and encounters around subcultural concepts. The name – meaning 'my bank' – was taken from a local bank's advertisement. Its main motivation was to look at social economies and their multiple connotations by organising interdisciplinary events with associated groups and individuals. Since April 2000, *meinebank* has carried out about sixty events that took place in various spaces across Berlin, but mostly in the former GDR's state bank. The programme's main intention was to intensify and support associated infrastructures. Its ideal precondition was its own realisation without any cashflow manoeuvres. As the gulf between such a practice and its economic context became more apparent, *meinebank* decided to leave the no money concept behind and instead examine the ambivalences of money within cultural production. The collective applied for a federal grant and created a scenario in which the cashflow was carefully watched, different models of trading, funding and producing were discussed, conflicts and distortions documented and the question posed: what are the trade values of cultural production? It

seems that since the 1970s more than just the concept of labour has shifted towards immateriality. At the transition point between Fordism and post-Fordism, the link between value and its material guarantor was dissolved at its very economic foundation: the abolition of the gold standard. The dominant currency, the dollar, became a fiat currency (a currency that is not backed by any real commodity) and even more powerful as a result. The dollar is still in crisis which obviously not only affects the US but the whole world. To find out more, meinebank invited Behrooz Abdolvand and Matthias Adolf – two scientists whose detailed research into the petrodollar was recently published in a German magazine ('Verteidigung des Dollar mit anderen Mitteln', Blätter fuer Deutsche und Internationale Politik, 2/03). A two-hour talk at the Crashcourse symposium made clear that the US' recent military adventures have been more about defending their currency than controlling resources. MB: What precisely are petrodollars? BA: The oil price does not obey the normal law of value, it is not determined by the most favourable terms of supply. There is not enough low-cost oil production to meet the entire demand, hence the price adapts to more expensively produced oil. The price difference generates extra profit for those countries able to produce more cheaply – the so-called differential rent. These extra profits are called petrodollars.

[IMAGE]

MB: Since when have petrodollars been in circulation?

BA: Since the 1973 oil crisis. Until World War II, oil was predominantly traded in pounds sterling. Since then, the oil price has been calculated in dollars. But in order to understand the developments of the last fifty years, we have to go back to Bretton Woods.

MB: What was decided in 1944 in Bretton Woods and why did the treaty collapse in 1973.

MA: Bretton Woods organised the post-war economic order. The GATT treaty regulated international trade, the World Bank regulated economic development and the IMF was supposed to prevent economic crises. However, the IMF – officially part of the UN – has no control over the dollar as reserve currency. The latter underlies the structure of the Federal Reserve which is itself an association of private banks. In contrast to the Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank is state controlled. In Bretton Woods the gold price was determined at \$35 per ounce. The other currencies were bound to the dollar by more or less fixed exchange rates.

The Bretton Woods structure was eventually undermined by the US' excessive creation of money. Particularly the wars in Korea and Vietnam led to high overseas debt. In late 1972, debts rose to \$78 billion, while there was merely the equivalent of \$11 billion in the gold depot. The gold standard could not be sustained anymore. MB: What happened after the breakdown of Bretton Woods.

BA: The US introduced a new factor into the game: oil and its price. From 1973 onwards, OPEC drove up oil prices and the US tolerated it. This led to an accumulation of dollars in the Arab world. The surplus money was reinvested mainly in the US and Europe, resulting in the emergence of the petrodollar recycling system. The oil price thus became an instrument of financial policy, able to influence the trend in foreign markets.

MB: Does that mean that oil took the place of gold as the basis of the dollar? BA: Carbohydrates as suppliers of energy in general. Carbohydrates provide the foundation of our civilisation. Controlling them became state doctrine in the US. MB: Thus, the war in Iraq was indeed about oil?

MA: Yes and no. The US do not depend on oil imports from Iraq. By now, Canada has tapped much larger oil fields. Besides, the costs of the military intervention are out of proportion to the gain. They amount to twenty times the normal oil price if calculated per barrel gained. However, the US does run

into problems if other countries acquire access to the Middle Eastern oil and pay for it in their own currencies. This would undermine the dollar as the reserve currency.

MB: What relation does all this have to the war in Iraq then?

BA: Since the end of 2000, Iraq had been selling its oil for euros and shifted its national reserves to the euro as well. After the war, one of the Federal Reserve's first measures was to bring billions of dollar bills into the country in order to replace the dinar. A veritable 'dollarisation' of the national economy. Furthermore, the occupation of Iraq could help to bring Iran, who deals part of her oil in euros, back to the dollar.

MB: The word is that without stabilisation through the petrodollar the dollar would have to be devalued by 60%?

BA: The productivity of the US economy corresponds to 28% of world trade while the dollar constitutes 60% of the world's money supply. Consequently, the dollar supply should be reduced. Is the US going to buy the dollars back with gold or foreign currency? Unimaginable. Or will it raise interest rates to regain the capital? Impossible. Currently, the US seems to be willing to sustain her geo-economic position by military means.

The greatest benefit of having a national currency that is simultaneously the world currency results from the so called Seigneurage advantage. The US are in possession of a machine that prints money. The Federal Reserve holds the exclusive right to distribute dollars. Let's assume that I am sitting here issuing you bonds as someone who works for me. You then go and deposit the bonds as savings in my bank. That is currently reality.

MB: For how long is it possible to sustain such a system?

MA: Contrary to export-economies such as Germany, Japan or China, the US and Britain show a permanent balance deficit. For Britain it amounts to about \$30 billion annually, for the US to about \$600 billion, i.e. 5% of the GDP. One can imagine the amounts accumulated over the last decades. In strictly economic terms the US is bankrupt. A daily supply of \$2 billion is necessary to finance the US' deficit.

MB: Is there a risk of significant geoeconomic conflicts between two 'currencyblocks'? Was the euro invented for this purpose?

BA: Initially, there was the ecu – a sort of half-hearted European version of Bretton Woods (with fixed exchange rates and 1% floating) for the protection of the internal market. At the 2+4 treaty, France only accepted German reunification on the condition that the deutschmark would be abandoned and the euro accepted. Currently there is a sort of economic balance of power between the euro and the dollar with the Europeans trying to get into the Seigneurage position as well. Either the attempt to revitalise the US economy through regulation supported by countries like Germany, Japan, and China succeeds, or there will be another war in the Middle East. It's either regulation or war. **MB:** Would it be feasible to reorder the state of affairs without a crisis?

BA: I hope so. The problem is solvable only through international co-operation, meaning the successive reorganisation of the world economy within an economic system that links money supply to production.

MA: We are talking about long-term transitions, a ten-year term. Nobody is interested in a destabilisation of the US.

meinebank.crashcourse [<http://www.mbnk.info>]

Stefan Heidenreich < stefan.heidenreich AT rz.huberlin. de > lives in Berlin, works for the 'History and Systematics of Digital Media' project, Cultural Studies Dept., Humboldt-University Berlin and is author of *Was Verspricht die Kunst?* (The Promise of Art), Berlin, 1998

Natascha Sadr Haghighian is a part of meinebank and lives in Berlin

Physics Unbound

By Sebastian Olma

Sebastian Olma sees a surprising reemergence of Bergson in Peter Lynds' novel theory of time

[IMAGE]

The publication of Einstein's 'On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies' revolutionised our understanding of time. What was to become the most famous paper of 20th century physics created turmoil in 'God's sensorium' which, according to Newton, constituted the proper place of time. Time no longer served as an absolute repository of mechanical movements but became the numerical multiplicity of space-time relations, determined by rulers and clocks. Now Peter Lynds, a 27-year-old broadcasting school tutor from Wellington, New Zealand, has published a paper in the August issue of *Foundations of Physics Letters* that has stirred up the international physics community once again.¹ Lynds attacks physics for upholding what he considers the nonsensical notion of time as a succession of precise static instants. If there were such things, Lynds argues, it would logically follow that the world would remain frozen at a precise instant, 'as though stuck on pause or freeze frame on a motion screen.' This could not be changed by postulating a continuous sequence of further instances, since it is the logical nature of frozen instances not to have duration. Thus, in its own understanding of time, physics prohibits continuity and motion to take place. The solution Lynds offers is the fairly outrageous claim that time does not exist at all – or at least not in a way that can be grasped by conventional physics. Time has no existence as physical quantity: 'This may seem somewhat counter-intuitive, but it is exactly what is required by nature to enable time (relative interval as indicated by a clock), motion and the continuity of a physical process to be possible.' Lynds has also managed to solve Zeno of Elea's infamous motion and infinity paradoxes. (The arrow refuses to reach its target just as the tortoise forbids Achilles to overtake only if the value of their respective positions is assumed to be precisely determined. Such a precise determination would result in the impossibility of changing this position, since in order to proceed to another precise value, it would first have to proceed to half that value, then to half that value, and so on.) As Lynds comments, 'With some thought it should become clear that no matter how small the time interval, or how slowly an object moves during that interval, it is still in motion and its position is constantly changing, so it cannot have a determined relative position at any time, whether during an interval, however small, or at an instant.'² One of the interesting things about Lynds' solution to Zeno's paradoxes is its echoing of Henri Bergson's treatment of the problem. In fact, Lynds' critique of time as physical quantity can be seen a reemergence of Bergson's project in physics – with a 100 years delay. For Bergson, Zeno's paradoxes were due to the illegitimate identification of movement with the space upon which it supposedly takes place. What is being attacked by the unlikely couple Bergson/Lynds is precisely the confusion of intensity (movement, quality) with extensity (space, quantity). Notwithstanding Bergson's obvious shortcomings in dealing with general relativity, Duration and Simultaneity did correctly reproach

Einstein for reinforcing this confusion. Although relativity theory did away with the idea of absolute time (time independent of things), it introduced the idea of a multiplicity of mathematically discrete space-time blocs/events, thus upholding an essentially spatialised notion of time. The question now is not so much why Lynds suddenly talks about the non-existence of time as physical quantity, thus invoking a time that Einstein did not believe to exist and that he denoted ‘philosopher’s time’,⁴ but rather, why Lynds’ ideas have such an astonishing resonance among the physics community. The answer may lie in the historical context of such ‘time-revolutions’. Einstein, far from being the detached, other-worldly genius of popular myth, was of course not only very strongly embedded in the cultural and technological zeitgeist of mature industrial capitalism but also among the foremost experts on time-keeping and synchronisation technology due to his work in Bern’s patent office.⁵

Consequently, Einstein’s time emerged at the heart of a historical movement characterised by an ever tightening disciplinary grip. Crudely speaking, Einsteinian time was the time of the confinements, confinements that needed co-ordination. Factories, hospitals, colonies, prisons, etc. formed veritable space-time blocs whose relative position to one another was of vital importance for the workings of the system as a whole. In retrospect, the disciplinary society at its apex seems rather likely to have propelled the emergence of a notion of time as ‘being kept’ in little space-time containers. From such an historical perspective, then, the reemergence of Bergson’s critique of extensity is today far from surprising. It coincides with the completion of the long durée of capitalist extension. Globalisation has ended some decades ago, followed by an accelerated intensification that Negri, Lazzarato and others have begun to describe. This is not to say – as some do – that space disappears. It only disappears as pure quantity in order to re-emerge as a problem, as something that is suddenly invested with time/quality but not as a succession of concrete, confined blocs but as virtual flow. As modernity’s confinements are collapsing, time/quality does not lend itself so easily anymore to spatialising imagination. The phenomenon Lynds articulates is thus isomorphic with post-disciplinary ontology as it finally hits the last bastion of modern epistemology, i.e. science. In this sense one could understand quantum mechanics as the link between Einstein and Lynds: the ‘smearing out’ of (subatomic) space-time containers as the physical analogy of time/quality (Foucault’s pouvoir-puissance) beginning to leak out of the porous walls of modern confinements. Maybe such an immediate understanding of ontological isomorphism is pushing it a bit far. In any case, what these analogies try to suggest is that Lynds’ problematisation of time appears in fact to be quite timely. It coincides with capital’s increasing virtuosity in managing the problem of the immeasurability of social creativity.⁶ The biopolitical machinery of unmediated appropriation is already successfully operating on the virtual flows of social creativity – one might think of the project-form that organises most of today’s immaterial labour, the productivity of internet consumers, or the countless interactive starlet-creation games on television. Even these few examples indicate that capital has well understood time as highly productive virtuality, as qualitative duration. The fact that physics is now catching up on the issue of time offers as promising or bleak a prospect as the ‘discovery of time’ does for our life in general. As Lazzarato, drawing on Bergson, suggests, the machinery that results from such an appreciation of time/quality ‘could either support our “active becoming” or rigidify us in passivity.’⁷ Time – of which, as we have to be aware, our own creativity is an essential feature – will tell.

1 The relevant paper can be found at [<http://doc.cern.ch/archive/electronic/other/ext/ext-2003-045.pdf>]. Unless otherwise specified quotes from Lynds are taken from this paper

2 Jones, Brooke, ‘Ground-breaking work in understanding of time’, at [http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2003-07/icc-gwi07270]

3 Bergson, Henri, *Duration and Simultaneity*, Manchester: Clinamen (1999 [1922])

4 Discussion with Einstein, in: *ibid.*, p. 159

5 On the very interesting detail of Einstein’s embeddedness, see Galison, Pete, *Einstein’s Clocks, Poincaré’s Maps*, London: Sceptre (2003)

6 On the problem of measure see Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio *Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.:

Harvard,(2000) p. 356 passim

7 Lazzarato, Maurizio, Videophilosophie, Berlin: B-Books, (2002), p. 27

Sebastian Olma <s.olma AT gold.ac.uk > is currently working on a PhD, working title Reorganising Life. He lives in Hackney, London

Illustration>Lady Lucy <ladylucy AT independenterione.org >

Relational history

ByPauline van Mourik Broekman

György Galántai and Julia Klaniczay, the founding members of Budapest's Artpool Art Research Centre, visited London's Austrian Cultural Forum this summer. Pauline van Mourik Broekman reports on a public archive institution with a difference

[IMAGE]

This summer the Austrian Cultural Forum, continuing its recent programme of curatorial devolution, invited duo B+B (Sophie Hope and Sarah Carrington) to put on a series of special events. In the face of imminent EU enlargement and the unforeseeable changes it will no doubt instigate, B+B's 'at home' chose to focus on the many artists and organisations they had encountered during past journeys through Central and Eastern Europe. Two evening events were dedicated to Hungarian organisation Artpool, a veritable pillar of the avantgarde and, as it turns out, a formidable source of information for anyone interested in art and networks. Like so many 'alternative' art ventures, Artpool is a creature born of necessity. Its roots go back to the Communist era when, between 1970 and 1973, founding member György Galántai organised a series of summer studios and exhibitions for his artist peers in the Balatonboglár Chapel, near Lake Balaton. Contributing to the modernist currents coursing through art at an international level, the studio initiative was as much an attempt to connect with a scattered creative community as a personal refusal to submit to the ideological terms and conditions imposed by the state on local cultural life. In 1984, Artpool co-founders Julia Klaniczay and György Galántai exhibited work by Hungarian and international artists under the title 'Hungary Can Be Yours! / International Hungary'. Following the closure of the studios in 1973, this show earned itself the unenviable honour of being the last exhibition in Hungary to be banned by the State. At his talk, however, Galántai was oddly loath to attribute political intentionality, let alone oppositionality, to his initiatives. When asked how Artpool's political stance had evolved in response to the drastic changes in its context and status (the organisation went from underground pariah to state-backed institution of culture), he absolutely rejected the question's political imperative. But the fact that the works weren't vetted or sanctioned and, one imagines, wore their international influences on their sleeves, automatically guaranteed the authorities' profound interest in Galántai's efforts early on, and inevitably left him classed as a dangerous subversive. This is documented in an official secret agent's report (on show in the exhibition), which states that the 1984 works 'mock and attack our state and our social order as well as the state security organs', and details attendance of significant persons connected to the 'artist-radical' down to the last infant. It is difficult not to see Galántai's interventions as in some sense politically inspired, despite his protestations to the contrary. But if insisting on his, or later Artpool's, anti-authoritarianism misrepresents lived experience, the latter's role as a guardian of unrecognised and ephemeral art forms is beyond doubt.

[IMAGE]

[IMAGE]

Artpool maintains an astonishing archive of Fluxus, performance and mail art works, assiduously scanning, cataloguing, and storing related material from all over the world, making it publicly available through its library, and putting it online via its sprawling treasure trove of a website. Its founders' participation in these art forms meant that Artpool followed them from the inside out, collecting material from a growing international network of collaborators and friends. Besides routing and collecting thousands of mail art works, they also produced their own newsletter-cum-magazine, Artpool Letter, whose purpose was to function as both a communiqué to and conduit back from the international scene. The general adroitness with which the publication handled its position as mediator between the global and the local uncannily prefigures contemporary cultural web forums, although it also exposes the semiotic homogeneity of their easy globalism. (A typical juxtaposition – from AL3, March 1983 – places art historian Lóránd Hegyi's article "Trans-Avantgarde, Post-Modern, New Subjective", or Art After the Expansion at the Beginning of the 80s' next to translated excerpts from Barney Hoskyns' 'The Price of Fame', from the NME, 14 March 1982, and a debate on the Young Artists' Club of Budapest.) Stefan Szczelkun, among other things a writer and mail artist, points to a more subtle possible reading of Artpool's postal hyperactivity and its resistance to an explicit political consciousness when he suggests that, 'the ultra democracy of the [mail art] movement preceded and was probably a part of the great democratic uprisings in Eastern Europe. Not that many projects were overtly political but for people in the eastern bloc countries such as Poland easy access to an international forum was a powerful antidote to a debilitating marginalisation and internal state censorship.' Having achieved the prominent position that it now has, the most visible dilemma for Artpool is how it deals with its dual role as 'museum' and 'participant'. Scanning some of the output of this incredible institution – whose meticulously maintained collection would put many more mature state equivalents to shame – you couldn't help but think a rather fetishistic relationship to objects and history was in the making. Is the preservation and organisation of art coming to supercede its production? Is the dutiful recording of live experimental art forms building a heritage industry bled of all self-criticality? After the ACF visitors had mulled over these questions, Galántai hesitantly ventured an answer, namely that it is in the organisation of information – the metaactivity of relation building, category creation and history making – that Artpool's cultural practice now resides. Where fear of historical amnesia is being exacerbated by digital information's instability, and interest in archives is at an all time high, his comment challenged the linear interpretation of time both these phenomena betray. Here, experience and its documentation turn into a malleable material able to constantly generate new vectors of connection and meaning across space-time. How collaborative a process this can be remains open to question, but for this audience member it finally put paid to the idea that Artpool is simply in the history business.

Picture Credits

Top> AL5 (Summer 1983)

>AL10 (Winter 1984)

>AL9 (May 1984)

>AL6 (September 1983)

>György Galántai, Julia

Klaniczay and colleague, Austrian Cultural Forum, 'at home', Summer 2003.

Photograph: Sophie Hope

Clockwise from top

left >Works by Demeter István, Haris László, Ilyés István, Magyar József, Papp Oszkár, Péterfy László, August 1970

>Works by Csáji Attila, Csutoros Sándor, Molnár V. József, Pauer Gyula, Temesi Nóra, August/September 1970

>Image advertising the Telenetlink exhibition, 1991;

>Flux Flags and Documents, Budapest Spring Festival, 1992 , Tommy Mew (top) and Luc Fierens

(bottom)

Artpool [<http://www.artpool.hu>]

B+B [<http://www.welcomebb.org.uk>]

Stefan Szczelkun's 'Cultural Groups & Collectives' text is on the Independent Art School website at [http://basic1.easily.co.uk/05A047/02F004/Stefan_Szczelkun.htm]

Pauline van Mourik Broekman <pauline AT metamute.com > is the co-publisher of Mute magazine

Hektor

ByMute Editor

A picture story of Jürg Lehni's portable graffiti machine

[IMAGE]

Jürg Lehni and Uli Franke's Hektor is a portable graffiti printer consisting of two motors, a spraycan holder, toothed belts, cables, a strong battery and a circuit board connected to a laptop which controls the machine. Via changes in the length of these belts, Hektor's spray-can can follow vector graphic paths and spray them onto walls.

[IMAGE] [IMAGE]

Spun Spooks

ByMark Fisher

In the BBC's latest spy-series-cum-MI5-promo 'Spooks', the spies have come in from the cold and are lounging about on designer sofas. Mark Fisher investigates their passage from ghosts to yuppies

[IMAGE]

Who can doubt, in the age of the War on Terror, that Fiction bleeds into the Real? Lying, dissimulation, spin, intelligence, espionage, fiction: Dr Kelly's death has illustrated the extent to which these already slippery terms are falling into synonymy. The Kelly affair – in which the largest possible geo-political stakes are played out through the messy seediness of betrayal, professional rivalry and the quirks of individual psychology – looks like it could have been scripted by John Le Carré.

This is at a time when MI5 thought it had laid Le Carré's ghost to rest. The BBC's adaptation of Le Carré's 'Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy' has haunted the agency since it was first broadcast in 1979. As witheringly nihilistic as anything in punk, 'Tinker Tailor' mordantly stripped away the James Bond image of the glamorous spy. Unlike Fleming's action-man hedonist, Le Carré's spies were not heroes but jaded civil servants, caught up in a world of generalised mistrust, endemic corruption, and uneasy compromise: a cold, drab East Germany of the soul. Le Carré's influence was such that the neologisms he coined – 'moles', 'lamplighters', 'babysitters' – actually became used by intelligence professionals. And Le Carré's image of MI5 has been confirmed by a series of scandals, from Spycatcher in the eighties to the Shayler affair more recently.

Enter 'Spooks', the BBC's post-9/11 MI5 drama. 'Spooks' is the antidote to Le Carré: a spy series which flaunts its contemporary gloss and youthful vigour. In 'Spooks', Le Carré's 'Circus' has had a '00s-style makeover: no more plain buff files and dingy offices, just slick, open plan designer spaces, discreetly showcasing up-to-the-minute technology. And gone, too, are Le Carré's disillusioned middle-aged men. At the frontline of the Spooks service are Tom Quinn (Matthew MacFadyen), Zoe Reynolds (Keeley Hawes) and Danny Hunter (David Oyelowo) – young, energetic, irritatingly well-spoken and implausibly good-looking. MI5 was reputedly perturbed by 'Spooks'' ludicrous promotional strapline – 'MI5 not 9-5' – but it has been delighted by the effect the series has had upon the perception of the agency. 'Spooks' has functioned as an unofficial recruiting film for MI5. Last year, the Observer reported that applications to join the service and hits on its official website have doubled since the series began in early 2002.

In 'Spooks', the spy is a hero again. Appropriately for the era of Blair and the Bush-led War on Terror, 'Spooks' has turned up the moral contrast button. This is Casualty or Bill realism: there are Good people and Bad people and a few heavily flagged Ambivalents. For Le Carré, spies were children of Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor: utilitarian cynics whose commitment to expediency made belief impossible. Le Carré was clear. Spies could not afford moral scruples: they were instruments, pawns in a game played by higher powers, the dirty means to ostensibly noble ends. They were in every way grey: ethically compromised, beset by a wintry pessimism, invisible to the society they notionally protected. No cynicism in 'Spooks'. To a girlfriend annoyed by his evasions and absences Quinn can say, without even a hint of irony, 'I'm serving my country – what's wrong with that?' None of Le Carré's characters, not even the redoubtable, doggedly loyal George Smiley, could have been quite so credulous. If everyone in 'Tinker, Tailor' could appear to be guilty, it was because, in Le Carré's Augustinian universe, they all were: to be a spy precisely was to be a traitor of one kind or another. The 'Spooks'' characters' moral failings, meanwhile, are minor: computer whiz Danny's rejigging of his credit rating is a typical slip, easily forgiven and quickly forgotten. Not a trace of Le Carré's taint. Many of the 'Spooks' sub-plots turn on the spies' 'difficult relationship' with 'ordinary society'. Much of the first series saw Quinn procrastinating over how far he could commit to a relationship. Yet these practical difficulties have no existential pay-off. To all appearances, MacFadyen, Hawes and Hunter are more or less indistinguishable from any other high-flying graduate on a career path. They don't look or sound like outsiders; in their 'focused professionalism', they could just as easily be lawyers. It was Le Carré's characters, including Smiley, who were 'spooks', hungry ghosts, excluded from the lands of the living.

'Spooks' even felt confident enough to insert a cheeky reference to Le Carré in its opening episode when Quinn uses 'George Smiley' as a code word. What a moment of dizzying ontological implosion and hauteur, in which 'Spooks' attempted to capture and contain Le Carré's Real in its fantastically promoted imaginary. Such a fantasy takeover might have seemed possible in the twilight years of Blairite spin. But as what remains of the new establishment's gloss is sheared off by the Hutton enquiry, it is Le Carré who has the last laugh.

BBC official site for Spooks

[<http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/spooks/index.shtml>]

Mark Fisher <mark.fisher27 AT ntlworld.com > is a writer on popular and cybernetic culture. He is a member of the CCRU and maintains a blog at [<http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org>]

The Opencontent.org Debacle

By Florian Cramer

The fate of OpenContent is starting to resemble a bad joke: how many licenses does it take to enforce the 'freeness' of certain content? Too many to be funny, as Florian Cramer explains

[IMAGE]

'OpenContent is officially closed. And that's just fine.' With these words opencontent.org has welcomed its visitors since June 30th. Many of those who read them, however, are less enthusiastic. Opencontent.org, after all, is the site which coined the term 'Open Content' itself. It went online in spring 1998, just a few weeks after the term 'Open Source' had been invented by a group of Linux advocates around Eric S. Raymond to provide a slicker, business-friendlier alternative to the term 'Free Software' as it had been propagated since 1983 by the GNU project and its nonconformist head Richard M. Stallman.

'Open Source' was then translated into 'Open Content' by David Wiley, a specialist in educational computing. The Open Content License with which he launched Opencontent.org was basically a cut-and-paste of the GNU General Public License (GPL), only without the former's preamble and appendix and with the word 'program' replaced by 'OpenContent'. Then, in June 1999, the Open Publication License was released. It allowed authors and publishers to restrict the modification and commercial reprinting of their works and has been widely employed by anyone from big publishers of computer handbooks to whole websites. A Google search of 'Open Publication License' currently yields 1,9200 results. What now seems to be the end of OpenContent should in fact have been a transformation. The site has been superseded by the Creative Commons project in which Wiley has begun to work as a 'Director of Educational Licenses'. Founded in 2001 by internet law expert Lawrence Lessig, Creative Commons is a general support platform for free information providing its own licensing scheme, a toolkit of 12 different licenses with special options for the attribution, commercial use and modification of a work. A web-based form [<http://creativecommons.org/license/>] makes it simple to choose the license that fits one's needs.

As it turns out, both the original Open Content License and the Open Publication License are no longer supported by their creator. This could merely be seen as an acknowledgement of their outstanding problems: unlike the GNU GPL and its maintenance and support through the Free Software Foundation and Columbia University law professor Eben Moglen, opencontent.org neither had institutional support nor legal expertise for its licenses, both of which Creative Commons has in abundance. If Creative Commons and its licensing scheme becomes a similar focal point of Open Content activism as the GNU project for Free Software, it would also do away with the Babylonian confusion of mutually incompatible Open Content licensing schemes like the Scientific Design License (SDL), the Open Music License, the Open Audio License, the Free Art License and so on. Still, issues remain. By publicly stalling OpenContent and its licenses, Wiley failed to provide a sensible and smooth upgrade path from the Open Content website and licenses to their equivalents at Creative Commons. Instead, Wiley opted for a publicity disaster, in which he risks alienating people who have talked publishers or cultural and educational institutions into releasing work under the Open Publication License. While Wiley probably intended to act responsibly and give his project more solid foundations, in fact the self-defacement of the OpenContent homepage contributed to a wider perception of non-software copyleft as immature and unstable.

Part of that perception also stems from the fact that major Open Content licenses are, wherever they restrict modification and commercial use, incompatible with Free Software copyleft. Therefore, of the twelve Creative Commons licenses only four make works 'free' or 'Open Source' in the sense of the two standard – and technically identical – specifications of these terms, the Debian Free Software Guidelines and the Open Source Definition. The original Open Publication License and, ironically, the GNU Free Documentation License (which allows invariable sections in documents) are plagued as well with this issue; the Debian project, creator of Debian GNU/Linux, even considered moving all GNU FDL-licensed software documentation from its 'main' into its 'non-free' section. 'OpenContent is dead. Long live OpenContent'; David Wiley's last words on Opencontent.org tell the story in its full ambiguity.

Creative Commons [<http://www.creativecommons.org>] Florian Cramer < cantsin@zedat.fu-berlin.de > is a lecturer in Comparative Literature in Berlin

Illustration > Dominik Binegger <dom_b_mail@yahoo.de >

Agribusiness Invades Poland

ByZoe Young

Poland's recent membership to the EU spells catastrophe for its farming traditions, farm labourers and environment. Zoë Young reports

[IMAGE]

'I'm not sure we can survive the European Union', says Andrzej Konkol, an organic farmer in Kashubia, Northern Poland. His daughter translates while her young twin brothers amble about the yard in the afternoon sun, grinning broadly as they half lead, half follow a gangling calf. 'When I went there, to Denmark, I saw only big farms. And I learnt that small farms like ours had all gone bankrupt.'

At the gates, a stork has made its nest atop a telegraph pole. On 40 hectares, Andrzej and his wife Teresa grow vegetables, cereal and fruit and keep pigs, cows, bees, dogs and cats. Children run, teenagers lurk and their grandmother feeds the chickens. Birds dart from wooden barn doorways to feast on insects over ponds, meadows and woods where black cranes nest and wild boar roam. Teresa does the milking, her mother in law makes butter in the kitchen, Andrzej cuts wildflower hay and tends pumpkin plants sprouting in pigshit compost. They heat their house with wood, and pickle vegetables for the winter. Nearby, Teresa's father ploughs his steeper land with horses. But this is no medieval throwback – the family have two cars, a tractor and television, subsidies for their organic produce and, behind the garage, an eco-tourist campsite.

Poland is a country in between. Its 40 million inhabitants, over a quarter of whom were employed in agriculture in 1999, lie between East and West, tradition and modernity, communism and capitalism, Europe and the US. With the Polish government supporting Bush with troops in Iraq, in June 2003 nearly 80 percent of a 60 percent referendum turnout said yes to joining the EU.

[IMAGE] [IMAGE]

The vote was 'a triumph of urban Poland over rural Poland', said the Times: text messages went to every mobile phone in the country urging people to vote. Museums even offered free admission to encourage city dwellers to stay and vote – rather than spending a weekend in the country, where the EU is viewed with more suspicion.

Unlike most benighted farmers in the UK for instance, two million Polish farmers still produce and deliver fresh food direct to local markets. With open borders to the EU, this example combined with wholesome exports from a land little touched by modern chemicals could be just what the doctor ordered for a Europe over-stuffed with factory farms, supermarkets and junk food. But instead of encouraging Poland's comparative advantage in growing markets for traditional and organic production, many EU rules and regulations will be impossible for small producers and sellers to meet. Of course, some are in need of modernisation, and most Poles favour learning from other countries. But EU agricultural policies tend to subsidise large scale agribusiness at the expense of wildlife, food quality, local economies and the crop variety needed for food security in changing climatic conditions.

Polish farmers are vocal politically in their nascent democracy, and after centuries of resisting invasion and then collectivisation, opposed the deal their government struck for EU membership. But Poland also has one of Europe's more corrupt governments, and despite widespread protest, with the help of multilateral banks, the agribusiness invasion is already underway.

Faced with a string of environmental and labour lawsuits at home, one US corporation in particular has been taking over Polish slaughterhouses and breaking veterinary and building law to turn former collective farms into 'concentration camps' for thousands upon thousands of pigs. Smithfield and its subsidiaries pump the animals with food and antibiotics, wash shit into lagoons and dump corpses that don't make it to supermarket as pork. The goal, it seems, is to enclose, vertically integrate and profit from Poland's productivity before a flood of Western European corporations come and do it their way. [IMAGE]

Big British and Danish farmers are among those buying up Polish farmland to take advantage of lower production costs and the subsidy structure expected with EU accession. And as organic farm activist Sir Julian Rose laments: 'The EU takes the view that drastic restructuring will be essential if Polish farming and the rural economy are to come into line with Western European standards and incomes. ...[it] will involve stripping about 1,200,000 farmers of their land.'

With next to no subsidy to adapt, where should dispossessed farming communities go? To the cities, already with near 20 percent unemployment? To join the thousands of Eastern Europeans already working unprotected and underpaid in the EU as agricultural pickers and packers?

CEE Bankwatch and Green Federation Gaja campaign against the corporate invasion of eastern European agriculture. Support from abroad can make all the difference.

Bankwatch on Animex/Smithfield in Poland

[<http://www.bankwatch.org/issues/ebrd/animex/manimex.html>]

Contact Robert Cyglicki + 48 91 489 42 32, <robertc@gajonet.pl>

International Coalition to protect the Polish countryside

[<http://www.icppc.pl/eng/index.php>]

Zoe Young <zoe AT esemplastic.net> is a researcher, writer, and film-maker with Conscious Cinema. Her book *A New Green*

Order? The World Bank and the Politics of the Global Environment Facility, was published by Pluto Press in October 2002, see

[<http://www.newgreenorder.info>]

Picture Credits

Defaced poster of President Miler; Woman selling gherkins at a market in Wrzeszcz, Gdansk. This practice will be outlawed under EU rules; Pigs on an Organic farm, Poland; Gherkin seller

Andrzej Konkol with his composting pig muck

Turnip stall at a market in Wrzeszcz, Gdansk

Internet Protocol Pirates

By Darius James

This summer, the Bootlab collective hijacked the net's new networking protocol for their Juni Radio experiment. The hope is to turn what looks like becoming a corporate hustle into a community radio tool. Darius James joined the merry pranksters

[IMAGE]

June, 2003, Berlin. When I walked into a makeshift radio studio in a room off an equally makeshift bar with Mario Mentrup, the Bootlab collective was already in the third week of its month-long Juni Radio experiment utilising the new IPv6 intelligent networking system. IPv6 is an upgrade of the nearly 20 year old Internet Protocol version 4 (IPv4), which is beginning to creak under the strain of the net's popularity. It's a protocol upgrade which uses 16 byte addresses (not the current 4 bytes) and will help to avert the address shortage currently looming. On the downside, it allows more control over routing which could lead to the prioritisation of some (i.e. high paying, corporate) traffic. At the time, I knew nothing of Bootlab, the IPv6 networking system or Juni Radio. Mario had only said, 'I'm going to spin records and ask you some questions.' That was the extent of his concept. Mario has a prankster's imagination. It could have meant anything.

I was outfitted with a powerbook and a clip-on microphone. Mario spun (or, more accurately, chewed) some German bubble-gum. The song had one recurring lyric in English: 'O, Mummy!'. Mario was clearly trying to get on my nerves so I responded with an mp3 of a Malcolm X speech. How, I thought, I could take him seriously I have no idea. The show was like my experience of improvising plays on FM radio in the late '70s – except, in this case, there was no post-production before airing. It was warts and all.

I still had no clue what was going on. Was Bootlab a pirate radio station? Another clandestine Berlin club? What?

This would change the following night. Stranded in the Mitte section of Berlin, I found myself back at Bootlab. Inside, however, there was no on-going party like the night before. Instead, I saw hundreds of programmers pecking away at laptops. The scene was spookier than the techie halls at a Chaos Computer Club convention. That's when I bumped into Diana McCarty, one of the project's driving forces. She's also a homegirl from New Mexico.

'What the fuck is going on?' I asked. 'This looks like some Blade Runner/Snow Crash type shit.' It had a real outlaw atmosphere.

Diana grinned. She sat me on a sofa and handed me a beer.

Bootlab, she explained, was an organisation of hacker-activists and culture jammers. Rather than hype the IPv6 networking system as the next new thing for the internet, and cater to the greed and delusions of corporate hustlers, the point of Juni Radio was to use the technology to reroute the internet and go

directly to the planet's most accessible means of broadcast communication – radio. It was unlikely a village in the wilds of Africa would have high-speed broadband connections, she said, but they would have radio. So Bootlab is creating an open source and downloadable digital radio-tool kit (available for educational and noncommercial use on their website); and tested it in conjunction with the new IPv6 intelligent networking system. 'It's like peer-to-peer filesharing,' she said, 'except, instead of swapping mp3s, one can swap whole communities of people.'

'Our plan is to radically alter the acoustic landscape by utilising this technology through radio broadcasting; and strengthen networks of social, political and cultural activists globally' she said. Sounded good to me. I asked for another beer.

Juni Radio [<http://www.juniradio.net>]

Reboot [<http://www.reboot.fm>]

Bootlab [<http://www.bootlab.org>]

Darius James <Darius_james2002 AT yahoo.com > is the author of *Negrophobia; That's Blaxploitation!!! ; Voodoo Stew and Froggie Chocolate's Christmas Eve*

War is my Business, and Business is Good

ByFrancesca X

Francesca X visits London's Defence Systems and Equipment International fair (DSEI), and discovers that under cover of a 'meet and greet' event, business is brisk

[IMAGE]

Early morning: thousands of delegates are crowded together in a tube station in Docklands, East London. Clutching compact travel suitcases and dressed in tailored suits, they are waiting patiently in line to enter the ExCel centre, a modern exhibition complex in London's Docklands hosting Defence Systems and Equipment International. DSEI, Europe's biggest arms fair, is a huge weapons supermarket organised by Spearhead Exhibitions Ltd., with the political and economic support of the British Government. It hosts more than 1,000 arms companies and 80 government representatives who come to meet international buyers for their small arms, missiles, planes, tanks, military electronics and warships, as well as surveillance and riot control equipment. This year's DSEI cost British taxpayers at least £1.5m in subsidies and extra policing. Since the Labour government was elected in 1997, the UK has licensed arms and military equipment to 20 countries engaged in serious conflict. 14 of these countries were invited to DSEI 2001 and many received invitations to DSEI 2003. Conspicuously missing from the British Defence Ministry's official invitation list were 20 countries that include some of the world's worst human rights-abusing states; but a second invitation list, drafted by Spearhead, made sure that these countries – including Israel, Turkey, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Colombia, China and Russia – were present at DSEI. Under the 2002 Arms Control Act, it is illegal for UK companies to sell arms to regimes which could use the weapons for either internal repression or external aggression – but, taking the Spearhead list into account, that's around half the countries attending the event. As far as the organisers are prepared to admit publicly, 'Nobody is selling or buying weapons at DSEI. People come to meet, to get to know each other and to do public relations.' But delegates and salesmen within the fair beg to differ. 'DSEI is a trade fair,' admits Italian DSEI representative Iva De Mari. The spokesperson of the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS) concurs: 'You do real business, make agreements, define the general lines for stipulations that will be signed later on. It's wonderful, instead of travelling like crazy around the world, we can come here every two years and do excellent business.' Among the list of weapons which manufacturers have been requested to exclude

from the DSEI this year are cluster bombs, which scatter small explosive bomblets over a wide area, causing indiscriminate casualties, and which often remain undefused long after the cessation of 'hostilities'. Unexploded weapons like these have caused more than a thousand infant deaths in Iraq and are now considered 'inappropriate' for the UK market, even though British and US forces used them extensively in Iraq. At the Ruag stand – the Swiss-based world leader in cluster bombs – a very irritated delegate claimed not to have brought any examples. 'We didn't bring them. You want to see one? Go ask the Turks.' But at MKEK, the Turkish State company which since 1995 has shipped small arms to Botswana, Burundi, Chile, Libya and Pakistan, the manager's lips were sealed. Smiths Group plc., the British company which manufactures the missile trigger system for the US-supplied Apache attack helicopters used by Israel against Palestinians, likewise kept schtum. Eventually the prohibited cluster bombs do turn up, in the catalogue of the Israel Military Industry, listed as 'cargo ammunition'. And what about depleted uranium, a toxic heavy metal which causes a wide range of cancers and foetal abnormalities, which pollutes soil, rivers and cities, with effects lasting for hundreds of years? This too is on sale at DSEI. Also starring is the Fn303n, a 'less than lethal' lancer used in Geneva to scar the face of Swiss syndicalist Denise Chervet. A huge poster of the anti-G8 riots dominates the stand of Fn Herstal, the Belgian company that makes the device.

'It doesn't hurt,' says the Fn Herstal communication manager, 'but it can stop protesters from being violent. Of course it depends on how police will use it... We recommend to aim at the chest, but in the end it's up to police how they use it.' Asked about the injured protestor, the Fn Herstal employee says the Swiss woman was hurt because 'she moved' – and asks for our camera to be turned off. Meanwhile euphemism and broad smiles are the rule: the arms dealers never talk openly about bombs, only about 'equipment' – not weapons but 'integrated defence systems'. There is never mention of the ongoing world war: everything is a simulation. The most extreme example is a live combat 'performance' by British soldiers just back from Iraq, showing off their nice war tools as if it was all just a virtual game for big boys.

[IMAGE]

The traders are willing to talk to journalists, and, because getting press accreditation is so difficult that the press is almost exclusively a specialised military one, they're sometimes caught off their guard, apparently quite unconscious of their behaviour, their words or the sales images they're using. One official is winking at women and blowing kisses; two old men are repairing a gun in front of a poster of a woman in a bikini with a machine gun between her legs... Amid the radar and Tomahawk missiles, Apache helicopters, guns, grenades, flight simulations and 'less lethal weapons', the businessmen seem to be enjoying the event a great deal. 'This year it's very well organised,' says one senior Italian official. 'I never saw so many official delegations... it's great to come here and to get updated on the newest war technologies.' By 5pm the arms traders are outside the centre, moving towards their hotels on public transport, merging into the stream of other businessmen and office workers. Outside the ExCel centre, a broad platform of different groups have organised three days of blockades, colourful demos, Critical Mass demonstrations, and actions in an attempt to disrupt the arms show. A few protesters brought the Docklands Light Railway to a virtual standstill by chaining themselves to the front of trains, placing cycle locks around their necks. In the centre of London, the Trafalgar Square fountain ran red with symbolic blood. To protect the arms dealers from these 'violent' protesters and their cardboard tanks, more than 2,600 security guards and police officers guarded the DSEI site, a security bill of more than £1million for the British taxpayer. During four days of protest, police arrested 150 people under the Terrorism Act 2000. Civil rights group Liberty denounced this illegal use of antiterrorism measures against legitimate protesters but at the ExCel centre, the arms dealers seemed to share the police's view of the protesters outside: 'They don't understand. What we do, it's about self-defence – not about making problems, about conflict.' Inside the elite club of the DSEI, it seems possible that the war professionals, excited by the prospects of

business, might really believe this.

Abort, Retry, Fail

By Simon Ford

With the advent of new computer art archiving projects such as CACHE, historical insights into the fraught relationship between these ‘two cultures’ are being salvaged. Simon Ford joins the rescue operation

[IMAGE]

In 1968, the art critic Christopher Finch wrote that ‘the emphasis on the conceptual role of the artist leads to the notion of the artist as programmer.’ With communication systems emerging that provided links between previously separate disciplines, Finch considered the role of the artist as increasingly resembling that of a co-ordinator – someone who compiled instructions that variously skilled technicians would then implement. Finch concluded that the artist, ‘by adopting the role of the programmer, can utilize all of these skills.’¹ Finch’s text appeared during the ‘Go-Go’ years, the original boom time for the nascent computer industry. Fed by the rising value of technology shares, supported by a seemingly ever-lasting revenue stream from Cold War spooked defence departments, and effervescent with the missionary zeal of NASA’s race to put a man on the moon, the computer age had arrived. Nothing was out of bounds for the technocrats, even art. By 1971, Colin Moorcraft boldly declared that ‘the heroic phase of modern art is well and truly over: no more lunatics burning their passions out on canvas; just a group of men [sic] in white coats deciding what next week’s New Movement is going to be.’²

Given such confident statements and the many others like them that appeared at this time, it is surprising that art historians writing about late 1960s and early 1970s art tend to overlook the role played by the computer in the ‘mentality’ of the period’s artists. Two main factors have contributed to this. The first of which, in Britain at least, is the ‘two cultures’ argument which describes a terminal lack of communication between the arts and sciences.³ The second factor concerns a continued narrowness of definition as to what constitutes actually existing art, beyond traditional forms of painting, drawing and sculpture. One project that aims to overcome such prejudices and recover the history of early computer art in order to ‘confirm its cultural and aesthetic legitimacy’ is the CACHE research project. CACHE stands for Computer Arts, Contexts, Histories etc. and is based at the School of History of Art, Film and Visual Media at Birkbeck, University of London.⁴ The CACHE team consists of Dr Charlie Gere, Paul Brown, Dr Nick Lambert, and Catherine Mason and its activities include: discovering and recovering the work of leading pioneers (not just artists but also engineers, scientists, and institutions); the identification and acquisition of personal and institutional archives; and the wider interpretation of this material to provide a historical context for the computer arts of the period. With funding only in place to cover three years of work it constitutes a pilot project to map out the field and identify the most urgent and necessary work that needs to be done. The ultimate aim is to create a permanent national collection. One key archive already acquired is that of the late John Lansdown, co-founder (along with George Mallen and Alan Sutcliffe) of the Computer Arts Society (CAS) in 1969.⁵ Another project with at least some focus on early computer art is The Digital Art Museum [<http://www.dam.org>], a collaboration between Metropolitan University and – reflecting the potential but still largely untapped commercial value of these works – the gallerist Wolfgang Lieser.⁶ Key events of the late 1960s and early 1970s still remain to be fully documented and assessed, including the British exhibitions *Cybernetic Serendipity* (1968), *Event One* (1969), and *Interact* (1973). However, alongside such essentially optimistic and utopian projects, any history of this period will necessarily also have to deal with those that took a more dystopian view. The benign nature of

computers and their manufacturers was always fiercely contested, not just amongst defenders of humanistic values but also amongst the most radical elements of the counter-culture. Take for example Robert Smithson in 1969 who was invited by the MIT Center for Advanced Visual Studies to take part in the US section of the São Paulo Bienale. He eventually withdrew stating that: 'To celebrate the power of technology through art strikes me as a sad parody of NASA. I do not share the confidence of the astronauts. [...]If technology is to have any chance at all, it must become more selfcritical.' 7 It also informed cinematic representations of possible future worlds in films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Alphaville* (1965), which Jean-Luc Godard had originally considered calling *Tarzan versus IBM*.⁸ Early exhibitions promoting the confluence of art and technology did little to instil confidence that a bright new future lay ahead.

[IMAGE]

In late 1970, Agnes Denes was so disgusted by her treatment in the Software exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York that she wrote to Studio International accusing the Museum of incompetence. Denes accepted an invitation to show on the grounds that her work *Dialectic Triangulation: a Visual Philosophy* was going to be reprogrammed for three-dimensional computer display presentation. She was assured the programming work would be completed in time, but 'assurances turned to evasions and finally just double talk.' By chance, just ten days before the opening, she learnt that work had hardly begun on her program and the show duly opened without it. Along with another artist she was also promised four computers for the show but only one was provided which meant the 'seven days a week through the summer' she had spent writing four new programs was wasted as only one could be used. In support of Denes a number of artists (including Hans Haacke, Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner) signed another letter claiming even more insidious wrongdoing, specifically that the technical advisor assigned to her 'told her at one point he would not do her work because he did not like her and did not like women.'⁹ American Motors Corporation sponsored Software and this marriage of art, technology and big business remained obligatory as long as computing power remained so debilitatingly expensive. One organiser of the exhibition *Art and Technology* (1971) at the Los Angeles County Museum of Modern Art believed that it was 'possible, and perhaps valuable, to effect a practical interchange between artists and members of the corporate-industrial society.'¹⁰ She cited as examples: John Chamberlain and James Byar working with think-tanks Rand and the Hudson Institute respectively, and Jesse Reich's work with Jack Citron, a physicist at IBM. Meanwhile, for the Situationist Raoul Vaneigem, such collaboration with the technocrats of the military-industrial complex provided only one benefit: the reversal – through *détournement* – of its practices for revolutionary ends: 'By laying the basis for a perfect power structure, the cyberneticians will only stimulate the perfection of its refusal. Their programming of new techniques will be shattered by the same techniques turned to its own use by another kind of organization. A revolutionary organization.'¹¹

Whether such statements are mere rhetoric or a portent of the inevitable, futurologists of both the right and left operate without the historian's luxury of hindsight. As projects such as CACHE should reveal, operating in often hostile conditions, early computer art was plagued by false starts and false promises. But without any knowledge of these shortcomings we run the risk of repeating the mistakes of the past. Now is a good time for a history of early computer art, to go back to the future of what went wrong as much as what went right.

1 Christopher Finch, *Pop Art, Object and Image*, London: StudioVista/Dutton Picturebook, 1968. Quoted in Kenneth Courtts-Smith, *The Dream of Icarus: Art and Society in the Twentieth Century*, London: Hutchinson, 1970, p. 190

2 Colin Moorcraft, 'On-line Nothings', *Studio International*, March 1971, no. 931, pp. 134

3 The key text of this debate is: C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution: The Rede*

Lecture 1959, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959

4 CACHE is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board and can be contacted at: CACHE, Vasari Lab, School of History of Art, Film & Visual Media, Birkbeck, University of London, 43 Gordon Square, London, WC1H 0PD, England, +44 (0) 20 7631 6197, <info@cache.bbk.ac.uk>, [<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hafvm/cache>]

5 For more on the founding of the CAS, see my 'Technological Kindergarten' in Mute 26

6 For a useful overview of projects relating to the history of early computer art see Paul Brown's 'Recovering History – Critical and Archival Histories of the Computer-based Arts'

[<http://www.siggraph.org/artdesign/gallery/S03/essays/brown.pdf>]

7 Robert Smithson, 'Letter to Gyorgy Kepes (1969)' in Jack Flam (ed.) Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, p. 369

8 Jean Luc Godard, Alphaville, London: Lorrimer Publishing, 1984, p.9

9 Undersigned, 'Open Letter to Jewish Museum', Studio International, December 1970, no. 928, pp. 228

10 Jane Livingstone, 'Some Thoughts on 'Art and Technology'', Studio International, June 1971, no. 934, p. 258

11 Raoul Vaneigem, The Revolution of Everyday Life, London: Left Bank Books and Rebel Press, 1983, p. 62

Picture Credits

Top > Poster of the Interact show in Edinburgh, 1973, which was run by the Computer Arts Society

Left > Front of the Interact show catalogue

Middle > Poster of the trade show Computer'70 where CAS had an exhibition

Right > PAGE issue 33 – this was the Computer Arts Society magazine

Simon Ford <fordmobile AT tiscali.co.uk > is the author of *Hip Priest: The Story of Mark E. Smith and The Fall*

Securing the Knowledge Empire

By Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite

Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite on how the US has used bilateral deals to secure its predominance in the information economy

The protectionist intellectual property paradigm that the US has quietly globalised over the last 20 years or so has attracted little comment outside of specialist circles. Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite investigate how, alongside the multilateral policymaking forums, the US has used bilateral deals to secure its predominance in the information economy

[IMAGE]

Since the mid-1980s, a sea change has been taking place in the way that international standards of intellectual property are set. The WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) has turned out to be a floor without a ceiling, and the hopes of many developing countries that the US would be content with the gains brought by its standards regime, to be hopelessly naïve. In fact, in the globalisation of their protectionist intellectual property paradigm, the corporate actors responsible for TRIPS at the end of the 20th century were merely laying the foundations for the knowledge economies of the 21st.

TRIPS was not just the product of private governance. It was also one of economic coercion in the face of the resistance felt from developing countries when the US began to push for the inclusion of intellectual property in the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs (GATT) at the beginning of the 1980s. Developing countries, which at that time held about one per cent of the world's patents and were desperate for access to western technology, knew that such a proposal would not be in their interests.

The US understood that many of these countries – the most active amongst them, India, Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Egypt, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, Tanzania and Yugoslavia – were dependent upon access to its markets under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP). It began a process of reforming this system to create a national trade enforcement tool for US corporations. Under US trade law, US corporations were now able to petition the US Trade Representative to withdraw benefits of trade agreements, or impose duties on goods from foreign countries that were not extending adequate and effective protection for US intellectual property. The Trade Representative then had the option of listing countries under what came to be known as the '301' process.

There is nothing very secret about this process. Almost every developing country that opposed the US at the GATT stage has ended up being listed for bilateral attention under it by the US. In 1988 the US changed its Trade Act to make resisting its wishes in a multilateral forum part of the conditions that could lead to a country being identified as a Priority Foreign Country and therefore the subject of a Special 301 investigation. Developing countries hoped that by negotiating multilaterally there was the possibility that they would be able to obtain some limits on the use of 301 actions by the US on intellectual property. Such was the suggestion of developed country negotiators and the GATT Secretariat. In fact, exactly the opposite happened. During the 1990s the US increased its unilateral surveillance of countries on intellectual property issues. By 2000 more than 70 countries had been reviewed under Special 301, with 59 foreign countries failing to meet satisfactory standards, whose laws and practices on intellectual property had to be watched.

Thus the global regulatory ratchet the US created in the 1980s and 1990s consists of waves of bilateral agreements followed by occasional multilateral or regional standard-setting (e.g. TRIPS and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)). Each wave of bilateral or multilateral treaties enforces existing standards and very often sets new ones. In all these agreements states are bound not to offer less protection than agreed to, but are allowed to offer more extensive protection than is required. Thus the ratchet only ever moves upwards. Its latest manifestation is in the free trade agreements that the US has concluded with Jordan, Chile and Singapore. These all contain long and detailed provisions on intellectual property, provisions that are 'TRIPS-plus'. The US is globalising domestic intellectual property standards that meet its own economic needs and fit with its cultural and philosophical traditions. What the US Supreme Court has declared to be its domestic position, namely that anything under the sun is patentable finds deep opposition around the world. Many have strong reservations about the patentability of plants, animals and human genetic resources, based on a variety of ethical perspectives and traditions, including religious, indigenous and environmental ones. Yet the US has relentlessly pushed such provisions in TRIPS and subsequent bilateral agreements. It is equally relentless in seeking to impose upon the world a system of agriculture in which the farmer becomes the lessee of patented seeds, plants, fertilisers and pesticides. Fears that this technology does not meet the needs of subsistence farmers around the world, that it carries with it environmental risks that have not been properly assessed, that it cuts across farming traditions such as the saving and exchange of seed or that it requires economies of scale that few countries can really exploit are brushed aside by its US multinational overseers, who respond by threatening litigation in the WTO.

The US has also been successful in excluding from TRIPS the recognition of authors' rights, based on European philosophical traditions that recognise an indissoluble link between creators and their works (the key ones being the right to paternity – which gives, for example, the composer of a song the right to be identified as such, and the right to integrity – the right of the author of any type of work and film to object to any addition to, deletion from or change to his or her work if this is detrimental to the work or to the reputation of the author). Hollywood, in the form of the Motion Picture Association Of America (MPAA), has been opposed to these rights because they are potential interferences in its world-wide system of production, marketing, distribution and exhibition. Yet at the same time actors like the MPAA invoke free speech values to argue that there should be no restrictions on the circulation of US film, television and other copyright works. Of course, there is a trade agenda – because as has been known for a long time, trade follows the film. The practical upshot of these free speech/free trade arguments is a constant pressure to remove quotas. No quota is too low to be ignored. When Indonesia imposed a screen quota requiring its First Run theatres to show at least two Indonesian films each month for a minimum of two days both the MPAA and the International Intellectual Property Alliance raised the matter with the USTR as part of their recommendation in 1993 to list Indonesia under the 301 process. The endgame for Hollywood is zero restriction on its capacity to dominate any type of screen in the world at any time and place. The US fashions and globalises intellectual property standards based on its own economic institutions, extending its sovereignty, ignoring the world's moral diversity and the desire of different societies to pursue different paths to development. Underneath the individualist ideology of intellectual property there lies an agenda of under-development, of maintaining economic hierarchy. Today's global intellectual property paradigm is about protecting the knowledge and skills of the leaders of the pack. In the US, state and US multinationals remain committed partners in the institutional project of information feudalism: acquiring and maintaining global power based on the ownership of knowledge assets. Meanwhile the inequalities and problems of this global redistribution of property rights in information are only slowly coming to be understood.

Peter Drahos <Peter.Drahos AT anu.edu.au > and John Braithwaite <John.Braithwaite AT anu.edu.au > are the authors of *Information Feudalism: Who Owns the Knowledge Economy?* (Earthscan, London, 2002)

This is the Public Domain

By Hari Kunzru

Hari Kunzru on Amy Balkin's guerilla-conceptual artwork that exposes the near impossibility of creating public space in the US

[IMAGE]

In recent years, artistic and political engagements with the concept of the commons have tended to focus on the new possibilities emerging online. Digital media is forcing change in IP regimes. Models based on shared, free or open virtualities are proposed to salvage public space at a time when it is physically under threat. As the marketplace becomes a mall and the village green a branded leisure-space the customary rights of free speech and association traditionally attached to such places are also eroded. Amy Balkin, living in California, has opted to look again at real space. Her project *This is the Public Domain* has a simple aim: 'to create a public commons that will exist in perpetuity.' 'This land,' she writes, 'will be permanently available, free, for use by anyone. Citizenship is not necessary to participate.' In a move which flies in the face of a social and legal system designed specifically to enforce land ownership, she has bought 2.5 acres of land near the Mojave desert and is instituting moves to transfer it out of her name into that of – nobody. Everybody. All of us.

The site is unpromising, squeezed next to a wind farm near the Edwards airforce base. Access is made difficult by the power company which owns the neighbouring area. The biggest challenge however is legal. One real estate lawyer advised Balkin that transferring ownership of land to 'the public' might involve exchanging signed contracts with everyone involved!

Balkin knows that her chances of achieving her aim under US law are slim. 'It could,' she suggests, 'be argued that the success of the project would symbolically undermine the sovereignty of the state regarding territorial control, as the public domain would be an international commons within the borders of a state.' One possible legal strategy is the use of IP law. Unfortunately, a piece of land designated as a conceptual artwork is not considered IP. Another strategy under consideration is placing a sculpture on the land and extending the artwork's 'base' to the borders of the plot. Balkin is following this option by placing a bench on the land, with a small plaque announcing the site's status. Legal arguments continue. In the meantime if you want to go there, the location is

Latitude: 35.082

Longitude: -118.2785

This is the Public Domain [<http://www.thisisthepublicdomain.org>] Hari Kunzru <hari@metamute.com > is the author of The Impressionist and a contributing editor of Mute

Picture Credits

Public Domain site marker / bench in transit, made by Trevor Tuttle, woodworker. Log donated by Meadowsweet Dairy. Photograph by Amy Balkin, May 2003

From Pages to Parangoles (Radical Excess, Technology, and the Publicational Body)

By Jordan Crandall

Jordan Crandall talks about the X-Art Foundation's publication, how it situates itself within code circuits and its debt to Brazilian artist Oiticica's work

From Open Encyclopædia to Distributed Library Project

By Harry Potter

Harry Potter leads us through a worm hole into the wiki-based world of collaborative knowledge production and resource sharing

[IMAGE]

The scale of the development of the Wikipedia Open Encyclopædia is such that it has already established itself as one of the most significant information resources on the web. With over 10,000 contributors served by a tiny staff and using wiki (a web-based collaborative work tool), it allows enthusiasts to share their knowledge of their pet subjects with the world at large. The system is simple: click on 'Edit this page' and you can alter the encyclopædia entry of your choice. However, it may well be someone else's choice, someone whose views are radically different from yours. The idea is that problems get resolved through consensus around what is naively called a 'Neutral Point Of View'. There are the wiki equivalent of blackboard monitors (BMs) who patrol the wikipedia searching for

what they consider to be inappropriate. Wikipedia functions on an open publishing basis, so no copyright material should be posted. The BMs quickly put any page which has been copyand- pasted with copyright material on the 'Votes for Deletion' page along with items they feel lie outside what they consider appropriate – bad jokes, attempts at self publicity or anything they consider spurious. You too can, of course, adopt the role of a BM, but you'll probably only do this if you enjoy feeling self-righteous. Many of these BMs seem too wedded to some sort of fixed idea structure. However their engagement with the practicalities of dealing with an Open Encyclopædia exposes them to the slippery world of semiotics and certain non-Aristotelian ways of thinking expounded by such folk as Umberto Eco. This clash of attitudes is really no bad thing, since the issues which arise are in fact best dealt with through the process of seeking practical solutions. Wikipedia has blossomed to contain over 170,000 pages in English and a further 150,000 pages in other languages. Linked 'Talk Pages' are also available for participants to discuss the developments within a specific page, and can be the arena for edit wars. Other projects are already developing as offshoots, inspired by wikipedia. Wikiquote is a collaborative project to develop an online source for quotes. Wikibooks is where contributors are setting up a whole range of free textbooks. A little more involved is the Distributed Library Project. Originally devised as a book sharing resource in California, it is now being developed with a much broader and deeper remit by the University of Openess. At a recent meeting at the London Action Resource Centre, librarians from Denmark, Norway, Papua New Guinea and Slovenia discussed how an online collaborative resource could be developed to serve as a multiple library catalogue. Participants can sign up as a node and enter all the books they have in their collections. Of course as the project develops many book titles will already be entered, and it will merely be necessary for users to add that another copy is available at their 'location'. Automatic input of ISBN details has already been organised to save a lot of typing. However the catalogue will not function like the Aristotelian library catalogues which have bedevilled the world for far too long. Rather than creating a hierarchical system which rigidly structures categories within other categories, the online facilities will eventually allow participants to develop their own knowledge paths. These will basically be open-access bibliographies which can be amended and developed by other participants. It will then be easy to create knowledge paths linking off from wikipedia pages into the broader mass of relevant books. Of course individuals as well as libraries will be encouraged to place their material on-line. It has been estimated that within eighteen years this will be the most significant library catalogue in the world, just as wikipedia has already outstripped the attempted development of other commercial encyclopaedias.

Wikipedi [<http://en.wikipedia.org/>]

Distributed Library Project [<http://dlpdev.theops.net/DlpUk>]

University of Openness [<http://twentiethcentury.com/uo/>]

Harry Potter: I was involved in some experimentation with a Quantum Computer at the Edzell National Security Agency, when an unfortunate accident sent me into a parallel universe where the intimate details of my childhood have become the subject of some bizarre consumerist cult. I have been informed that any attempts to assert my identity may result in me being prosecuted under intellectual property rights. If you can help me return to my own universe please contact me at <harrypotter AT cyber-rights.net>

Telestreets

By Agnese Trocchi

Agnese Trocchi looks at the history of pirate television in Italy and sees the rise of a new organisation in the TeleStreet network

[IMAGE]

San Lorenzo, Rome, near Termini station: a tall antenna towers over the roof of a squatted building where families of immigrants are living illegally. Its name is TeleAut and it's a StreetTV channel that is exploiting the 'shadow' of a local channel. (A shadow channel is created when a broadcaster's signal is not, for whatever reason, available in a particular geographical area). TeleAut is on air everyday from 9pm to 9am on channel UHF-27. Its name is an homage to RadioAut, an independent radio station which was broadcasting in 1977 from a village near Palermo, Sicily. On the 9th of May 1978, the day when the body of Aldo Moro was found killed by the Red Brigades, another corpse was also found, blownup on the railway between Palermo and Cinisi. It was the corpse of Peppino Impastato, the founder of RadioAut, killed by the Mafia. Italian history is composed of hidden truths and independent voices which have always struggled to express themselves – by any media necessary.

The first StreetTV was born in 1972 in Biella, a village in the north of Italy, as a 'video-magazine'. TeleBiella based its existence on Article 21 of the Italian Constitution, which establishes the right to expression by any and every means. In 1973, following a decree of the Minister of Telecommunications, it became illegal. TeleBiella appealed against the conviction, and in 1974 the Constitutional Court decreed the end of the radiotelevision monopoly that had been granted to RAI. This was the starting point of the proliferation of private TV channels, the expansion of advertising on TVs and the creation of Berlusconi's empire. Italian airwaves became a Wild West with Berlusconi its fastest gun. The social texture changed profoundly: television became a household tool and children developed new needs and desires defined by the flux of cathode images. Now, since they cannot hate TV, they want to make it. Video technologies have become consumer goods; video players, amateur cameras and computers allowing the easy editing and sharing of material on the internet, have changed the perception of the consume, who is no longer passive but becoming-producer. This new hands-on 'hacker' attitude first articulated itself in 1998, during the first Italian Hackmeeting, where a new experiment in StreetTV took place. Like La TV del Pratello (in Bologna, 1996) and OffLineTV (Rome, Forte Prenestino, 1996, '97 and '98), BoiCoopTV was a temporary experience, on air for only a few days. The channel's aim was to reappropriate media as a public access zone – a dirty console that everyone could join, broadcasting his or her personal visions.

At the end of the '90s we still considered these experiences avant garde, but now, in the new millennium, StreetTV is becoming a reality for many social groups: in 2002, OrfeoTV was born, broadcasting in the shadow of MTV (UHF-51 in Bologna). It started the campaign [<http://www.telestreets.it>] to create a network of StreetTVs. In every city, town and village from the North to the South, small independent self-managed sister stations are springing up, from local neighbourhoods to condominiums. What is important is to meet one another, share knowledge, reactivate brains, and build collective narratives. Technically the kit is simple: aerial, cable, transmitter and amplifier. Legally, the situation is not so good: building a StreetTV station is illegal, with only appeals to the flimsy Article 21 for protection. So in May 2003, Senators of the Rifondazione Comunista introduced a legislative proposal to grant legal access to shadow channels to local StreetTVs. Simultaneously the Ministry of Communication is emitting decrees ad hoc to protect the Berlusconi empire.

With the passage to the terrestrial digital TV which, in 2006, will provide more than 100 new channels, we can expect a whole new Wild West. This time, however, the cowboys and sheriffs will not have an easy life: now they face the multitudes taking communications into their own hands.

Telestreet [<http://www.telestreet.it>]
Telediella [<http://www.telediella.it>]
The Ministry of Communications [<http://www.comunicazioni.it/en/index.php>]
Hack-It 98 [http://www.ecn.org/hackit98/faq_en.html]
Peppino Impastato [<http://www.peppinoimpastato.com>]

Agnese Trocchi <frenesi AT kein.org> is a member of Candida, an Italian video collective based in Rome

Hot-Wire Jamaica

ByMute Editor

At last, after four years of planning, the Container project has arrived

[IMAGE]

Container is a mobile media lab, launched on April 30th 2003, in Palmers Cross, a rural community in South East Clarendon, Jamaica. An initiative of media artist mervin Jarman, the container – which he describes as ‘a means of technological repatriation’ – is currently helping Palmers Cross community access new media facilities. The lab, housed in a converted 40-foot freight container, will bring workshop projects to hard-to-reach and marginalised urban and rural communities. Container’s function is to encourage disenfranchised youths and the long-term underprivileged to develop their creativity through computer use. mervin Jarman comes from Palmers Cross himself, and wanted to bring back something to the community there after more than ten years training and working – partly with the Mongrel collective – as a digital artist in London. He explains: ‘It’s about fostering the creative abilities of Jamaicans and continuing to distribute our values like we have done in the UK over the last 50 years. The UK and Europe need to feed back their technological skills into Jamaica to help sustain the culture clash that is contemporary mongrel culture.’ Far from taking a role as director, his priority has been to facilitate ownership by the community for the community. Similarly the ‘training’ methodology encourages people to pursue their own interests and ambitions, calling on the help of colleagues and professionals only if required. Jarman explains: ‘This is about each individual taking ownership of the space interpretatively, so that it becomes the best that it can be for each person. The newness of this concept is bizarre as we have always engaged in a shepherded directional learning process.’ The container is equipped with 16 networked computer workstations, running four different operating systems and a server. Members can get involved with video and audio production, office suite familiarisation, hardware and networking, web and software development. The container was donated by Jamaica Producers, and the computer hardware from Redundant Technology Initiative in the UK, SkyBuilders in the USA and ReSource in Canada. The project has been four years in the making, with most of the structural conversion, re-building of donated computers and establishment of the network done over a three month period in 2003 by a local and international team working together. An internet connection has yet to be established though, but for now the Container thrives without. If the technical side still requires some work, there is nothing lacking in the project’s ambition: ‘At the moment,’ Jarman says, ‘there is very little creative technology going on outside of the corporate landscape in Jamaica even though this is one of the loudest cultural producers of the last 40 years. We want to hot-wire Jamaica into the machine that will make the Upsetters of the future.’

[IMAGE]

1. Har-Homa

This Jewish neighborhood was built on parts of the West Bank incorporated into the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem after the Six Day War. The land was expropriated in 1991 and construction work began in 1997, replacing a 60,000 tree pine forest. The neighborhood, about 800 meters in height, overlooks much of its surroundings and completes a ring of Israeli neighborhoods, roads and settlements that cut off Palestinian East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank

2. The olive orchards of the Palestinian village of Beit-Safafa

This West Bank village was incorporated into the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem following the 1967 war

3.a,b,c,d,e. Sewage system

The existence of a ring of sewage beyond the neighborhood boundary is an indication that further expansion of the neighborhood might take place

[IMAGE]

4. A tank rampant and a small infantry lookout bunker belonging to the Israeli Army

This position was set at the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifadah following frequent shooting attacks from Beit-Jala

[IMAGE]

6a. An Israeli by-pass road connecting Jerusalem with the Jewish settlements to the south whilst by-passing Palestinian towns.

The Israeli government is constructing a network of fast, wide security roads that by-pass Palestinian towns and connect the settlements to Israel. The by-pass roads will soon comprise a system of twenty-nine highways covering five hundred kilometers. With 150 meters of fenced-in 'sanitary' margins on each side, these roads are consuming much of the territory of the West Bank. They allow four hundred thousand Jews living in the West Bank to have freedom of movement, whilst enclosing about three million Palestinians into approximately 200 isolated enclaves.

Anthropologist Jeff Halper writes: 'Roads are instruments of control and development... as mechanisms of control, they are ideal. They are permanent structures. They flow through long stretches of territory...yet they effectively claim and monopolize land by their very routes. Roads are banal. They can be made to look inoffensive and even benign and attractive – or, if need be, they can be made to look like imposing and intimidating barriers. They can be opened or closed, and used as a means to separate, unite or channel populations.'

6b. Lighting poles installed along the road

Seeking safety in vision, the by-pass roads are lit excessively. At night and from a distance they are visible as brilliant white streaks of light. The employment of light as a security measure stands in stark contrast to Palestinian techniques. Seeking safety in invisibility, Palestinians employ blackouts as a routine protection from military attacks

[IMAGE]

7. Al-A'za Refugee Camp (population:1,300)

8. Bethlehem (population:22,000)

9. Herodion

The Herodion is a fortified palace built on an artificial hill by King Herod between 22 and 15 B.C. It was both a desert retreat and part of a chain of fortresses that Herod erected in the Judean desert as protection for himself and his kingdom. During the period of the Great Revolt, the zealots built a synagogue in the existing structures. The Herodion, first explored by the American scholar Edward Robinson in 1838, forms part of a chain of archaeological sites of Jewish heritage in the West Bank. These material traces help construct a national identity rooted in the depths of the ground. They assume immense political importance as an alibi for the Israeli 'return' to the hills of the West Bank as the successor of ancient Israel.

10. 'See and Seen'

A prefabricated bullet proof periscopic infantry lookout positioned towards the Palestinian towns from where shooting attacks were carried out on the Jewish Neighborhood of Gilo.

11. Eruv line

The Eruv is a Jewish, religious, temporary and flexible boundary marking the current limits of the Jewish part of the city. It is composed of metal poles with a thin wire stretched between them.

12. The oldest Jerusalem municipal by law requires square, dressed natural stone – Jerusalem Stone – for the facades and all visible walls constructed within the city limits. In the context of contemporary Jerusalem, the stone does more than fulfil an aesthetic agenda – it visually defines the geographic limits of Jerusalem and marks the extent of its holiness.

[IMAGE]

13. The Jerusalem 'Separation Fence'

14. Hebron Mountains

15. A road block made of piled earth marks the closure of Bethlehem. Political analyst Meron Benvenisti claims that roadblocks are nothing but 'doors with no walls,' meant to symbolise 'the separation' – an absurd border crossing placed along a non-existent border

16. A Palestinian road under the Israeli bridge marks the physical separation of traffic arteries

[IMAGE]

17. The Tunnel Road

The Tunnel Road connects Jerusalem with the southern settlements of Gush Etzion and Hebron. To accomplish this without passing through Palestinian towns, it has to perform a double contortion: having stretched upwards as a bridge crossing over a Palestinian cultivated valley, it then dives into a tunnel under the Palestinian Bethlehem suburb of Bet Jallah. Meron Benvenisti writes: '...the person travelling on the longest bridge in the country and penetrating the earth in the longest tunnel may ignore the fact that over his head there is a whole Palestinian townthe road managed to crash the three dimensional space into six dimensions – three Jewish and three Arab' The volumetric separation of Jews from Palestinians is mirrored by a political separation. The legal and effective 'border' is stretched along a horizontal line. Palestinian limited sovereignty extends to the city overhead while Israeli sovereignty covers the road below it.

18. Bullet protection wall

19. The Arches House

From this building many shooting attacks were carried out by Palestinians

20. Beit Jala

21. Bethlehem

Launched on 30 April 2003, Container is a public access multimedia arts project in Palmers Cross, Jamaica. The project encourages people to pursue their own interests, provides exposure for local talent and explores all forms of digital arts production

Information for this article came from the Container project websites [<http://www.container-project.net>] & [<http://www.fraw.org.uk/jamaica>], and commissioning agency Media Arts Projects [<http://www.mediaartprojects.org.uk>]. Thanks to mervin Jarman <4mervinATsupanet.com> and Lisa Haskel <lisaATSouthspace.org>

Launched on 30 April 2003, Container is a public access multimedia arts project in Palmers Cross, Jamaica. The project encourages people to pursue their own interests, provides exposure for local talent and explores all forms of digital arts production

Freemasons Of The Future

By Saul Albert, Simon Worthington, and Fabian Thompsett, with help from Ben Russell, Jo Walsh and Asim

The Semantic Web, a machine readable representation of everything, is a future that has already started to arrive. The University of Openess' Faculty of Cartography looks at its dual potential to flatten and diversify the relations between data and existence. By Saul Albert, Simon Worthington, and Fabian Thompsett, with help from Ben Russell, Jo Walsh and Asim Butt

At the Next 5 Minutes hacktivist conference, September 2003, an interest group formed around the topic of cartography. We organised a series of meetings and presentations to discuss developments in collaborative cartography, location-based services, information visualisation and the Semantic Web. As a contribution to this work, the University of Openess' Faculty of Cartography wrote the following text to introduce some of the problems and potentials posed by the Semantic Web for the Free Information movement.

The first and most salient fact about the Freemasons of the Future is that they do not exist. However they are sentient beings trying to struggle into existence. From their perspective they are involved in a life and death struggle to ensure their own past, some of which we perceive as the present. Located in the distant future after time travel has become commonplace they endeavour to sojourn into what they regard as history to create the conditions which they consider as necessary for their own existence. But this does not mean they are going to be successful.

They justify their existence upon their existence, which they consider self-evident. The current conditions of life are to be extrapolated into the future until every quanta of human activity has been commodified: from genetic engineering to nanotechnology, the search for profitability is projected in every conceivable way. A world where sentient scraps of human biology exist as islands of wetware within the framework of vast cathedrals of computerised electronics. The distinction between human, animal and machine is dissolved as these products of bio-engineering are installed to fulfil operative

functions within a nauseous system developed to do nothing but to manifest continuously expanding value. Whether we can regard such creatures as our offspring, or whether they are simply genetically engineered mutant beings created out of this or that strand of DNA is perhaps beside the point. This is the nightmare world to which we are heading, and which would provide the sort of massive bio-computer needed by the Freemasons of the Future to realise their greatest desire: unequivocal existence.

Faced with this onslaught which we can see around us, as all barriers to genetic engineering and the conversion of existence into docile information are torn down one by one, how can we respond? The class struggle now manifests itself in dimensions which have recently been invaded by the process of industrialisation: from the industrialisation of the imagination, through television, to the industrialisation of knowledge through the internet, the information age continues to build on the 'achievements' of the Age of Steam, the Age of Petrol and the Atomic Age. The current episode we are living through is rattling asunder as the ripples of the Quantum Time Bomb¹ penetrate the deepest recesses of human activity.

– Harry Potter², Extract from the announcement of the Limehouse TimeTravel Rally³

It has become inaccurate to discuss the 'the web' as a single entity since this use of a definite article belies the increasingly electrical interconnectedness of a plethora of devices, processes, information and indices. 'The web' is inadequate because it implies a coherence that is not evident in the use of many incompatible formats, private networks, and non-indexed sections of network. This incoherent, frayed mess of networks is like an expanding and obscure territory for which there are no maps, or at least, no maps with standard keys, scales or control coordinates. In some ways 'surfing' or 'browsing' are increasingly appropriate metaphors for the superficial and indiscriminate ways our browsers allow us to use the web. These limited research excursions are almost entirely dependent on the indices of one of the major search engines (Google in most cases) which has become the limit of the network; everything else is uncharted, unconnected and therefore largely inaccessible. By attempting to develop an extensible and syntactically coherent language to describe networks and information resources, the Semantic Web Project promises (or threatens) to help map this lost world of data. 'The Semantic Web', Tim Berners-Lee explains, 'is an extension of the current web in which information is given welldefined meaning, better enabling computers and people to work in cooperation.'⁴ Using computer readable data formats and programmable agents with which to collect and categorise them, the object is to produce a schema from which to build a local description of local data formats, network topographies and information resources. This local description, fitting into the logical framework of the Semantic Web, can then be transposed into other contexts, linked to similar or related descriptions of other resources and networks, understood and used by human and software agents; put on the map. To expedite the growth of colonial empire, admirals Cook and Vancouver pioneered new forms of cartography in the late 18th century, a period sometimes referred to as the 'cartographic reformation'. Where they had no empirical, controlled data for their maps, they simply left large blank sections rather than filling in the gaps with supposition, thematic motifs or 'here be dragons'. This was the origin of a powerful set of scientific norms entailing representations of the world that are largely still intact, keyed into subsequent cartographic and spatial technologies. The initial impact of the cartographic reformation is comparable to that of the Semantic Web, with both working to reveal enormous blank spaces in our maps and the limited uses of our networks. In turn, they set out a framework by which these topographies might be described, understood, and mapped.

In the mid '90s computer scientist Ramanathan V. Guha went to work for Apple, where he developed a metadata format called Meta Content Framework which described websites, files, filesystems and relationships between them. The intention was that, using Apple's 'Hotsauce' browser, users could fly through a 3-dimensional representation of that content. However, it was only when Guha moved to Netscape in '97 and Extensible Markup Language (XML) became a common standard for the

exchange of structured, computer-readable data that his ideas about representing semantic associations between bits of data began to gain influence. At that time the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the international web standards body founded by Tim Berners-Lee, began a general-purpose metadata project, loosely termed the 'Semantic Web', to develop ways of representing data on the web. Based on the Resource Description Framework (RDF), the basic idea is that resources are named with Uniform Resource Locators (URLs or web addresses) and described by the links between them using machine readable XML as a syntax. The framework is general enough that it is not limited to describing data on the web and, crucially, it can also be used to describe and interrelate things in the world: people, places, objects, abstract concepts – the largest blank spaces on the semantic map. If we can assign a URL to a physical object, person, or idea, this URL can in turn be linked to other URLs referring to other people, objects, ideas or links. Someone (or something) looking at this association can then make inferences about what is being represented from its associations, which can be further described and qualified by more links. The 'namespaces' – machine-readable XML documents that group together the vocabularies used in these descriptions – can also be seen as nodes in this semantic network and linked to, extended, re-written and re-defined. Hence these representations are always contingent and nonoriginary; there is no start or end point, and no point of observation that can be outside them, just new nodes in the network.

The totalising rhetoric of the Semantic Web project was very evident in one of its key predecessors, the CYC corporation's proprietary 'common sense' knowledgebase. This 'big AI' project was Guha's first job out of university, and involved the collation of a huge database of so-called 'common sense' statements. These statements were machine-readable so that software agents would be able to search through and make inferences based on them. A typical example is a CYC-based search engine that could respond to the question 'what is bravery?' by looking through its knowledgebase, finding an assertion that a property of 'brave' is 'danger', finding another saying that rock climbing is dangerous, and then retrieving a picture of a rock climber.

The notion of collating all 'common sense' (or 'consensual reality' as CYC corporation sometimes put it) as a basis for artificial intelligence is a genuinely totalising and largely discredited idea. This problem, and the fact that the format of the knowledgebase and the modes and methods used to describe its contents were fixed, prescribed by CYC's designers and their proprietary legal structures, frustrated Guha and gave him and his collaborators the impetus to break with CYC and attempt to formulate a more malleable framework. The development of the Semantic Web – a machinereadable representation of everything, and its relationship to everything else – does sound like a step towards the kind of universal dataveillance exemplified by DARPA's discredited 'Total Information Awareness' program. It is true that the enriched and extensible vocabularies that the Semantic Web uses to describe relationships will hasten morally dubious activities such as surveillance, unsolicited direct marketing and military operations. These technologies will refine existing authoritarian systems for associating and describing things and people (such as consumer profiling systems) which are usually imposed without negotiation or consent, and, since they are limited to a definition of the person as a consumer, remain very unsophisticated.

However, the extensibility of the Semantic Web, the fact that the person doing the describing can define the terms, the 'vocabulary' of that description, suggests a less totalising, more heterogeneous 'information awareness'. This is both promising and potentially dangerous. Augmented by many more layers of information and description voluntarily supplied by the person being represented, the 'consumer profile' becomes infinitely more insidious and detailed. At the same time, the greater sophistication of the Semantic Web's descriptive language enables someone to consciously and deliberately allow or deny access to specific data that they produce. Using cryptography, and 'friend of a friend' testimonial systems (sometimes called 'trust' networks) at least offers some degree of control over and awareness of the data being exchanged about us. On a more structural level, the development

of many divergent, even antagonistic descriptions of the world and the people in it moves away from the idea of any imposed ‘consensual reality’ and suggests a mode of representation that can be multiply subjective.

RDF was developed as an open framework from philosophical inquiries by W3C about creating universal categorising systems, with the understanding that such a framework can never be comprehensive, hence the ability to add and modify the vocabularies used to describe and categorise things.

The Semantic Web’s use of the RDF common framework allows the data used in each description to be fully distributed in terms of storage and authorship. Not only can groups collate and share their own data, but also automate the aggregation and inclusion of publicly accessible data sources such as company profits, IMF trade data, names and connections between regulatory board members etc.

RDF’s more widely-known derivative is Rich Site Summary (RSS), a format often used to syndicate news stories and blog postings between websites. Both RDF and RSS are machine readable web standards for expressing metadata (data about data) but whereas RSS has a predetermined and fixed vocabulary specifically for reading news, RDF is an extensible common framework for vocabularies, and their namespaces. Using the framework of RDF you can create an ordered list about a category of things (a namespace). For example, the Foaf Corp namespace which came about as a vocabulary to convert the They Rule [<http://theyrule.net>] project into a Semantic Webcompatible format, started with the original vocabulary below:

- * fc (foaf corp)
- * fc: Company
- * fc: Committee
- * fc: Board
- * fc: Member
- * fc: Stock code
- * fc: Filings

Later, at the Cartographic Congress held in London’s Limehouse Town Hall in June 2003 (see Mute 26), the MCC (Mapping Contemporary Capitalism) project proposed the following additions and extensions:

- * fc: Owns – internal, external
- * fc: Shareholders – list of shareholders, number of shares on each market, percentage of shares
- * fc: Company employs – (this is a crude category which will display multiple categories: business management, investment banking, marketing, personnel etc)
- * fc: Company is funding – (this data may be unavailable but we can draw many inferences from its patchiness)
- * fc: Company affiliation – company member affiliation (e.g. Gate Foundation).
- * fc: Company’s geographical locations ONTOLOGIES

Once web content has been formatted using an RDF vocabulary from a namespace, such as FoafCorp, then it becomes possible to infer meaning from the associations between the things it describes. To make those inferences, the Semantic Web uses ‘Web Ontology Language (OWL)’, a language for asking logical questions about metadata, to ask questions about the assertions in RDF documents.

‘An ontology defines the terms used to describe and represent an area of knowledge. Ontologies are used by people, databases, and applications that need to share domain information (a domain is just a specific subject area or area of knowledge, like medicine, tool manufacturing, real estate, automobile repair, financial management, etc.). Ontologies include computer-usable definitions of basic concepts in the domain and the relationships among them (note that here and throughout this document,

definition is not used in the technical sense understood by logicians). They encode knowledge in a domain and also knowledge that spans domains. In this way, they make that knowledge reusable' – 'W3C Working Draft' 3 February 2003, [<http://www.w3.org/TR/2003/WD-webont-req-20030203/#onto-def>]

A set of OWL ontology code could include a namespace and an initial set of URLs to visit, then call on a number of logical declarations. Because the Semantic Web deals with web content, it is inherently distributed, so expect OWL ontologies to also be distributed. One consequence of this is that OWL generally makes an 'open world assumption' allowing it to move across networks, finding new bits of RDF metadata, new assertions and new questions, and adding them to the initial ontology.

OWL would be employed in the form of a 'bot, spider or scutter', a set of code sent out onto the web to gather and interpret RDF data. For example, technology writer Ed Dumbill's 'FOAFBot' sits on an IRC channel, listening for snippets of the conversation that it is programmed to understand:

'<edd> foafbot, edd's name

<foafbot> edd's name is 'Edd Dumbill', according to Dan Brickley, Anon35, Niel Bornstein, Jo Walsh, Dave Beckett, Edd Dumbill, Matt Biddulph, Paul Ford' The FOAFbot is invoked when Edd calls its name in the IRC channel, and then responds to his command 'edd's name' by searching through the statements in the FOAF files of Dan Brickley, Anon35, Niel Bornstien etc. and inferring from those that the nickname 'edd' refers to 'Edd Dumbill'. It can retrieve any information about Edd that is available in the statements in those FOAF files, such as links to pictures of 'Edd' or lists of the people that Edd says he knows in his FOAF file.⁵ This simple functionality can then be re-used by other bots, built on and re-purposed to create hugely complex and nuanced systems of distributed information storage and retrieval.

FREE ASSOCIATION

Prior to the invention of the printing press, there was no such thing as an index. Books copied by hand would have different pagination, so the idea of correlating specific sections in the book with certain ideas, and collating them in an index at the back never occurred. Similarly, without standardised grammar, spellings or spacings between words, hand-written script tended to run into long, unbroken lines of letters that needed to be read out and understood aurally for meaning to emerge. The visual comprehension of words on a page without a spoken and heard intermediate stage was, again, a development of the printing press. These two developments made possible access to, and use of information with formerly unimaginable speed and sophistication. The Semantic Web promises a similar acceleration and transformation in our relationship with information. The vision of computers and people, working in 'co-operation' as Berners-Lee puts it, casts aside superficial metaphors of 'pages' to be 'explored' or 'navigated' and instead proposes the web as a growing network of prosthetic comprehension and, potentially, a treacherous one.

'The third wave of network attacks is semantic attacks: attacks that target the way we, as humans, assign meaning to content.'

– Bruce Schneier, Semantic Attacks, 'The Third Wave of Network Attacks', Crypto-gram Newsletter, October 2000.⁶

Although here Bruce Schneier is talking about the imminent threat of a catastrophic hacker assault on computer security systems, he could just as well be referring to the standard operation of certain search engines. Although Google currently maintains a fairly clean track-record with regards to how it indexes, ranks and displays its search results, the potential for massaging and manipulating those operations is huge. Dependence on a single system of information association, particularly an unaccountable commercial system whose ownership may change at any moment, makes our use of the

web very vulnerable to abuse. The enclosure of a potential ‘information commons’ by an anarchistic elite of corporate/state bodies is well underway. Alongside this enclosure, strong and vibrant hobbyist movements are flourishing. Free software activists, free hardware geeks and free networkers – natives of the information commons – are continuing to fiddle, peeking under the bonnet of their technologies, creating and manipulating their information environment as they see fit. Despite the problematic heritage of the Semantic Web project, it still has the potential to be used and developed into an important element within the Free Information movement. The three strands of this movement mentioned above share the SemWeb’s dubious origins, but are pursuing a difficult and tortuous course that avoids compliance with authoritarian and profitdriven exploitation. As it is, these movements are disparate, unconnected, resembling the state of the net itself; an incoherent mess of networks. Worse, the connections between these networks are almost always proprietary at some point. When you download free software, it will almost certainly be passing over a proprietary network and, somewhere in that transaction, there is a dependency on the permission and profit- margin of a corporation, a media owner, an ISP, the DNS system. You might not even have found out about the software if Google hadn’t permitted it to be indexed and returned in your search results.

Without the associations and indices that allow access to information, that information is inaccessible, valueless. As the density and quality of Semantic Web meta-content grows, that meta-content will become an extremely valuable asset in itself. To protect the integrity and trustworthiness of their meta-content, Semantic Web developers and meta-content producers will need to cooperate with and adopt similar legal defence strategies to the Free Software groups, asserting the intellectual property rights of an author to allow their works to be maintained in the public domain.

But here is the most treacherous part. Asserting intellectual property rights over associations, vocabularies, descriptions, the relationships between things in the world, as much as data on the web, is premised on the assumption that this kind of information must be seen as property. As the Semantic Web stretches over more and more areas of knowledge production, encompassing histories, identities, interpersonal relationships, and language, this assumption feeds nauseous system of selfindustrialisation and commodification, the process by which we are transforming ourselves into the Freemasons of the future.

Glossary and Links

Semantic Web: The web of data with meaning in the sense that a computer program can learn enough about what the data means to process it

RDF – Resource Description Framework: Designed for expressing metadata about things in the form of ‘triples’, using vocabularies that are published on the web. See Mute Map vocabularies (above). An introductory (business-oriented) slideshow by Tim Berners- Lee has some interesting visualisations and talks about using an ‘RDF Integration Bus’ like the Mute Map Infomesh for applications [<http://www.w3.org/2003/Talks/03-pcforum-tbl/slide15-4.html>]

W3C RDF primer: [<http://www.w3.org/TR/rdf-primer/>]

History of RDF by Tim Bray: [<http://www.tbray.org/ongoing/When/200x/2003/05/21/RDFNet>] RSS – Rich Site Summary: An RDF vocabulary and RDF/XML format for distributing news, increasingly popular with websites. There are many newsreaders available, for example: [<http://amphetadsk.com>] for Windows, and [<http://www.netnewswire.com>] for Macs. There are also many RSS aggregation services like [<http://syndic8.com>]. Easy to write ‘crawlers’ and ‘scrapers’ can convert HTML, email, irc, nntp etc. to RSS format

FOAF – FriendOfAFriend: A vocabulary for describing people and networks of people in RDF

[<http://rdfweb.org/foaf>] Friends of Corporate Friends (FOAFCorp): [<http://rdfweb.org/foaf/corp>]

FoafNaut: A visual tool for navigating the FOAF network done in SVG : [<http://foafnaut.org>] A bug in FOAF, explaining the difficulties of modelling groups of people:

[http://rdfweb.org/issues/show_bug.cgi?id=8] OWL – Web Ontology Language: A language

(expressed in RDF) that allows us to apply logical and taxonomic constraints to RDF data and the things expressed in RDF vocabularies. Still in development
[<http://www.w3.org/TR/2002/WD-owl-guide-20021104/>] SVG – Scalable Vector Graphics: An XML format for describing vector graphics with SMIL and javascript. It can do Flash-like things; it also does lovely scalable static images

An SVG organisational chart demo: [<http://swordfish.rdfweb.org/discovery/2003/03/6deg.svg>]
Carto.net, cartography and SVG: [<http://www.carto.net>] SVG London tube map:
[<http://space.frot.org/rdf/tubemap.svg>] XML (Extensible Markup Language): A simplified successor to SGML, W3C's generic language for creating new markup languages. Markup languages (such as HTML) are used to represent documents with a nested, treelike structure. XML is a product of W3C and a trademark of MIT

Scutter, spider, bot: In the Semantic Web context this would be a set of code containing logical instructions, that is then sent to a number of URIs to apply the code to RDF data it finds at these addresses Namespace: Repository for Semantic Web vocabulary

URI – Uniform Resource Identifier: The generic set of all names/addresses that are short strings which refer to resources URL – Uniform Resource Locator: An informal term (no longer used in technical specifications) associated with popular URI schemes: http, ftp, mailto, etc.

W3C (World Wide Web Consortium): A neutral meeting point of those to whom the web is important, with the mission of leading the web to its full potential If you are interested in taking part in Semantic Web or cartography projects, you are welcome to join the University of Openess Faculty of Cartography: [<http://uo.thepe.net/FacultyCartography>], or find more information at one of the key resources listed below:

RDFweb and FOAF development: [<http://rdfweb.org/>]

Geowanking – An important mapping list

[<http://lists.burri.to/mailman/listinfo/geowanking>]

TheMuteMap – Semantic Web/ SVG development space

[<http://themutemap.3d.openmute.org>] & Mapping Contemporary Capitalism

[<http://themutemap.3d.openmute.org/modules/wakka/McC>] The Locative Media Lab:

[<http://locative.org/>]

Footnotes

1 The Quantum Time Bomb is an expression which refers to the whole range of anomalies which will occur when a Quantum Computer is linked to the internet. Perhaps this has already happened on August 14th, when much of North America experienced a power cut.

2 For more information about this author, see [http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Harry_Potter] 3 The Voodoo Science Club and the London Psychogeographical Society Historification Committee, Friday 22nd August 2003, announced overnight a cycle trip from Limehouse, London, to the Cave of the Illuminati, Royston, Herts [<http://uo.thepe.net/LimehouseTimeTravelRally>]

4 Tim Berners-Lee, James Hendler, Ora Lassila, 'The Semantic Web', Scientific American, May 2001

5 Download source code and find more information about Edd Dumbill's FOAFbot at

[<http://usefulinc.com/foaf/foafbot/>] 6 See [<http://www.schneier.com/crypto-gram-0010.html>]

Art Basel 34

ByGwynneth Porter

Art Basel is an empty display case open for occupation by smooth commercial operators, gullible wannabes and tactical activists alike. Here Gwynneth Porter explores the fair and its surroundings, a setting in which the uneasy relationship between money, culture and Swiss cheese is played out

[IMAGE]

The Basel art fair is the hardcore. For a week each June, what would seem to be the entire international art mafia gather in this polite, affluent, Medieval-yetinsipid Swiss city, and has done so since 1970. Overwhelming in scale and tone, it is a vast event occupying two levels of a massive events centre, that positively (and creepily) haemorrhages money. Not surprising, given that Switzerland is surely one of Europe's richest countries. There is also the odd feeling, when walking about, that beneath the pristine footpaths are vaults full of currencies that the Swiss don't ask too many questions about.

When traveling, one's choice of siesta literature can turn out to be fortuitously coincidental. For example, reading Jean Genet's *A Thief's Journal* in Basel imparted the information that Genet thought Switzerland was the obvious place for him to go when he had decided to attempt suicide. No reason was specified, but there is an undertow in Basel that was dark in an efficient, folksy, painted-wood sort of way. It was in Switzerland that Genet wrote his remarkable play *The Blacks*, where he declared that in this country he 'was tired of everything being white – the people, the snow...' One naturally gets to wondering just what creates this undertow. Well, for one thing, it is hard to escape cheese in Switzerland.

Everything comes with cheese, and the onslaught is relentless – morning, noon and night there is cheese. But what many people don't know is that cheese contains a chemical called tryptophan which makes people dream, and hard. This chemical is in particularly high concentrations in, you guessed it, Swiss cheese. Was this the reason that such important research work into the inner recesses of the human psyche was done in Basel? Jung, Nietzsche and Kraft-Ebbing all lived and worked there as does the inventor of LSD, Dr Albert Hoffman. Does this make Switzerland a key spot to visit if one wants to 'feel the noise'? Meet the dead? Get mythological? Meet thy maker? Go to hell?

Take Jung for example. He was less interested in the 'little' personal unconscious that Freud had posited, but in a collective unconscious that spanned not only individuals, but the past, present and future. His theories had been very much influenced by his strange and lucid dreams – not a surprising thing for a Swiss, assuming he had a typical appetite for cheese – both asleep and awake (which are of course not entirely separate conditions). During one of his visions, in 1913, he witnessed a 'monstrous flood' swamping Europe. Many drowned and cities crumbled. Then instead of water, blood streamed everywhere and Europe was plunged into a winter that went on and on. This was in mid-July. On 1 August, World War I began.

[IMAGE]

But Art Basel clearly has no time for neurosis of any kind. The fair – ostensibly the face of untroubled art commodification – is no place for the weak, conspicuous displays of confidence being necessary to attract backers. The women were particularly amazing. To get around such an expo was quite an undertaking, and doubly so given the heat-wave outside and post-Venice Biennale fatigue, even if one was wearing sensible footwear. But all around was this special breed of incredibly slickly turned out women in little strappy designer heels and not wincing at all. The female gallery assistants/bitches, or gallerinas, were particularly inscrutable. The general effect of such an art fair is that of a thousand

glossy art magazines come to life. In the same way that these magazines seem to pretend to show you everything worth showing, the fair purported to deal in only the most important artists, as if what was left out was not worth including. In reality there is a hell of a lot of great work missing, as what usually makes it into art magazines and fairs is that which, in the case of magazines, pays for advertising and, in the case of fairs, is predicted to meet the taste of the target markets. Much art, for example, is still bought with a mind to décor.

Something else about art fairs is that there is a quite different relationship between work and viewer than, say, when visiting an art museum or gallery. Where the latter tend to aim for coherent displays with some sort of narrative art fairs, for better or worse, are entirely incoherent. And one tends to expend more energy blocking out work one does not want to see than on engaging with the interesting work. There is such a weird admixture of periods, formats and styles that, on this sort of scale, it's draining to the point of being damaging. But that is not to say that there was no narrative in operation at Art Basel. There was one and it was all to do with the aura of art, investment potential, general prestige, and high finance.

[IMAGE]

The fair is organised into two main parts: the Art Galleries section occupied by the dealers displaying a cross-section of the artists in their stables, and the newly introduced Art Unlimited area. This ground-floor display is devoted to what could be described as museum-scale works by the hottest dealers; hottest in the minds of the organisers. Dealers, within their booths, also have the option to choose to devote space to single artist projects by 'young artists' – a sort of overlap between the two main sections called Art Statements. This year there were seventeen such showings. The outstanding work and booth of the fair, I believe, was that occupied by China Art Objects Galleries. This Los Angeles gallery-cum-project space, started as an experiment in 2000, was included in the Basel Art Fair for the first time this year. Their booth was quite the exercise in subversion, participating in and aping the Art Statements format brilliantly. CAO turned their space over to an installation by the disarmingly clever Los Angelesbased African American artist Eric Wesley. In the space one encountered a nice new red cylindrical sandblasting unit atop a pile of sand. There was a painting which, upon close inspection, turned out to be stretched denim that had been blasted in a focused fashion. There was also a rack of jeans. According to the capitalised, hand-written, corner-stapled A4 handout, it is a work which proceeds from three premises: firstly, that sand is the embodiment of time; secondly, that 'people love those fake worn jeans because of guilt, i.e. you work at the computer all day leaving your body behind, you know you should be working with your hands so you compensate by displaying your obviously constructed 'dirty' jeans'; and thirdly, the idea and impossibility of starting over, of erasure.

The handout also talked about how, when the machine runs, it sends Malibu sand out into other booths to settle on the tops of paintings and into DVD players. As a series of saleable items in the space there was an edition of 17 'homeland security style survival kits' for Art Statements participants – sets of rolled up plastic sheets stuffed inside rolls of duct tape for those booths that wanted to protect themselves, all of which sold it seems. (Duct tape is an interesting social artefact: before the Gulf War the American public was urged to buy it in case of terrorist attacks, then it emerged that Dick Cheney would profit hugely from a run on this product. There seems to be an interesting point of contact here in terms of the way dealers 'talk up' artists they have themselves invested in.)

Wesley's work was a welcome relief in that it was site-specific (or should I say spite-specific?) and articulate. The rest of the work in the fair was so autistically non-site-specific, so passive, so mute. Such a presentation was yet another feather in the souvenir headdress of this astute gallery, one that has charted a radical course through the grey area between the extremes of the historically

anti-commodity artist-run gallery scene, and the dealer gallery sphere. Radical because, unlike the depressing commercialism and intellectual sloppiness of a standard gallery operation, CAO sought to actually do something for their community of talented artists.

In the same way that art exists in the face of a lot of things, this gallery project has sought to act in the face of the financial terror many artists experience. LA has some amazing art schools, but graduate students leave them with horrifying levels of debt and face the distinct possibility of hideous compromise to survive economically. Given these circumstances, the idea of making money for artists you love genuinely was surely a great and timely one.

One of the founders of China Art Objects Galleries, the late Giovanni Intra, had left New Zealand in 1996, where he had been instrumental in the excellent Auckland artist-run space Teststrip, to do something stupid and expensive that would no doubt result in something charming, successful, and sure to expose conservatism in thinking. In an article written for the 2001 exhibition Circles in Karlsruhe, Germany, (ostensibly about artists' circles), Intra explained why pure abstinence from the financial scene was counter-productive: 'The shift from alternative venue to something more economically opportunistic – from simply exhibiting artists to representing them – wasn't the result of a gradual change in principle, but a conscious adaptation in order to best exploit the potentialities at hand... We have discovered, after years of research, that money doesn't compromise an exhibition programme. If I keep returning to this 'alternative' point it is because of the pleasure I have taken in betraying its principles. Selling art is a lot of fun. To make money out of art is a kind of revenge against the expense of graduate education and the political imperative which suggests that it is compulsory for young artists to attend school for extended periods and go into debt... Most days there's a lot of laughter in our gallery, and it often surrounds the perversion of the art system and our part within it.'

Perhaps they are playing with the oft-quoted idea from Negri and Hardt's Empire that 'there is no outside' when it comes to capitalism, or maybe not. But one thing was for certain, there was no point in going outside for long at Art Basel because it was too damn hot. The interior spaces of the exhibition centre were of course luxuriously air-conditioned, and the astounding dumbness of this coolness made the Basel art fair, in my mind, even more of a sinister social text. This feeling was compounded by the selection of the winning pavilion at the Venice Biennale the week before. As far as we could make out, the only reason Luxembourg won was that their show, Air Conditioned, lived up to its name and, unlike the rest of the Biennale, remained beautifully cool during a comic heat wave. I can understand why taking advantage of this milieu would appeal so much to these cunning community-minded young gallerists – but as Intra once quipped, 'it's not exactly riding the jock of genius.'

Gwynneth Porter <Gwynneth.Porter At manukau.ac.nz> is a writer living in Auckland, New Zealand. She is also a member of the itinerant artist-run gallery project, Cuckoo

The Packet Gang

By Jamie King

Jamie King on the impasse of political organisation in the age of 'openness'

Openness – as an organising principle and political ideology – has become an article of faith across networked social movements. From its role as a central tenet of free and open source software production to its current popularity within activist circles, the concept of openness is attracting enthusiastic adherence. Here, as part of our series on the politics of alternative media structures, JJ

King takes a less credulous view of what lies beneath the dream of organisational horizontality

1. THE IDEA OF OPENNESS

Since the founding of the Free Software Foundation in 1985 by Richard Stallman and the Open Source Initiative in 1998 by Eric Raymond, the idea of openness has enjoyed some considerable celebrity. Simply understood, open source software is that which is published along with its source code, allowing developers to collaborate, improve upon each other's work, and use the code in their own projects. The cachet of this open model of development has been greatly increased by the high-profile success of GNU-Linux, a piece of 'free-as-in-libre and open source software' (FLOSS). But, taken together with the distributed co-composition offered by, for example, the wiki architecture,[1] and the potential of peer-to-peer networks like Bittorrent and Gnutella,[2] a more nuanced and loose idea of openness has suggested itself as a possible model for other kinds of organisation. Felix Stalder of Openflows identifies its key elements as:

[...] communal management and open access to the informational resources for production, openness to contributions from a diverse range of users/producers, flat hierarchies, and a fluid organisational structure.[3]

This idea of openness is now frequently deployed not only with reference to composing software communities but also to political and cultural groupings. For many, this is easily explained: FLOSS' 'self-evident' realisation of a 'voluntary global community empowered and explicitly authorised to reverse-engineer, learn from, improve and use-validate its own tools and products', indicates that 'it has to be taken seriously as a potential source of organising for other realms of human endeavour.'[4] In these circles, openness is now seen as 'paradigmatic'. Computer book publisher and guru Tim O'Reilly's presentation at the Reboot conference in 2003, entitled 'The Open Source Paradigm Shift', placed FLOSS at the vanguard of a social phenomenon whose time, he said 'had come'; its methods of ad hoc, distributed collaboration constituting a 'new paradigm' at a level consistent with, for example, the advent of the printing press and movable type.[5]

Such accounts of the social-political pertinence of the FLOSS model are increasingly common. A recent essay by activist Florian Schneider and writer Geert Lovink, for example, exhibits the premature desire to collapse FLOSS-style open organisation into a series of other political phenomena:

freedom of movement and freedom of communication [...] the everyday struggles of millions of people crossing borders as well as pirating brands, producing generics, writing open source code or using p2p-software.[6]

More soberly, Douglas Rushkoff has argued recently in a report for the Demos think-tank that 'the emergence of the interactive mediaspace may offer a new model for cooperation':

The values engendered by our fledgling networked culture may [...] prove quite applicable to the broader challenges of our time and help a world struggling with the impact of globalism, the lure of fundamentalism and the clash of conflicting value systems [...] One model for the open-ended and participatory process through which legislation might occur in a networked democracy can be found in the open source software movement.[7]

meeting places

meeting places 2

Rushkoff does not try to draw direct parallels between FLOSS and other forms of activity in the manner of Schneider and Lovink, but argues equally problematically that the model used in open source software composing communities could be usefully applied to democratic political organisation. A growing willingness to engage with the underlying code of the democratic process,' he contends, 'could eventually manifest in a widespread call for revisions to our legal, economic and political structures.' [8] Clearly, then, the idea of openness has appeal across rather different constituencies – here we already have both the reformist-liberal and the radicals activists claiming openness as their ally. Indeed, as ICT theorist Biella Coleman suggests, the widespread adoption and use of the idea of openness and its 'profound political impact' may precisely be contingent on its peculiarly transpolitical appeal. 'FLOSS,' she writes, resists

political delineation into the traditional political categories of left, right or centre [...but] has been embraced by a wide range of people [...] This has enabled FLOSS to explode from a niche and academic endeavour into a creative sphere of socio-political and technical influence bolstered by the internet.[9]

But the broad-church appeal of the idea of openness suggested by FLOSS need not necessarily be a cause for celebration, especially since many of the constituencies making use of it conceive of themselves as fundamentally opposed. Can the idea of openness these divergent constituencies embrace really be the same? And how can it be that they consider it sufficient to their very different aims?

The chief purpose of this article is not to answer these questions by examining the 'self-evident' truths of open source production. Such studies are already being carried out in forums like Oekonux [<http://www.oekonux.de>]; indeed, in this issue of Mute, Gilberto Camara, Director for Earth Observation at Brazil's National Institute for Space Research, publishes research that challenges some key tenets of the FLOSS model. His research exposes the possibility that, in many cases, FLOSS does not innovate significantly original software, or sustain projects outside of corporate or large scale academic involvement. Instead this article seeks to address the intense political expectation around open organisation among diverse elements of the diffuse activist organisations which, post-Seattle, have been loosely referred to as 'the social movement' or 'social movements'. In referring to the social movement, this article concerns itself primarily with groups such as People's Global Action, Indymedia, Euraction Hub and other such non-hierarchised collectives; it does not have in mind more traditionally structured organisations like the Social Forums, Globalise Resistance or so-called 'civil society' NGOs.

In the social movement thus defined, openness is clearly becoming a constitutive organising principle, as it connects with the hopes and desires circulating around the idea of the 'multitude', a term whose post-Spinozan renaissance has been secured by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's book *Empire*. The multitude is a defiantly heterogeneous figure, a collective noun intended to counter the homogenising violence of terms such as 'the people' or 'the mass'. For many thinkers in the post-Autonomist tradition, this multitude is a way of conceiving the revolutionary potential of a new 'post-Fordist proletariat' of networked immaterial labourers. In certain circuits within the social movement, pace Schneider and Lovink, FLOSS organisation is seen as the techno-social precondition of a radical democracy in becoming. However tenuous this assemblage may be, it goes some way to explaining the way in which FLOSS and openness have become quite central rhetorical terms in the struggle to produce an identity for the networked, anti-capitalist movement. But it is also true that certain characteristics of the idea of openness have genuine organisational influence within the movement. A study of openness in this context is useful in three degrees: first, to the social movement itself 'internally'; second, to 'outsiders' wanting to gain a good understanding of 'what it is'; third as a critique of those who would seek to represent the movement with, or attempt to manipulate it through,

a particular deployment of the idea of openness.

2. 'THE REVOLUTION WILL BE OPEN SOURCE'

It is too easy to make sweeping generalisations about the ways in which the social movement realises the idea of openness. Instead we need to look at the ways in which the kind of openness identified in FLOSS may practically correspond to specific moments of organisation in the social movement. Based on my direct involvement in the social movement in contexts such as the anti-G8, No Border Camps, PGA meetings and various actions, I think it is possible to see correspondences in five key areas:

Meetings and Discussions

The time and location of physical meetings are published in a variety of places, online and off. The meetings themselves are most often open to all comers, sometimes with the exception of 'traditional' media. Although often no recordings or pictures are allowed at meetings, there is rarely any other vetting of those who attend. Anyone is allowed to speak, although there is often a convenor or moderator whose role is to keep order and ensure progress. Summaries of discussion are often posted on the web (see 3., Documentation) where they can be read by those unable to attend a physical meeting or those otherwise interested parties.

The same is true of IRC meetings, which anyone may attend, and for which the 'logs' are usually published (see, again, Documentation).

Net-based mailing lists, through which much discussion is carried out, are usually open subscription and, as with physical meetings, those joining are not vetted.

Decision-Making

Most often, anyone present at a meeting may take part in the decisions made there, although these conditions may occasionally be altered. Currently, the majority of decision making is done using the 'consensus' method, in which any person present not agreeing with a decision can either choose to abstain or veto ('block'). A block causes an action or decision to be stopped.

Documentation

In general, documents that form organisational materials within the movement are published online, usually using a content management system such as wiki. In most cases, it is possible for even casual visitors to edit and alter these documents, although it is possible to 'roll back' to earlier versions in, for example, the case of defacements.

Demonstrations

The majority of demonstrations are organised using the above methods. Not only is their organisation 'open' but, within a certain range of political persuasions, anyone may attend. Self-policing is not 'hard' but 'soft'.

Actions

Even some 'actions' – concentrated interventions usually involving smaller numbers – are 'open', using the above methods to organise themselves and, if the action is ongoing, even allowing new people to participate.

Thus some key moments within the social movement share certain characteristics with the FLOSS model of openness. Indeed, the movement deploys many of the same tools as FLOSS communities (i.e., wiki, IRC and mailing lists) to organise itself and carry out its projects. But its characteristic uses of openness are not enshrined in any formal document. Rather, they have developed as a way of organising that is tacitly understood by those involved in the social movement: an idea of openness

that, to differing degrees, inflects its organisation throughout. Although the principles are not rigidly followed, there is often peer criticism of groups who do not declare their agendas or who act in a closed, partisan fashion, and, generally speaking, any group or project wanting to keep itself closed has an obligation to explain its rationale to other groups.

Some of these attitudes and principles derive from the People's Global Action (PGA), an influential 'instrument' constituting a visible attempt to organise around networked openness. The organisational philosophy of PGA,[10] which was formed after a movement gathering in South America in August 1997, is based on 'decentralisation'. With 'minimal central structures', the PGA 'has no membership' or 'juridical personality': 'no organisation or person represents' it, nor does it 'represent any organisation or person'. It is a 'tool',

a fluid network for communication and co-ordination between diverse social movements who share a loose set of principles or 'hallmarks' [...] Since February 1998 [...] PGA has evolved as an interconnected and often chaotic web of very diverse groups, with a powerful common thread of struggle and solidarity at the grassroots level. These gatherings have played a vital role in face-to-face communication and exchange of experience, strategies and ideas [...] [11]

The PGA has attempted to structure itself around a set of 'hallmarks' which have been updated at each key meeting. These are currently as follows:

1. A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism; all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalisation.
2. [... A rejection of] all forms and systems of domination and discrimination including, but not limited to, patriarchy, racism and religious fundamentalism of all creeds. [...An embracing of] the full dignity of all human beings.
3. A confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organisations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker.
4. A call to direct action and civil disobedience, support for social movements' struggles, advocating forms of resistance which maximise respect for life and oppressed peoples' rights, as well as the construction of local alternatives to global capitalism.
5. An organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy. [12]

These hallmarks function to structure participation in the PGA process. In theory, they allow the network to remain 'open' while designating the kinds of activities that don't fall within its field. PGA meetings, for example, do not exclude those who don't subscribe to ITS hallmarks, but neither would discussions explicitly contrary to them be given much attention. Certain kinds of discussion are openly privileged over others on pragmatic grounds.

Structures like PGA and those being experimented with more widely are part of the social movement's general rejection of organisational models based on representation, verticality and hierarchy. In their stead comes 'non-hierarchical decentralisation' and 'horizontal coordination'. 'From this movement,' writes Massimo De Angelis, 'emerges [...] the concept and practice of network horizontality, democracy, of the exercise of power from below.' [13] For this 'radical political economist'[,] this form of 'social-cooperation' is 'ours'. It is 'our' horizontality and these are 'our' networks, part of a set of modes of coordination of human activity that

go beyond the capitalist market and beyond the state. [...] we are talking about another world. [...] the slogan on T-shirts in Genoa was entirely correct: another world is not only possible. Rather, we are already patiently and with effort building another world – with all its contradictions, limitations and ambiguities – through the form of our networks. [14]

In other words it is the open, networked, horizontal form of the movement that produces its radical potential for social change: the message, yet again, is the medium. In the case of the self-described 'open publishing' project Indymedia, for example, the open submission structure is said to collapse the distinction between media producer and consumer, allowing us to 'become the media'. The Indymedia newswire, write the collective

works on the principle of OPEN PUBLISHING, an essential element of the Indymedia project that allows anyone to instantaneously self-publish their work on a globally accessible web site. The Indymedia newswire encourages people to become the media [...] While Indymedia reserves the right to develop sections of the site that provide edited articles, there is no designated Indymedia editorial collective that edits articles posted to the [<http://www.Indymedia.org>] news wire.[15]

meeting places 3

Here, the idea of openness presents itself as absolutely inimical to the 'dominant multinational global news system', where 'news is not free, news is not open'. With open publishing

the process of creating news is transparent to the readers. They can contribute a story and see it instantly appear in the pool of stories publicly available. Those stories are filtered as little as possible to help the readers find the stories they want. Readers can see editorial decisions being made by others. They can see how to get involved and help make editorial decisions. If they can think of a better way for the software to help shape editorial decisions, they can copy the software because it is free and change it and start their own site. If they want to redistribute the news, they can, preferably on an open publishing site.

The working parts of journalism are exposed. Open publishing assumes the reader is smart and creative and might want to be a writer and an editor and a distributor and even a software programmer [...] Open publishing is free software. It's freedom of information, freedom for creativity.[16]

Accounts such as this and De Angelis' bear out my argument that an extreme amount of expectation is being focused on openness as an agent for change. Not only is openness central to the organisation of the social movement, but in many cases it is taken as read that the organisational quality of openness is inherently radical and will be productive of positive change in whichever part of the social-political field it is deployed. This is seen, for example, in the work of the group Open Organisations, comprised of three individuals – Toni Prug, Richard Malter and Benjamin Geer – who were previously closely involved with UK Indymedia, and who have until relatively recently been united in their belief in the radically liberatory potentials of openness. For them, it is simply an as-yet insufficiently theorised and elaborated form and thus they have been working on what might be characterised as a 'strong' or 'robust' openness model which recommends a set of working processes or practices intended to foster it. 'Open Organisations' are entities that anyone can join, [that function with] complete transparency and flexible and fair decision making structures, ownership patterns, and exchange mechanisms, that are designed, defined, and refined, by members as part of a continual transformative and learning process.[17]

3. CRYPTO-HIERARCHIES AND PROBLEMS WITH OPENNESS

In effect, by creating 'structured processes', Open Organisations try to provide for a consistent openness. In doing so, they implicitly recognise that there are inconsistencies between the rhetoric and behaviour of contemporary political organisations. But what are these problems and who, indeed where, are openness' discontents? In fact they may be found everywhere. In the case of Indymedia's 'open publishing' project, for example, openness has been failing under the pressures of scale. Initially small 'cottage-industry' IMCs were able to manage the open-publishing process very well. But, in

many IMCs, when the number of site visitors has risen past a certain level, problems have started to occur. Popular IMC sites have become targets for interventions by political opponents, often from the fascist right, seeking opportunities to disrupt what they regard as an IMC's 'countercultural' potential and a platform from which to spread their own rhetoric. Of course there is nothing to prevent this in the IMC manifesto; but it has impelled the understandable decision to edit out fascist viewpoints and other 'noise', using the ad hoc teams whose function was previously to develop and maintain the IMC's open-publishing system. Some IMCs have ultimately been seen to take on a rather traditional, closed and censorial function that is all too often undeclared and in contradiction with the official IMC 'become the media' line. In other words, Indymedia channels are often politically censored by a small group of more-or-less anonymous individuals to quite a high degree.

This emergence of soft control within organisations emphatically declared open is becoming a common and tacitly acknowledged problem across the social movement. As with Indymedia, practical issues with open development and organisation too often give the lie to the enthusiastic promotion of openness as an effective alternative to representation. After one PGA meeting, the group Sans Titre had this to say:

Whenever we have been involved in PGA-inspired action, we have been unable to identify decision-making bodies. Moreover, there has been no collective assessment of the effectiveness of PGA-inspired actions [...] If the PGA-process includes decision-making and assessment bodies, where are they to be found? How can we take part?[18]

This problem runs through the temporary constitutions and dissolutions of 'open' organisations that make up the social movement. The avowed 'absence' of decision-making bodies and points of centralisation can too easily segue into a concealment of control per se. In fact, in both the FLOSS model and the social movement, the idea that no one group or person controls development and decision making is often quite far from the truth. In both cases it is formally true that anyone may alter or intervene in processes according to their needs, views or projects; but practically speaking, few people can assume the necessary social position from which to make effective 'interventions'. Open source software is generally tightly controlled by a small group of people: the Apache Group, for example, very open-handedly controls the development of the Apache Web server, and Linus Torvalds has the final say on the Linux kernel's development.[19] Likewise, in the social movement, decision making often devolves to a surprisingly small number of individuals and groups who make a lot of the running in deciding what happens, where and when. Though they never officially 'speak for' others, much unofficial doctrine nonetheless emanates from them. Within political networks, such groups and individuals can be seen as 'supernodes', not only routing more than their 'fair share' of traffic, but actively determining the 'content' that traverses them. Such supernodes do not (necessarily) constitute themselves out of a malicious will-to-power: rather, power defaults to them through personal qualities like energy, commitment and charisma, and the ability to synthesise politically important social moments into identifiable ideas and forms.

This soft control by crypto-hierarchies is tacit knowledge for many who have had first hand experience with 'open' organisations. Statements such as the following by a political activist introduced to what he calls 'the chaos of open community' at a Washington State forest blockade camp in 1994 and then later the Carters Road Community, are typical:

the core group, by virtue of being around longer as individuals, and also working together longest as a sub group, formed unintentional elites. These elite groups were covert structures in open consensus based communities which said loudly and clearly that everyone's influence and power was equal [...] We all joined in with a vigorous explanation that [...] there were no leaders [...] The conspiracy to hide this fact among ourselves and from ourselves was remarkably successful. It was as though the situation

where no leaders existed was known, deep down by everyone, to be impossible, outsiders were able to say so, but communards were hoping so much that it was not true that they were able to pretend...[20]

To examine how much this 'pretence' is the rule within the social movement is beyond the scope of this piece. But what is clear is that each of the five characteristics of 'openness' described above, when subjected to scrutiny, reveal themselves as extremely compromised. The details, for example, of meetings and discussions are published and circulated, but this information is primarily received by those who are able (and often privileged to be able) to connect to certain (technological/social) networks. Likewise, the language of a 'call' or equivalent can determine whether a party will feel comfortable or suitable to respond to it: like PGA's 'hallmarks', language and phraseology is a point of 'soft control', but not one that is openly discussed and studied. Furthermore, meetings may be 'open to all', but they can quickly become hostile environments for parties who do not or cannot observe the 'basic' consensus that is often tacitly agreed between long-term actors in a particular scene. This peer consensus can indeed, on occasion, so determine the movement's 'open' decision-making process as to turn it into a war of attrition on difference, with divergent points of view gradually giving themselves up to peer opinion as the 'debate' wears on and on. The 'block' or 'veto' is in fact rarely used because of the peer pressure placed on those who would use it ('Aw, come on, you're not going to block, are you?' – a common enough complaint at movement meetings). In some cases the apparently neutral 'moderator' role can also become bizarrely instrumentalised, giving rise to the sensation that 'something has already been decided', and that the meeting is just for performative purposes.

Likewise, documentation of meetings and decisions usually only tells half the story. Points of serious contention are frequently left out on grounds that the parties involved in the disagreement might not want them to be published. This 'smoothing over' of serious difference is quite normal. In fact participants in IRC discussions habitually inflect what they say because of the future publication of the logs, using private channels to discuss key points and only holding 'official' discussions and 'lines' in the open. Too often the open channel only 'hears' what it is supposed to hear and important exchanges are not published.

All of this explains why some activist-theorists are beginning to interrogate the experiment with openness as it is taking shape in the social movement. History has put significant resources at their disposal. Jo Freeman's 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness' is a key document, originating from the experiences of the '60s feminist liberation movement, and provides a critique of the laissez faire ideal for group structures still absolutely relevant today. As Freeman argues, such structures can become

a smoke screen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others. Thus, structurelessness becomes a way of masking power. As long as the structure of the group is informal, the rules of how decisions are made are known only to a few, and awareness of power is limited to those who know the rules.[21]

Freeman's insight is fundamental: the idea of openness does not in itself prevent the formation of the informal structures that I have described here as crypto-hierarchies; on the contrary, it is possible that it fosters them to a greater degree than structured organisations. Underneath its rhetoric of openness, the non-hierarchical organisation can thus take on the qualities of a 'gang'. As Jacques Camatte and Gianna Collu realised in 1969, such organisations tend to hide the existence of their informal ruling cliques to appear more attractive to outsiders, feeding on the creative abilities of individual members whilst suppressing their individual contributions, and producing layers of authority contingent on individuals' intellectual or social dominance. 'Even in those groups that want to escape [it]', writes Camatte, 'the [...] gang mechanism nevertheless tends to prevail[...] The inability to question theoretical questions independently leads the individual to take refuge behind the authority of another member who becomes, objectively, a leader, or behind the group entity, which becomes a gang.' [22]

OPENNESS: OPEN TO ALL CONSTITUENCIES

What this initial investigation has indicated is that the idea of openness, which is receiving such a promotion on the heels of the Free-Libre and Open Source software movement, is not in and of itself an immediately sufficient alternative to the bankrupt structures of representation. There seem to be good reasons for the discontent with open organisation felt by many activists, much of it based on evidence that must remain, by nature, anecdotal. But what is clear is that, if we are going to promote open organisation within the social movement, we must also take care to scrutinise the tacit flows of power that underlie and undercut it. The accounts here suggest that once the formal hierarchical membrane of group organisation is dismantled – in which, for example, software composition or political decision-making might have previously taken place – what remains are tacit control structures. In FLOSS, limitations to those who can access and alter source code are formally removed. But what then comes to define such access, and the software that is produced, are underlying determinants such as education, social opportunity, social connections and affiliations. The most open system theoretically imaginable, this is to say, reveals perfectly the predicating inequities of the wider environment in which it is situated; what the idea of openness must tackle first and most critically is that a really open organisation cannot be realised without a prior radicalisation of the social-political field in which it operates. And that, of course, is to beg the oldest of questions.

This essay is part of a year-long collaborative investigation into innovative media forms enabling cooperative discourse, which will also involve a series of public events. For updates and texts, see Metamute [<http://www.metamute.com>] and the General Intelligence Group website [<http://gig.openmute.org>]

[1] See: ‘What is Wiki?’ at [<http://wiki.org/wiki.cgi?WhatIsWiki>]

[2] See: [<http://www.zeropaid.com>] for a review of current peer to peer and fileshare services

[3] Felix Stalder, ‘One-size-doesn’t-fit-all. Particulars of the Volunteer Open Source Development Methodology’, available at [<http://openflows.org/article.pl?sid=03/10/25/1722242>]

[4] Adam Greenfield, ‘The Minimal Compact: Preliminary Notes on an “Open Source” Constitution for Post-National Entities’, [http://www.v-2.org/displayArticle.php?article_num=339]

[5] Tim O’ Reilly, ‘The Open Source Paradigm Shift,’ Keynote, Reboot 2003, available at [<http://www.reboot.dk/reboot6/video/>]

[6] Florian Schneider, ‘Re: <nettime> Reverse Engineering Freedom’, Nettime, Tue, 14 Oct 2003, available at [<http://www.mail-archive.com/nettime-l@bbs.thing.net/msg01248.html>]. See also Florian Schneider and Geert Lovink, ‘Reverse Engineering Freedom,’ in Make Worlds, 2003. Available at [<http://www.makeworlds.org/?q=book/view/20>]

[7] Douglas Rushkoff, ‘Open Source Democracy: How Online Communication Is Changing Offline Politics’, Demos, 2003 [http://www.demos.co.uk/opensource democracy_pdf_media_public.aspx]

[8] Rushkoff, *ibid*

[9] Biella Coleman, ‘Free and Open Source Software’, in Survival Kit, Part one, proceedings of RAM4

[10] See: [<http://www.apg.org>]

[11] ‘Sophie’, ChiapasLink UK, ‘We are everywhere! People’s Global Action meeting in Cochabamba, Bolivia’, posted to A-infos list, 8 Dec 2001.

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[19] See, for example, Paula Roone, 'Is Linus Killing Linux?', in TechWeb, January 28, 2001,

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4/12/2001, [http://cartersrd.org.au/covert_elites.html]

[21] Jo Freeman, 'The Tyranny of Struturelessness', first printed by the Women's Liberation

Movement, USA, 1970 [http://www.anarres.org.au/essays/amtos.htm]

[22] Jacques Camatte, 'On Organisation', in Invariance, Annee V, Serie II, No.2, reprinted in This

World We Must Leave and Other Essays, Autonomedia: New York, 1995, p.30

JJ King <jamie@metamute.com> is information politics editor of Mute and founder member of GIG [http://gig.openmute.org]

Picture Information:

The pioneering research of Paul Baran in the 1960s, who envisioned a communications network that would survive a major enemy attack.

The sketch shows three different network topologies described in his RAND Memorandum, 'On Distributed Communications: 1. Introduction to Distributed Communications Network' (August 1964). The distributed network structure offered the best survivability. (From Cybergeography.com.)

A:

Abbasian Mansion, Kashan, Iran

View of the central courtyard

<http://archnet.org/library/imgdownloader/jpg/12059/big/IIR0339.jpg>

B:

Christ Church

Old North, 1723 – 1724

<http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/kidder/kjpegs/C0752-09>

C:

A.B.U. Theatre Workshop, Zaria, Nigeria

Main entrance to ABU Theatre Workshop

<http://archnet.org/library/imgdownloader/jpg/26074/big/IAA8169.JPG>

D:

Mosque Mali

<http://archnet.org/library/webpages/jamesmorris/DJENNECH1.jpg>

E:

Chapel, Portsmouth Priory School

Portsmouth, RI

Pietro Belluschi, 1961

<http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/kidder/kjpegs/C2036-037.jpg>

F:

Shaker Village
Pittsfield, MA
Anonymous, 1790 – 1864
<http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/kidder/kjpegs/C2039-025~.jpg>

G:
Jonathan Corwin House (witch house) Salem, MA Anonymous, c. 1642
<http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/kidder/kjpegs/C2039-031~.jpg>

H:
Meeting House
Sandown, NH
Anonymous, 1773 – 1774
<http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/kidder/kjpegs/C2036-006~.jpg>

I:
Friends Meeting House
Dover, NH
Anonymous, c. 1768
<http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/kidder/kjpegs/C2039-063~.jpg>

J:
Conference Hall, Bamako, Mali
Interior, Conference hall
<http://archnet.org/library/imgdownloader/jpg/22453/big/IAA4547.JPG>

K:
Community Center and Cyclone Shelter, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh
Front façade of the shelter at Moheshkhali
<http://archnet.org/library/imgdownloader/jpg/19222/big/IAA3005.JPG>

L:
Meeting House
Danville, NH
Anonymous, c. 1760
<http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/kidder/kjpegs/C2039-062~.jpg>

M:
Anup Tala-u Pavilion, Fatehpur Sikri, India
Exterior close-up view toward north showing columns
<http://archnet.org/library/imgdownloader/jpg/5394/big/IHI0020.jpg>

N:
Kahere Poultry Farming School, Koliagbe, Guinea
<http://archnet.org/library/imgdownloader/jpg/19284/big/IAA3067.JPG>

O:
Boston City Hall
Boston, MA
Kallmann, McKinnell & Knowles with Campbell, Aldrich & Nulty, 1961 – 1968
<http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/kidder/kjpegs/C2022-034.jpg>

P:

Baghdad Conference Palace, Baghdad, Iraq
Interior, conference hall
[http://archnet.org/library/imgdownloader/jpg/25057/
big/IAA7152.JPG](http://archnet.org/library/imgdownloader/jpg/25057/big/IAA7152.JPG)

Q:
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
Public area in front of a government building
<http://archnet.org/library/imgdownloader/jpg/18467/big/IGV1252.JPG>

R:
Jefferd's Tavern and Historic District
York, ME
Anonymous, c. 1750
<http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/kidder/kjpegs/C0752-081~.jpg>

Open Source Development

By Gilberto Câmara

The production and development of open source software (OSS) has received substantial attention recently, following the success of projects like Apache, Perl and Linux. But what are the real dynamics of this 'new' mode of production? The National Institute for Space Research surveyed the production landscape of GIS OSS looking for answers. Gilberto Câmara, director of Earth Observation, shares the findings and argues for a new conceptual paradigm

[IMAGE]

The predominant idea of the open source production model is of committed groups of individuals operating in distributed networks, with each programmer working on a small but meaningful module. These programmers are apparently isolated, communicating by means of a central repository and mailing lists. They have individual incentives to participate.¹ Some writers have gone so far as to identify in open source software a new mode of organisational structure: 'commons-based peer production'.²

At the National Institute for Space Research, we have conducted a detailed study of one segment of the software market: geoinformation technology (GI), which includes geographical information systems (GIS), location-based services, and remote sensing image processing. The survey selected 70 GIS open source projects, mainly using a listing provided by the Freegis.org site. Its findings call into question the idea of open source as it is commonly understood. While carrying out the survey, we considered the following questions: (a) How is OSS developed and produced? (b) Who is actually building Geographic Information OSS products? (c) How can developing countries use OSS to meet their national needs?

[IMAGE]

Three clear models can be distinguished in OSS development: the post-mature model; the standards-led model and the innovation-led model. The post-mature model is found in strongly consolidated markets, where a proprietary product has gained a large market share. As a product becomes popular, its functionality and conceptual model become so well established that it is difficult for another commercial product to capture market share, even if that product is sold at a lower price. In such cases, there is a strong incentive for newcomers to license their products as open source: for

many potential users, the perceived benefits of open source outweigh the cost of switching from the commercial product. One very good example of this is the Open Office productivity suite,³ which provides a Free Software alternative to Microsoft Office. The standards-led model arises when the establishment of a common standard for a product allows others to compete in the marketplace by replicating the standard as open source. Newcomers benefit from the substantial intellectual effort that has already gone into establishing the standard. An example is the SQL database, which has motivated products such as mySQL. Another is the POSIX standard for operating system interfaces, which has reduced switching costs from other UNIX-based environments to Linux.

[IMAGE]

The innovation-led model occurs when universities, public institutions and corporations produce work that has no direct equivalent in the commercial sector. An example is the University of California's Postgres database management system.⁴ After an unsuccessful commercialisation attempt, a private company took over the development of Postgres, added SQL support, named the resulting product PostgreSQL, making it available as open source.

Based on size, geographical distribution and affiliation, our survey has distinguished three categories of OSS development teams:

- Individual-size projects: the project team consists of 1- 3 individuals, usually from the same location and working in their spare time. The software products are usually small, specialised applications addressing specific requirements.
- Collaborative networks: the project core team consists of a team of 15-30 individuals, geographically dispersed. The developers usually have separate jobs, and do their work in their 'spare' time, sometimes allocated in agreement with their employer.
- Corporation-based: the project's core team, usually a set of 3-8 programmers, is part of a corporation. There can be outside collaborators, but the main design decisions are made within the corporation and in some cases also address the company's commercial objectives. Examples include the PostGIS extension to the PostgreSQL DBMS, and the TerraVision systems for terrain visualisation on the internet.

These results contradict the naïve view of open source software as predominantly developed by committed teams working through peer-cooperation. In fact, only four (6%) of the projects we looked at are based on such a loose network of collaborators; more than half are led by individuals. Corporation-based projects account for 41% of all cases examined. Out of the 29 corporations involved in developing open source GIS, 17 are private companies, eight are government institutions, and only four are universities. Currently, in other words, the academic research community is not significantly concerning itself with direct involvement in long-term open source projects. Maintaining and supporting an open source software project requires considerable resources, beyond the reach of most university groups, added to which there is a conflict between the generation of new research ideas and the need for long-term software maintenance and upgrades. Often, for a research prototype to evolve into an opensource product, another team of developers must take over from the original research team and establish a support and maintenance infrastructure for the product.

[IMAGE]

The relatively small proportion of innovative projects (19%) in our survey shows that the design of most open source software products is based on the post-mature and standards-led production model, in which the main aim is not directly to innovate, but to lower licensing costs and break commercial monopolies. Perhaps most significantly, the maturity, support and functionality of OSS products differs massively across development scenarios. It seems that the corporate environment is much better

suited to long-term software development than the individual-led one. Individuals are constrained by their commitments, and are very rarely able to include full-time support for the software they develop, whereas many corporations rely on earning indirect revenues (e.g., consultancy fees) from their open source products. But the difference between a corporation and a networked team is much smaller in terms of quality and support: a committed team of individuals are able to produce results which are comparable to, or better than, those produced by corporations.

The fact that the direct participation of universities in open source software is limited means that innovative non-commercial projects account for less than 20% of the total; a large proportion (53%) simply aim to provide standardised components for spatial data processing. Two innovative projects developed by a networked team of programmers are GRASS [<http://grass.itc.it>] and R [<http://www.r-project.org/>]. Both products have a simple and well-understood conceptual design, and their innovative contribution lies not in their design, but on the analytical functions that scientists develop using these environments.

Many developing nations are currently considering policies to support or enforce the adoption of OSS by public institutions. The arguments in favor of OSS adoption by public institutions include:

- Lower cost: adoption of personal computers based on OSS for public use can reduce an initial entry cost by as much as 50%. Easier replication of solutions is also possible. Large-scale public projects can greatly benefit from having a prototype developed and tested, that can then be replicated across the country with no additional software costs.
- Independence from proprietary technology: many governments are increasingly concerned with overdependence in some important markets on a small number of vendors.
- Availability of efficient and low-cost software: the virtuous examples of some products (such as Linux and Apache) have encouraged statements about the widespread availability of OSS software for public use.
- Ability to develop custom applications and to redistribute the improved products: given the ‘open’ nature of OSS, skilled local programmers could adapt the software to fit local needs, and thus increase the efficiency of the services provided by the improved products.⁵

Our study has significant consequences for developing nations considering OSS. The evidence we have gathered broadly supports the first two claims – but ‘software availability’ and ‘ease of customisation’ are far more problematic. The most successful open source software tools are infrastructural products, such as operating systems, programming languages and web servers. The huge demand in developing nations for enduser applications, especially in the public sector, seems unlikely to be satisfied by the small number of such applications being produced in OSS. Corporations still dominate the development of open source software, taking place around their own strategic interests, and they are unlikely to furnish the full range of end-user applications needed by developing countries. This suggests that if governments in developing nations aim to profit from the potential benefits of open source, they must intervene and dedicate a substantial amount of public funds to support the establishment and long-term maintenance of open source software projects. The benefits of this strategy could be substantial. In the case of urban cadastral systems, based on a spatial database for middle-sized cities, the typical base cost of a spatial database solution for one city is US\$100,000. Should 10 cities adopt as OSS solution in a given year, there would be a saving of US\$1 million per year on licensing fees; money that could be well used for financing local development and adaptation. Government strategies for supporting indigenous open source software development and adaptation would also result in a ‘learning-by-doing’ process. Such processes foster innovation in the developed world and would likely do the same for those nations supporting emerging economies.

By looking in detail at open source software development in the areas of geoinformation technology, we can see that the 'Linux paradigm' is exceptional. Corporations are the main developers of successful open source products built around their own strategic agenda, and peernetworked teams develop only 6% of the all open source GIS products. This result strongly mitigates claims that open source software development defines a significant new 'mode of production'. In fact, the vast majority of substantial software design and development is still the product of qualified teams operating at a high level of interaction. Developing software in a decentralised manner requires a modular design that is difficult to achieve for most applications, since few software products can be broken into very small parts without a substantial increase in interaction costs. These results have important consequences for public policy guidance. Governments worldwide who try to benefit from the open source software model by establishing legislation mandating its use could be frustrated by the lack of mature, available public-sector applications. In order to create the software they need, governments will have to establish public-funded projects for open source development and adaptation to local needs. Software, whether open or closed source, is still constrained by the essential requirements of its development process: conceptual design, program granularity, cohesion of the programming team and dissemination strategy. Failure to understand the realities of the open source development model could result in a lost opportunity for the developing world: reducing the critical technological gap between rich and poor nations.

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Gilberto Câmara is Director for Earth Observation at the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), Brazil [<http://www.dpi.inpe.br/gilberto>]

1 Weber, S., 2002

2 See Benkler, I., 'Coase's Penguin , or, Linux and The Nature of the Firm' 3 Download OpenOffice at [<http://www.openoffice.org>]

4 See Stonebraker, M. and Rowe L.A., 1986

5 Ghosh, Krieger, et al., 2002

Bombs and Bytes

By Anustup Basu

Can the intense economy of information short-circuit knowledge? Anustup Basu follows Gilles Deleuze in analysing fascism as a hijacking of linguistic potential. Fascism, he argues, realises itself through a technology of habituation parasitic on our willingness to be informed – a biopolitical sovereignty that percolates individuals and communities at the micro-level. No longer is world-order decreed by the word of the sovereign, but by an inhuman sovereign will constituted on the plane of information

INTRODUCTION

During the publicity drive towards building up domestic and international support for the 2003 war on Iraq, no functionary of the United States government actually made a public statement to the effect that Saddam Hussein had an active part to play in the devastation of September 11, 2001.

Nevertheless, it was subsequently noted in the opinion polls that an alarming number of American people believed that the Iraqi despot was involved in the conspiracy and its execution. Hence the two propositions – Saddam the evil one, and 9/11, the horrible crime – seem to be associated in a demographic intelligence without having any narrative obligation to each other; that is, without being part of the same ‘story’. The outcome, it seems, was achieved by a mathematical chain of chance, by which two disparate postulates, in being publicised with adequate proximity, frequency, and density, gravitate towards each other in an inhuman plane of massified thought. They, in other words, are bits and bytes of newspeak which have come to share what I will call an ‘informatic’ affinity with each other, without being organically conjoined by constitutive knowledge. The formation of the latter entity is of course something we are prone to consider a primary task of the philosophical human subject, who is also the modern citizen with rights and responsibilities. Attaining knowledge by reading the world is how we are supposed to self-consciously exercise reason, form views, and partake in an enlightened project of democratic consensus and legislation. Hence, insofar as these much hallowed protocols of liberal democracy are concerned, this 9/11 opinion poll poses some disconcerting questions:

1. How does one account for the fact that what is, at face value, the most sophisticated technological assemblage for worldly communication and dissemination of ‘truth’, should sublimate what, in Kantian terms, must be called an unscientific belief or dogma?

2. To be mediatised literally means to lose one’s rights. Hence, what happens to the idea of government by the people and for the people if the ‘false’ is produced as a third relation which is not the synthetic union of two ideas in the conscious mind of the citizen or the general intellect of the organic community, but is a statistical coming together of variables?

[IMAGE]

3. If the ‘false’ is merely a moment in an overall control and management of an information environment and its electronic herd, that is, if it is simply a matter of manipulated distribution and saturation of facts in order to get a desired feedback in terms of public perception, what consequences does that have in terms of human politics? How is the cynical intelligence of power that calls this into being to be configured?

4. Lastly, this distillation of the false as ‘informatic’ perception requires money. In other words, it requires a tremendous amount of wealth in order to not only bring the variables Saddam Hussein and 9/11 into a state of associative frequency, but also to minimise and regulate the appearance of other

variables from appearing in the scenario. For instance, in this case, to reduce, for the time being, the frequency of the proper name Osama. Hence, the obvious question – what is the role of money in the purportedly post-modern, increasingly technologised, sphere of communicative action?

These are not new questions. They are a continuation of what a long line of western thinkers, from Antonio Gramsci to Giorgio Agamben, have been asking from various philosophical standpoints: how was it that modern technologies of reproduction of the art work and electrification of the public sphere should produce European fascism as one of its first, grotesque spectacles? In a way, this anxious query seems to resonate, in a particular context, the old Pascalian question posed at the very gestative period of a godless modern world: how does one protect the interests of abstract justice from the real, material interests of power in the world?

[IMAGE]

WHAT IS INFORMATION

The paradox, qua modern publicity and communication, as it is expressed in Walter Benjamin's 'Work of Art' essay, can be outlined as follows: from the perspective of the enlightenment humanist one could say that mechanised mass culture in the 20th century was supposed to 'de-auratise' the work of art and make it more democratically available; but what Benjamin notices in his time is a disturbing incursion of aesthetics into politics, rather than the politicisation of art that could have been possible. This, for him, constitutes a 'violation' of the technologies of mass culture, by which the 'Führer cult' produces its ritual values of aestheticising war and destruction. Benjamin formulates the problem as belonging to a society not yet 'mature' enough to 'incorporate technology as its organ'. In Benjamin's essay, 'The Storyteller', we can see this problem being articulated as a situation in which forms of storytelling (which are at once educative and exemplary to the citizen for his cosmopolitan education, and also amenable to his freedom of critical interpretation and judgement) are replaced by a new form of communication which he calls information. The first characteristic of information is its erasure of distance – its near-at-hand-ness grants information the 'readiest hearing' and makes it appear 'understandable in itself'. The dissemination and reception of information is thus predicated on the production of the event as 'local', as 'already being shot through with explanation.' For the conscious subject, this also entails the disappearance of a temporal interval required for movement within the faculties, from cognition to understanding and then finally to knowledge. Information is that which is accompanied by the entropic violence brought about by a supersession of the commonplace, and a reduction of language into clichés. It is in the ruins of a constitutive or legislative language that the instantaneous circuit of the commonsensical comes into being. In this case therefore, the establishment of Saddam's crimes does not remain a matter of old jurisprudence, following normative rules of argumentation, proof, and deduction; it becomes an absolute movement of the commonsensical as the 'already explained'.

[IMAGE]

WHAT IS FASCISM?

Fascism is the common name we accord to totalitarian power. However, we often do it irresponsibly or ahistorically, categorically identifying the concept with limited, sociologicistic understandings of the German or Italian scenarios around the great wars, or confining it to grotesque figurations of human agency, like that of Mussolini or Hitler. If the concept is to have any critical valence whatsoever in our global, neoliberal occasion, it needs to be unpacked and re-articulated before we begin to transpose it here and there. Gilles Deleuze has re-articulated Benjamin's argument by transposing it from its organicist parabasis into a sub-human, molecular-pragmatic one. According to Deleuze, the discourses of fascism, as dominant myths in our time, establish themselves by an imperial-linguistic takeover of a

whole social body of expressive potentialities. There are different forms of life and expressive energies in any situation of the historical which are capable of generating multiple instances of thought, imaginative actions, and wills to art. Fascism destroys such pre-signifying and pre-linguistic energies of the world, extinguishes pluralities, and replaces them with a monologue of power that saturates space with, and only with, the immanent will of the dictator. This is the moment in which the language system sponsored by the sovereign is at its most violent; it seeks to efface historical memory by denying its constitutive or legislative relation with non-linguistic social energies; it casts itself and its unilateral doctrine as absolute and natural. For Deleuze, this is a psychomechanical production of social reality more than an organicity of community torn asunder by human alienation and the incursion of reactionary ideologies, false consciousnesses, and agents. Not that the latter do not exist, or are unimportant components in this matter, but that this technology of power cannot be simply seen as a neutral arrangement of tools misused by evil ones. The figure of the dictator is therefore not that of the aberrant individual madman, but a psychological automaton that becomes insidiously present in all, in the technology of massification itself. The images and objects that mass hallucination, somnambulism, and trance produce are attributes of this immanent will to power.[1] The hypnotic, fascinating drive of fascism is thus seen to paradoxically operate below the radar of a moral and voluntaristic consciousness of the human subject; fascism becomes a political reality when knowledge based exchanges between entities of intelligence give way to a technologism of informatics.

Thinking, knowledge, or communicability (which is different from this or that technologism of communication) becomes foreclosed in such an order of power because one cannot really say anything that the social habit does not designate as something already thought of and pre-judged by the dictator. The publicity of fascism is one where friend and foe alike are seen to be engaged in tauto-talk, repeating what the dictator has already said or warned about. Benjamin calls this an eclipse of the order of cosmological mystery and secular miracles that the European humanist sciences of self and nature, and an enlightened novelisation of the arts sought to delineate and solve. There can be neither secrets in fascism, nor anything unknown. Conspiracies in that sense can only be manifestations of what is already foretold and waiting to be confessed. The SS can of course procure and store 'classified information', but it can never say anything that the Führer does not know better. Information therefore becomes an incessant and emphatic localisation of the global will of the dictator; in its seriality and movement, it can only keep repeating, illustrating, and reporting the self-evident truth of the dictatorial monologue.[2] For Deleuze, it is in this immanence of dictatorial will that Hitler becomes information itself. Also, it is precisely because of this that one cannot wage a battle against Hitlerism by embarking on a battle of truth and falsehood without questioning, and taking for granted, the very parabasis of information and its social relations of production. 'No information, whatever it might be, is sufficient to defeat Hitler'.

Hence, like any other individual, Adolf the Aryan anti-semitic does not exhaust the figure of Hitler. Informatics has not ceased after the death of Adolf and his propaganda machine, or the passing away of the particular discourse of the Adolphic oracle and its immediate historical context. As a figural diagram, as a special shorthand for a particular technology of power, Hitler subsequently must have only become stronger, that is, if indeed we are to still account for him as an immanent will to information that invests modern societies. But how can one conceptualise him without the formalist baggage, in other words, without the grotesque, arborescent institutions of repression, like the secret police or the concentration camps, which constitute a historicist definition of fascism? If one were to put the question differently, that is, occasion it in terms of a present global order of neo-liberalism, marked by American style individualism, consumer choices, democracy, and free markets that supposedly come to us after the agonistic struggles of liberation in the modern era are already settled, how can one enfigure the dead and buried tyrant in our midst in such an 'untimely' manner? How is Hitler possible in a liberal constitution? The question is a complicated one, because if we go back to the example we began our essay with, we will see that it actually satisfies the conditions of democratic

accountability in terms of the human lie (the President never said this). Besides, it is also not the result of the state, as collective capitalist, monopolising the public sphere for propaganda purposes.

Perhaps one has to begin by not trying to enfigure Hitler in the contours of the human, as the irrational apex of the suicidal state, or the pathological Goebbelsian liar who perverted the tools of human communication into mass propaganda machines. Hitler in that sense, would not simply be the mediocre and grotesque madman who uses or abuses technology. He would still be a proper name for technologism itself, but in his latest neoliberal incarnation, he would not be one who simply imprisons the human in enclosed spaces like the death camp or exercises a Faustian domination over him through arborescent structures like the Nazi war/propaganda machine. The 'postmodern' technology of information that we are talking about qua Hitler is neither external nor internal to the human; it is one that is a part of the latter's self-making as well as that of the bio-anthropological environment he lives in. Hitler enters us through a socialisation of life itself, through a technology of habituation that involves our willingness to be informed. It is a diffuse modality of power that perpetually communicates between the inside and the outside, erasing distance between the home and the world. It is in this context that Deleuze's statement, that there is a Hitler inside us, modern abjects of capital, becomes particularly significant. Hitler, as per this formulation, becomes an immanent form of sovereignty that is biopolitically present, percolating individuals and communities in an osmotic manner. Hitler as information, as socially immanent micro-fascisms, is not the addresser who speaks to us while we listen. It was only Adolf who did that in the old days, as the anachronistic caricature of the sovereign who had not yet had his head cut off, but had simply 'lost it'. Information on the other hand, is a metropolitan habit of instant signification; it is an administered social automaton that does not presume a contract between the speaker and the hearer. Since it has no point of origin other than the person informed, the instance of information is thus always one where the self listens to the commonsensical within the self itself, to the point where the two become indistinguishable. Hence, it is neither a lying President who says that Saddam Hussein had something to do with 9/11, nor was such a sublimation the result of unilateral state propaganda in the style of old Adolf or old Stalin. Information in this sense, is indeed a commodified effect – a compact of words and images that is called into being by a non-linear and inhuman intelligence that, amongst other things, produces the human caricature or the icon of the Dictator himself. Informatisation therefore, evades the legal question altogether, by creating a situation where the commonsensical relation between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaida is established not by the word of the sovereign (which can always be produced as evidence and contested in tribunals of justice) but by a manifest immanence of an inhuman sovereign will.

It is only when we understand the cult of information as a social mode of production that we can understand that the problem of mediatisation that we have been talking about does not concern the agency of the individual human at all. To put it blandly, this is not about a conspiracy of a cabal of capitalists and money mongers who manufacture truth in a determined manner. That is, Hitler in an anthropomorphic form who arbitrates what should be said and what should not. We are also not simply talking about representational intentions (what Karl Rove really wanted us to believe) or prejudices about representational capabilities (Americans, as a people, need to mature in order to be able to separate the wheat from the chaff). The effort, on the other hand, is to understand a situation where screen time is money time, where one has to have money, or be sponsored by corporate interests of money, in order to be able to exercise one's right to 'self representation'. The fact that we are mediatised, hence bereft of rights, thus applies only differentially – all of us are Hitlers who command attention, or nigger-infants (the Greek etymology of the word infant, as in in-fans, refers to the being without language) who listen without speaking, but only in differential degrees of hierarchised mediation. Without old Adolf's old dividing walls, everyone can speak, blessed with the freedom of speech. Nominally, everyone can play the game of representations, since everyone has money. It is a different matter altogether, one that has not much to do with the language games of neo-liberal

economics and ideology, that some have a lot more of it than others.

[IMAGE]

CONCLUSION

A new form of political thinking has to begin by taking into account vast amounts of energies in the world that are antagonistic to capital. This has to be done in terms other than those pertaining to the figure of the human citizen and his charter of rights. It is part of the transcendental stupidity of the cult of information to impart such energies with a catalogue of profiles: the criminal, the delinquent, the madman, the negro, the woman, the child, the African AIDS victim, the poor, the unemployed, the illegal immigrant, or the terrorist. Informatics is about the reporting of the state's pharmacopic action on these bodies, as objects of charity, aid, medication, schooling, or military action. This is why the unspeakable antagonism of living labour in the world is never 'visible' on CNN, Fox or any other corporate geo-televisual schema of metropolitan representation. The latter can discern only the ontology of money and its coalitionary interests – that which perpetually makes screen time money time. Humans, who are merely refugees great and small, can only climb into one or many of the designated profiles of massification. The centralising, perspectivist drive of CNN – as commentary of the world, as a repetitive human psychodrama of development (birth pangs of modernity in the frontier, subjugated and freed consumer desires) – overlooks the energy from the margins of the frame in trying to fit entire crowds into the telegenic face. This is why populations can be categorically divided into simple binaries like 'with us' or 'against us'. Labour and its multiple wills to antagonism (of which various narratives of resistance are only partial but undeniably important molar expressions) are thus un-representable precisely because they lack a 'human' face, or rather the face of the future American consumer. Global antagonisms to capital are at once utopic (as in 'non-place' since the logic of globalisation cannot posit an 'outside') and pantopic; they are, in multiple forms, and in different degrees of sublimation, nowhere and everywhere. It is a complex, political understanding of such matters – like linking insurrectionary violence in different corners of the world to unfair and imbalanced trade practices like agricultural subsidiaries, dumping, and tariff walls by first world countries – that spectacular informatisation removes or minimises from the public sphere. Politics therefore is replaced by symbiotic exchanges between peace and terror, and fear and security; communication likewise, is overwritten by a great monologue of global managerial-elite interests, in which power speaks to itself.

A judgement of the panorama of expressions of this global antagonistic will on the lines of good and bad can take place only as an afterthought; political thinking in our occasion can begin only with the acknowledgement of these energies as eventful, and not subject to essential categories of a state language that has become global. In other words, thinking has to proceed acutely, from an awareness of that very point of danger, where the state fails to 'translate' such affective hostilities into repetitive instances of its own already explained story. It must be remembered that informatics, as a form of social production of consent, is able to attain a normative power precisely because it is accompanied by an epistemic presumption of the end of the historical process altogether.[3] Stories therefore cannot be seen to be teaching us anything new in terms of constitutive politics because in the new world order of a globally rampant neoliberalism, there can be nothing new to narrate at all, in terms of alternative destinies and potentials of the world. They can only be local instances of crisis and management, in a grand chronicle of financialisation of the globe that is already foretold. It is this dire poverty of political language that the neo-liberal state tries to cover up with violence dictated in a situation of 'emergency' that is legitimised by an emotionalist, folksy rhetoric of 'good' and 'evil'. Here I must strongly clarify that I am not registering support for either the undeniably tyrannical Saddam Hussein, or a statist ideology of violence like that of Al Qaida. These two totalitarian entities, like some of their western counterparts, merely capture and mobilise some of these antagonistic energies. As far as the

latter is concerned, it is not difficult to see how informatics peddles the worst clichés of neo-liberalism in trying to enframe antagonism through a host of good and evil profile doublets according to which a population is invented and managed, or policed and fed – the model minority contra the inner city delinquent, the healthy contra the mad, the peaceful Arab contra the Islamic bigot. In terms of spectacle and violence, it thus falls perfectly within the logic of war/information to have the yellow cluster bomb be interspersed with the yellow food packet during the recent war in Afghanistan. The global state of surveillance and security today violently tries to foreclose the political by informatising complex insurrectionary potentialities in terms of a simplistic, self-evident, and bipolar logic of peace and terror. The latter thus becomes a generic term to reductively describe a multiplicity of forces – from Latin American guerilla movements, to African tribal formations, to Islamic militancy in the Middle-East to Maoist rebellion in Nepal. The freedom of choice offered by the globally rampant North Atlantic machine of war and informatics is no longer between dwelling as a poet or as an assassin, but between a statistic or a terrorist.

[1] See Deleuze, Cinema 2, p. 263-69

[2] In this context see Hannah Arendt's useful elaborations in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

[3] I am of course alluding to Francis Fukuyama's Kojévian-Hegelian thesis in *The End of History and the Last Man*

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Anustup Basu <anbst42@pitt.edu> is Cultural Studies Fellow at the University of Pittsburgh's Department of English

Museum Epidemiology

By Betti Marenko

After this summer's sci-art exhibition spree in London, Betti Marenko considers the possibilities for art to subvert techniques of science without being contaminated by them

'Sci-art' all-too often acts as a PR vehicle for science, at the expense of art. But what of true collaborations between artists and scientists that try to resist such instrumentalisation? Miria Swain surveys the scene

[IMAGE]

'It is necessary to explain that in those days there was the complete divorce in people's minds between aesthetic and mechanical considerations. First you made a thing, they thought, and then you decorated it. [...] If they made something fruitful, then the artist was called in to sugar the pill'.¹

'[T]hose days' were supposed to be the future according to HG Wells, the godfather of science-fiction. So what of the relationship between art and science 70 years on from *The Shape of Things to Come*? Wells might not have thought that there was much future in it, but then he was not right with all his prophecies. London has not collapsed into the Thames quite yet. The last five years or so have seen an increase in attempts to marry art and science and as a result the emergence of a particular branch of the

visual arts categorised as ‘sci-art’. Like its semantic sibling sci-fi, sci-art exists in a post-enlightenment never-never land between science as rational and logical on the one hand and art as intuitive and emotional on the other. Unlike sci-fi though, what is commonly understood to be sci-art does not generally deal with dystopian visions of what the world might be like in the future (think Wells, Orwell, Huxley, Dick et al) or what science, in the wrong hands, is capable of (think Dr Moreau, Frankenstein, the Hulk... the list goes on).

Sci-art is instead a term commonly used to describe art projects which emerge from a perceived need to foster a better public understanding of science – as outlined in *Science and Art – Seeing Both Sides*, a Wellcome Trust News Supplement published last year. This ‘sugar the pill’ agenda of mediating scientific ideology through art has part of its legacy in a government education policy begun in the 1940s and ‘50s, aimed at countering adverse public opinion of science during the Cold War. Since then, funding programmes run by The Wellcome Trust, The Gulbenkian Foundation and The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) among others, have been instrumental in reinforcing the art and science hybrid that is sci-art.

[IMAGE]

These science education and publicity driven patronage schemes find precedence in the marriage of art to religion, for centuries inseparable. Art was certainly deemed a successful tool in making religion more accessible to laymen, so in an age when science supersedes religion as a dominant doctrine, art can be used to the same end for science. Although using art as a communication vehicle for science accounts for the majority of so called sci-art projects, the orthodox view that the only viable position for art is one that is subordinate to science, overshadows many projects which attempt to advance the dialogue between artists and scientists.

This autumn saw the launch of *Experiment: Conversations in Art and Science*, published by The Wellcome Trust. This represents a short history of art and science collaborations and documents seven of the 32 projects presented under the umbrella of Wellcome’s funding programme, ‘Sciart’. These range from mathematically enhanced juggling (Baby Epsilons) to the exploration of the effect on an audience of infecting a concert with infrasound (Soundless Music). One particular project *Red and Wet on the Iron Air* began life at the National Institute for Medical Research, a government funded research centre in North London, which has been supporting a contemporary art programme since 1998 [<http://art.nimr.mrc.ac.uk>]. In 1999, Zarina Bhimji was selected to be one of two artists-in-residence at NIMR. Over the course of 30 days, Bhimji took up a place within the department of Parasitology and so began a conversation with Dr Tony Holder that extended beyond the laboratories of Mill Hill to the red earth of Bhimji’s native Uganda. The starting point for the project stemmed from a mutual interest in malaria and its carrier – the mosquito – Holder’s area of research and the biggest killer in Africa. As the conversation developed, the project evolved into what Holder describes as an ‘[e]xploration of the spaces between laboratory and fieldwork, science and humanity.’ The aim of Wellcome’s sci-art programme has always been to support true collaborations between artists and scientists. From the outset Bhimji and Holder might have appeared to represent the model collaboration. Here was the scientist genuinely interested in how contemporary art practice might possibly interact with science. There, the artist interested in how science might provide a different perspective on her concerns as an artist – many of which are rooted in traumatic memories of Uganda under the despotic dictatorship of Idi Amin. In *Experiment*, the section on *Red and Wet on the Iron Air* features a text by Holder. Holder’s essay describes the impact of social, political and economic factors on the spread of malaria, the science of the malaria parasite and his stake in the art and science collaboration. Missing from the section, however, is documentation of Bhimji’s work and her involvement in the project. The images are photographs taken by the scientist. The artist is referenced, but silent, and the art is entirely missing from the sci-art. One cannot help wondering

where the collaboration went and if, perhaps, there never was a true collaboration, just an extended conversation. In her introduction to the book, Bergit Arends reiterates that Bhimji and Holder's project was centred on research. She goes on to describe how research, by nature, does not always bring about conclusive outcomes and that it was the choice of the artist not to present work in progress. Holder and Bhimji's work may or may not conclude in the production of a work of sci-art, but the dialogue and time spent working through ideas will remain a valuable exchange. Holder gained an insight into the work of a contemporary artist, and the science may yet feed into Bhimji's work, albeit in an oblique and not obviously sci-art way. Consider *Out of the Blue* (2002), Bhimji's installation at Documenta XI and Art Now, Tate Britain, a visually powerful film picturing the scarred landscape of war-torn Uganda set against a soundtrack which includes the amplified hum of mosquitoes contrasted against the muffled sound of gunshots. In many ways the connections one might make in this work between political corruption, war, poverty and the mosquito as emblematic of disease, are not unlike Holder's concerns described in his chapter *Red and Wet on the Iron Air*.

[IMAGE]

[IMAGE]

The plan becomes art becomes the plan. With the work of Janice Kerbel, it is hard to know where the art stops and a good idea begins. Perhaps that is the point – the art is the good idea. Kerbel seduces us with the possibilities presented by her drawings, plans and instructions, regardless of the fact that most of them are just good ideas in theory. It is, after all, probably not a good idea to rob Coutts & Co on Lombard Street even though Kerbel's *Bank Job* (2000) might seem foolproof, and you certainly do not want to play poker with Kerbel unless you are in on her *Three Marked Decks* (1999) blag. As for *The Bird Island Project* (2000-03) – a dream island escape – if only it did exist.

As with many artists who adopt conceptual strategies, a frequent criticism of Kerbel's work (mainly from those outside the art world) is that, like a scientist or inventor, she sets up hypothetical what if scenarios and researches around the subject, but, unlike a scientist, that is usually where the project ends. Kerbel is not an empiricist and if she were to test her hypotheses her art might just turn into science. A research residency Kerbel undertook at The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research informed her latest project, *Home Climate Gardens*. The Tyndall Centre is a sort of environmental think-tank within which scientists work together with economists, engineers and social scientists to come up with sustainable solutions to climate change on a local and global scale.

Kerbel describes *Home Climate Gardens* as 'a series of drawings and site specific installations that consider dystopic visions of the future alongside utopic dreams of landscape and architectural design.' The series of drawings take the form of plans for gardens that are perfectly adapted to the climatic conditions of the built environment. The site specific installations, one might deduce, take the form of actual gardens designed, created and grown according to the precise indoor habitat in which the project is presented (whether a private home, a gym or an office, the possibilities are endless). With *Home Climate Gardens*, Kerbel might be testing her hypothesis, but the art has hardly become science in the process. As for the project's relationship to research undertaken at the Tyndall Centre, at first it seems as if Kerbel is not concerned with finding a way to 'advance the science of integration... to develop, demonstrate and apply new methodologies for integrating climate-change related knowledge,' as one of the Tyndall Centre's mission statements claims [<http://www.tyndall.ac.uk>]. But the more you think about the underlying socio-utopic dream proposed by *Home Climate Gardens*, the more you realise that, although Kerbel's work may not be illustrating the latest thinking on how to deal with the effects of global warming, it is on some level dealing with climate change. Not change on a global or local scale, but on a domestic scale, in terms of the changed climates within which we find ourselves living and working. With *Home Climate Gardens* the art is not subordinated to the science, nor the science trivialised by the art. This is, in the main, due to two factors: Kerbel's extensive experience of

engaging with different areas of specialist knowledge and the inter-disciplinary context of the Tyndall Centre within which different perspectives, methodologies and thought processes are actively encouraged. In November 2003, as part of an exhibition of the Home Climate Gardens project, there might be a garden built, cultivated and installed in the Norwich Gallery according to its unique environment – might, because you never know whether Kerbel will actually go through with testing out her plans.

[IMAGE]

‘There are trivial truths and there are great truths. The opposite of a trivial truth is plainly false. The opposite of a great truth is also true.’ The Danish theoretical physicist Niels Bohr says his father was fond of this saying. Matthew Tickle tells me it explains chiasmus, a rhetorical device in which groups of words or ideas which express truth, when reversed in parallel to each other, can also be true. Chiasmus is the title of a work Tickle exhibited in a London show called Isonerv in May 2003. The work consisted of a Geiger counter attached to four photographer’s flash lamps. Every time the Geiger counter detected a radioactive particle one of the powerful flash lamps was activated, apparently at random. This work was the pilot for a larger project that Tickle has been developing for over two years with theoretical physicist Dr Fay Dowker who is based at Queen Mary College, University of London.

Most of empirical science relies on the notion that there is only one version of reality and one version of the truth. Scientists are not often ready to entertain the possibility that there might be more than one version of truth or reality; that truth in itself might be subjective. Quantum mechanics is one area of scientific enquiry which acknowledges some element of subjectivity. Dowker’s research interests lie in the area of quantum gravity, or to put it another way, she is interested in finding ways in which it might be possible to reconcile quantum theory and general relativity – the two cornerstones of theoretical physics. Dowker describes this as ‘high risk’ because she is researching at the point where science becomes ‘speculative’. In an interview Tickle explains to me that Dowker believes the universe exists outside of our ability to comprehend it. This takes the subjectivity of the quantum world one step further. The speculative nature of Dowker’s work inevitably involves the kind of creative leaps of imagination that, as Thomas Khun suggested in his seminal 1962 text *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, occasionally bring about paradigm shifts in scientific thinking. It does not really come as a surprise then to learn that it was Dowker who initiated the project in the first place. Dowker, frustrated with orthodox attitudes within the scientific community, visited her local art gallery (Matt’s Gallery) in search of a new kind of sounding board for her research and ideas. It is not obvious what Dowker hoped to get out of the project, if anything. Tickle says she is simply interested in learning more about how a contemporary artist and contemporary art work. He says curiosity was and remains Dowker’s main motivation, and that she never stopped being the scientist and he never stopped being the artist. *What the Eye Can’t See the Heart Can’t Grieve For*, Tickle and Dowker’s project, will be visible from the Mile End Road at Queen Mary College, University of London, after dark during February 2004. It will consist of about 100 photographer’s flash lamps attached to about 100 Geiger counters positioned in various buildings, including the clock tower and the Physics building. One possible reading of the work might be to see it as making visible ‘what the eye can’t see’ – such as radioactive particles in the atmosphere. The flashlights suggest the action of photography, which in turn implies that an event has been recorded as well as made visible, but the only image produced, however, the working practices of science and art. In *Science in Action* Bruno Latour, for example, proposed the idea that science – like art to a certain degree – is made by a network of corroboration within society. With this in mind, his idea of the ‘Great Divide’ between things that we know (science) and things that require some element of belief (art and Latour’s idea of ‘science in action’) does not seem so great. Without such a gap to bridge, it is possible to envisage that art and science can enjoy a productive exchange of ideas, knowledge and imagination. An exchange between art and science might not always lead to fruitful collaborative projects, but it does at the very least

promise a few more scientists with some interest or understanding of what lies beyond a laboratory. In 1945 George Orwell wrote an open letter to the Tribune entitled 'What Is Science?'. Responding to J Stewart Cook's suggestion that in order to avoid 'scientific hierarchy' the public would need to be scientifically educated, Orwell countered that some scientists might also benefit from a bit of education in the arts. In support of his argument Orwell refers to a contemporary example: '[A] number of British and American physicists refused from the start to do research on the atomic bomb, well knowing what use would be made of it. [...] And though no names were published ... it would be a safe guess that all of them were people with some kind of general cultural background some acquaintance with history or literature or the arts – in short, people whose interests were not, in the cultural sense of the word, purely scientific.'

So what is the shape of sci-art to come? Rather than sci-art, why not simply a case of science genuinely interested in art or art informed by science? Respect for the sci-art model certainly seems to have waned in recent years. Sci-art, it would seem, has become a victim, like sci-fi, of the institutional snobberies and intellectual elitism plaguing both art and science worlds. The idea that science and art can somehow meet on common ground – that scientists can speak the same language as artists and vice versa – often entails compromise and more often than not it is the art that gets compromised. Where art is subordinated to science, it does not challenge scientific hierarchy but reinforces it by suggesting that the only successful projects are those in which art becomes science. For these reasons few artists (and this undoubtedly includes Bhimji, Kerbel and Tickle) are comfortable with their work being described as sci-art. Sci-art as both a term and working model, is reductive, denying that our understanding of how contemporary artists and contemporary art works has moved on since the aesthetic frustration of the future as imagined by Wells.

Miria Swain ran the art programme at NIMR between 2001-2003. She is curator of the forthcoming publication *Nanoscope Culture* and now works at Modern Art, Oxford

1 *The Shape of Things to Come*, HG Wells, 1932-3, pp. 359-60. All section titles in this article are taken from chapters in the fourth and fifth books

Picture Credits

Animated visualisation of the forthcoming public artwork *What The Eye Can't See The Heart Can't Grieve For*, Matthew Tickle and Fay Dowker

Home Climate Gardens, Janice Kerbel, 2003

Chiasmus, Matthew Tickle, 2003-4. *Flash Units and Geiger Counter*, dimensions variable. First shown at the exhibition *Isonerv*, London, April-May 2003. Organised by Michael Croft and Jonathan Hatt

Abstract Sex

By Luciana Parisi

Luciana Parisi shows how a parallel process of DNA transmission confounds Darwinian and neo-Darwinian conceptions of development. Can a new politics emerge from bacterial sex? Illustrations by Richard Starzecki

[IMAGE]

[...] we have seen [...] that it is most closely-allied forms, – varieties of the same species, and species of the same genus or of related genera, – which, from having nearly the same structure, constitution, and habits, generally come into the severest competition with each other; consequently each new variety or species, during the progress of its formation, will generally press hardest on its nearest

kindred, and tend to exterminate them. We see the same process of extermination amongst our domesticated productions, through the selection of improved forms by man. Many curious instances could be given showing how quickly new breeds of cattle, sheep, and other animals, and varieties of flowers, take the place of older and inferior kinds.

Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*

Whether it be in the development of the Earth, in the development of Life, upon its surface, the development of Society, of Government, of Manufactures, of Commerce, of Language, Literature, Science, Art, this same evolution of the simple into the complex, through a process of continuous differentiation, holds throughout. From the earliest traceable cosmical changes down to the latest results of civilisation, we shall find that the transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous, is that in which Progress essentially consists...

Herbert Spencer, 'Progress: Its Law and Cause'

[IMAGE] [IMAGE]

THE BACTERIAL ASSEMBLY

In 1981, Lynn Margulis' research into bacterial mitochondrial transmission called into question the foundations of Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism. Margulis argued that mitochondria, organelles residing in the body of nucleated animal and plant cells, are in fact descendents of free-living bacteria. Enclosed in their mitochondrial membranes, these ancient bacteria have an independent genetic apparatus of their own, but were at some stage – possibly the moment in which oxygen entered the atmosphere 200 million years ago – captured within the cell body, though outside the nucleus.

Like all bacteria, these mitochondria reproduce, but their genetic transfer is non-linear and takes place only by way of the mother. However it got into the cell body originally, the presence of mitochondrial messenger material outside the nucleus constitutes a parallel process of transmission long unknown to science and unaccounted for within the Darwinian paradigm. It would seem that nucleic transmission is not the exclusive determinate of the evolution of the organism after all; indeed nucleic DNA itself is altered by the mitochondrial material that surrounds it. In other words, there are not one but two parallel and mutually infecting channels of genetic communication that determine the organism's development. Indeed, within the same species, the nucleic germline and the bacterial somaline exhibit differential rates of mutation.

From these findings, Margulis has revolutionised the classical evolutionary understanding of the development of life, drawing on the work of Russian scholar-biologist Konstantin S. Mereschkovsky who, in the first quarter of the 20th century, had already rejected the Darwinian theory of natural selection and invented the term 'symploysis' to describe the prolonged symbiotic, parasitic associations that precede the appearance of a new organism. (Sapp, 1994; Sagan 1992, pp.362-85; Margulis, 1981, pp.1-14) A 'guest' bacteria, entering the cell, takes part in a transfer of DNA information with those 'host' bacteria already present. Bacteria move across phylums without regard, altering the genetic material of each lineage as they go.

Dismissed for a long time, symploysis is acquiring a constitutive scientific importance, supported by molecular biology and biochemistry's questioning of the classical division between plant and animal kingdom and the classifications based on this division. Symbiotic processes now in fact seem to explain the emergence of the cellular and genetic modifications of sex and reproduction, disrupting the the 'zoocentrism' of the theory of evolution (the priority of Homo Sapiens) in demonstrating that 'each animal cell is, in fact, an uncanny assembly, the evolutionary merger of distinct bacterial metabolisms.' (Sagan, 1992, p.363)

BIOTECH: THE OLDEST SCIENCE

In this sense, genetic engineering and cloning are not only not new, but not even particularly innovative complexifications of life. They strongly resemble the trading of genes invented by bacteria 3,900 million years ago: non-nucleated cells transmitting information without copulation. Perhaps all that is marked by 'biotech', the human recombination of genetic material between independent cellular bodies, is the re-emergence of the most ancient sex: bacterial sex.

But biotechnologies such as transgenics and cloning, insofar as they entail the horizontal transfer of genetic material, the re-engineering of cells across species barriers, do expose new levels of symbiotic mixture. For bacteria and endosymbiotic parasitism, they mark a new threshold, a new channel for a bacterial trading that will not constrict itself within the intentions of the scientists who opened it. Transgenesis accelerates differential mutations in patterns of evolution so that biotechnologies used, for example, to improve organs and cell transplants, make insulin, or produce new cells and tissues for 'cell therapies', are in fact promoting parallel, unknowable, non-filial recombinations of genetic sequences and cellular compounds that favour the emergence and re-emergence of new viruses – alongside new generations of mutant vegetables, insects, fishes, reptiles, sheep and humans. No longer species or individuals, forms or functions, transgenesis highlights evolution's underlying pattern: packs of relations between bodies that engineer new bodies. It is simply not accurate to say that genetic engineering is technology's colonisation of the biological: at the same time, the biological is abducting the transmission layer that biotech produces.

What is produced in this cross-colonisation of the biological and the technological layers of organisation, is a bio-digital assemblage, a symbiotic modification of matter that is not part of any natural 'design'. The bio-digital assemblage of bodies – mouse and a micro-chip, a virus and a human organism – propagate the tendencies of symbiotic matter and accelerate the turbulent and unexpected swerves of non-linear DNA transmission. Micro-mutations within and across species are enabled and accelerated. The tendencies of the bio-digital assemblage of matter are non-linear; and the transactions between various chronological moments – the biological, the technological, the biotechnological – take place via the nexus of symbiotic contagion. At this nexus, bio-digital sex catalyses the emergence and re-emergence of unprecedented life forms.

RE-MAPPING DNA

According to the central belief of evolutionary dynamics and embryology, nucleic DNA – the germline – is the true organiser of life, that which decides the destiny of parts. Cloning, on the contrary, suggests that somatic substances themselves have specific abilities and potentials of individuation unknown to nucleic DNA and that it is not nucleic DNA that determines variation. Via the movement of bacterial DNA in and through physical space, through the membranes of phylum and species, through time, folded into layers of sedimentation, or re-emerging into the atmosphere in one of earth's eruptions, DNA's linear transmission, and progressive evolution, are in fact thoroughly and constantly disrupted through intensive bacterial trades.

For neo-Darwinism, sexual reproduction has been directly selected to accelerate the evolution of the most varied traits across generations by driving sexed organisms to adapt faster to changing conditions. But the parallel transmissions of endosymbiosis, bacterial sex, and parthenogenesis (the reproduction of an unfertilised egg into offspring), present as many genetic variations as two-parent sex. The assumed function of sexual reproduction in increasing complexity is, then, undermined. Indeed, sexual reproduction itself can be expected to have arisen from previous symbiotic associations, of parasitisms and transgenic trades between distinct bacteria under certain pressures. Bacterial symbiosis is thoroughly folded in to the process of nucleic transmission.

This leads to a conception of life as a ‘dissipative dynamics’, a non-teleological account of nature’s organisation. Margulis’ work on microbial sex suggests that unprecedented reorganisations of life occur through symbiotic trade, a non-cumulative mixing giving rise to new compositions that do not resemble the parts from which they were generated. In endosymbiosis, novelty does not imply the enrichment of matter. The rule of symbiotic life is chance encounter, unforeseeable responses to unknowable conditions.

[IMAGE]

ABSTRACT SEX

Your people will change. Your young will be more like us and ours more like you. Your hierarchical tendencies will be modified and if we learn to regenerate limbs and reshape our bodies, we’ll share that ability with you. That’s part of the trade. We’re overdue for it.

Octavia E. Butler, 1987, p.40

The distance between the macro and the micro no longer applies to this world of bacterial trade, proliferating through symbiotic contagion rather than nucleic filiation. There are as many sexes as there are terms in symbiosis, generating an ecosystem of micro-mutations which intersect at different speeds. This symbiosis, catalysed by chance encounters between molecular bodies, maps a dynamics of evolution that resonates with the metaphysics of Deleuze and Guattari and Spinoza.

For them, nature is machinic, an engineering process of paths never becoming a whole. Life forms do not result from a forced or spontaneous cooperation between individuated bodies struggling to reach a shared goal or to survive in a hostile environment. They are defined neither by a harmonious nor a conflictual state of nature driven by group collaboration or by individual competition. Altruism and egoism are both rooted in a humanisation of evolution that is undermined by symbiotic trade.

Instead, symbiotic assemblages make use of chance encounters that include reverse abductions, viral transmission, nuclearisation and multiparasitism. These processes of becoming are machinic involutions on a nature-culture continuum. Unknowable mutations are entailed in all of the parts caught up in their composition. I call these mutations abstract sex.

Abstract sex designates the potentials of intensive mutant matter: potentials that require no teleological aim towards novelty. Abstract sex names neither a progressive nor a regressive state of materiality. Rather, it is a conception of nature defined by continuous mutations across all layers and stratifications. It is a non-deterministic process, a phylum of immanent relations traversing traditional strata in a parallel, anti-genealogical dynamic. Abstract sex opens up bio-physical and bio-cultural organisation of nucleic sex to radical destratification.

BACTERIAL MICROPOLITICS

It is the singular moment of Darwinism and Social Darwinism, initially triggered by the combination of social urbanisation and technological industrialisation, that must today give way to abstract sex. Together with this pairing goes the entire theory of evolution that has become central at the biological, social and economic layers— dominating, for example psychology, sociology, anthropology and political theory. The function of adaptation, the ‘survival of the fittest’, can finally be disentangled from the social field, and the conspiracy of culture to ‘make’ nature is ended.

In the Darwinian logic the blind force of natural selection regulates variations by ensuring common descent. This explains the driving force of capitalist development: capitalism is the invisible hand of order that selects the most successful mode of reproduction originating from the individual struggle for

survival. In neo-Darwinist Kevin Kelly's famous analogy, the self-organisation of natural systems mirrors the increasing development of the free market: self-organisation takes the place of natural selection, regulating and channelling the world's randomness into a working whole. This is 'control without control' – and operation of selection that, for Kelly, does not involve a hierarchical chain of command. Rather, the 'invisible hand of selection' controls without authority the networked architecture of natural and economic systems. Biological networks match a democratic model of the market, defying the transcendence of centralised control.

The determinism of evolutionary complexity, in which self-organising networks add simple units to constitute complex systems, maintains a finality for nature. Capitalism as Darwinian evolution requires repetition without mutation, the passage from actuals to actuals, the preservation of the same variation, the selection of an always-already individuated difference. This logic of 'control without control' only recentralises humanism in nature, a dynamic process of teleological evolution that dismisses the vaster, aimless processes that in fact constitute them.

Of course, the continuous folding-in of indeterminate populations and mutant bodies must ultimately confound the supposed primacy of 'self-organisation.' Not only does abstract sex call radically into question the biological determinism that takes determinate forms and functions as examples for all organisations, but the fact of continuous symbiotic trade destroys Kelly's naturalist logic of economic systems and the unitary logic it imposes on the population of genetic material. In abstract sex, potential mutations accompany the most diverse stages of organisations on a nature-culture continuum, refuting the use of biology as a model for laissez-faire liberal economics.

The aimlessness of abstract sex also calls into question the 'creative power of the multitude', theorised by Negri and Hardt in the book *Empire* (2000). For Negri and Hardt, the multitude constitutes 'the networked real productive force of our social world, whereas *Empire* is a mere apparatus of capture that lives off the vitality of the multitude.' (p.62) The multitude is defined by creative, communicative, networked relations of virtualised production (i.e. immaterial labour), based on decentralised, innovative and 'abstract cooperation' of bodies that constitutes global capitalism. By considering *Empire* a parasitical web of bodies living off the creative vitality of a multitude characterised by the networked intelligence of humans and machines, Negri and Hardt still presume a formal distinction between the self-enclosing or self-organising structure of capitalism on the one hand, and the cooperative, creative forces of the multitude on the other. And although they argue for the primary potentials of the multitude over apparatuses of capture – state capitalism – their model recentralises human agency in the material dynamics of evolution, with creativity as the organic force that will always resist parasitic capture.

Rather than engaging with molecular mutations, Negri and Hardt characterise capitalism through the negative qualities of parasitism as opposed to the striving, living qualities of the multitude. This reinstates vitalist creativity and re-installs the human at the centre of matter's dynamics. *Empire* misses the dynamics of transmission visible in the endosymbiotic coexistence of bacterial and nucleic, informational trading through markets and antimarkets. Abstract sex demands a radically ambivalent picture of the relation between the host and the guest, the abductor and the abductee, the parasite and that which it is parasitic upon. If each symbiotic assemblage involves the modification of all parts participating in its composition, unleashing the emergence of unpredictable mutations, then apparatuses of capture can never be external to the multitude. On the contrary: there is a constant, interdependent relationship between these distinct modes of organisation. Hence not only can the most rigid monopoly feed on the sparsest grass-roots, but counter-power can also hijack and grow through power's channels.

This open-ended trading entails no aim, interest or finality. It is a non-given micropolitics of destratification and mutation, a pragmatics under construction on the nature-culture plane. It concerns bodies defined by relations and potentials rather than the macropolitical determination of differences in position by kind and degree. This micropolitics of bodies resonates with the ethics (or ethology) of Spinoza, subtracting the body's field of action from the humanist logic of self-interest, whereby political activity requires the identification of groups occupying visible social categories (e.g. class, race and gender).

Abstract sex instead offers a pragmatics of encounters, abductions and contagions between bodies, laying out a dynamics of sociability that emerges in situ rather than being determined by social positions. It entails a bodily participation in pulling out potential threads of mutation from actual conditions and distributing turbulent variations. Sex becomes an indeterminate quantum of thought and extension, proliferating through the contagious trading of matter; affecting – acting upon – the socio-cultural determination of identity positions.

This practice of intensifying bodily potentials to act and become is an affirmation of desire without lack which signals the nonclimactic, aimless circulation of bodies in a symbiotic assemblage. This desire is not to be equated with something natural or given, spontaneous or induced. It is not primarily intentional. It has no final peak. It exists in symbiotic compositions giving rise to novel mutations. As a micropolitics, this continuous construction of nonclimactic assemblages entails indeterminate fields of action in which each local activity modulates a global state. Very small interventions resonate unknowably across the plane. These assemblages of bodies are as biological and cultural as they are collective and political. It is the body that bears the potentials of action and mutation, and abstract sex mobilises them, spinning off new symbionts across the evolutionary logic of nature, economics, and desire.

Luciana Parisi teaches Cybernetic Culture at the University of East London. Her book *Abstract Sex: Philosophy, Bio-technology and the Mutations of Desire* is forthcoming with Continuum Press (Dec 2004)

[IMAGE]

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Now that We are Persons

By Emma Hedditch

An insertion by Emma Hedditch as part of the Mary Kelly project

I have been working with an artist-led project called Mary Kelly since May 2003. The first page of the printed booklet for the project assembles the following statements:

[...] attempts to articulate the politics of site and self initially through a radical engagement with 'cinema'.

Intimacy becomes revolutionary when it becomes a desire to communicate. The lie of alienation scrambled by a flurry of small, purposeful movements.

It seems incredibly important to recognise the strategies of formation, the processes in which experience and formal representation take place. The former not distinct from the latter, but as a continuous grasping

on the surfaces of the other.

Drawn to an engagement in the interpersonal and organisational and the consideration of other persons.

The Mary Kelly project

<http://www.andiwilldo.net/marykelly.htm>

In early discussions for the Mary Kelly project Marina Vishmidt and I met with Josephine Berry Slater who was pregnant at the time. We watched videos from Cinenova and began an exchange. Marina wrote a text around *Bred and Born*, a film by Joanna Davis and Mary Pat Leece made in 1983, and Mary Kelly's *Post- Partum Document*, 'an intervention into motherhood and knowledge systems executed by the artist over a period of several years in the mid-to-late 1970s.' (Marina Vishmidt, 'Her, Her, Me, It, Them, There: Scripto-Visual, Socio- Economic, Post-Partum, East End, TV?') Subsequent meetings with Josephine and Marina gave me a feeling of urgency in continuing a discussion on the subject of maternity or the maternal subject. The urgency also came from some other reflections on the relational movement of my own identifications and nonidentifications with a lesbian feminist position, research into women-only organisation and the desire to acknowledge Josephine's changing subjective experience. I wanted to explore the questions around giving birth, motherhood and how these events produce new selves – in women and those who support them.

Action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore natality, is inherent in all activities. Moreover since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical thought.

Hannah Arendt, 'Vita Activa and the Human Condition', 1958 The problem with intervention in labour is that one form of intervention may lead on to another so just by monitoring a woman and confining her to a bed means that she can't move around so much which means that she may have less efficient uterine action, less efficient contractions, the next step on from that is to use a drip to encourage contractions. Labour tends to be more painful if it is induced, and so the use of painkilling drugs is increased. Painkilling drugs may have an effect on the baby and mean that the baby will get distressed and so the consequences of that are maybe moving on to forceps delivery and having to resuscitate the baby. Polly Ferguson, tutor midwife in the film *Special Delivery* by Red Flannel Film collective, 1991, UK

I am interested in foregrounding the processes and experience of maternity, pregnancy and natality as political time; where such a foregrounding looks at the process and experience in relation to social dynamics that are influenced by things like power, visibility, feelings and identity. Especially when words like 'identification', 'action' and 'intervention' serve as the language of political expression. I want to slow down and put off assimilating maternity into a present political discourse or using it as a metaphor that projects away from the experience of birth, in order to express maternity as a feeling around the subjects of 'identification' and 'belonging'. Care needs to be given to the painful processes of self-reflexivity and the complexities of 'identification' and 'non-identification' in the experience of maternity, pregnancy or natality. Being pregnant and giving birth, or deciding not to give birth, produces a consciousness that women exchange with others, not as an abstraction but in such a way that the dialogue between people about the reproductive process transforms and shapes social relations, and is simultaneously always affected by where reproduction takes place and the specific political, social and economic contexts that construct it.

If pregnancy is a continual motion, an intermediate and unfixed state where the body performs a function and becomes functional, then we don't have to identify with it all the time. But pregnancy is also the reflective period in which women contemplate the past and how things are changing in relation to the present, whilst simultaneously projecting into the future, with the present lived experience of growth. Pregnancy challenges the coherence of the bodily experience and throws open one's subjectivity, before even reaching the decision to give birth. 'Being' in the process of pregnancy or becoming pregnant makes it a social action that is part of the female consciousness. But 'being' pregnant means women could become alienated from other forms of reproductive processes, labour/social relations, because they are not always alienated from the process of reproduction that is biological reproduction. The film *Positions of Power* made by Jacky Garstin and Delyse Hawkins in 1983, explains the ways in which women are alienated from the experience of childbirth by medical practices that actually make childbirth more difficult and painful. A demonstration by the *Radical Midwives* highlights the growing consciousness of women on the subject of home birth and its political weight within the women's movement of the time. *Home Truths* by Yvonne Baginsky (1983) records the personal stories of women who wanted to, or succeeded in, having home births. Two particularly contrasting stories are recounted in the film. In one, Celia Meyer describes how she was forced into confinement which then leads to her having her baby by caesarian section. Her account is filmed in one long take and allows her to express her story in detail. In the second story, which corroborates the first, we witness the home birth of Janette Przerwok who is free to walk around and give birth standing up, and the film is edited to incorporate the whole social experience of her birth.

Maternity is a sentiment that you don't have to be pregnant to feel. The moment of birth is strongly associated with pedagogical functions, where a person introduces the other, the not-yet-thing, into the social. It is a narrative that observes and reassures the new not-yetthing. It delineates itself from the functions of raising or rearing, because it is not really supposed to define or structure anything. The maternal time is mutable, limited and irregular but, despite its precariousness, it continues to exist powerfully as a repressed emotional state located within our psyches as an almost fixed, irreducible location. For Arendt, natality is action whereby each unique being has the potential to start something new; but the new person could be born into a group or nation (with a set of characteristics that constitute its social behaviour), without identifying or having the desire to identify with it. Our own specific relation to identification – the time and place that you are born into – can also shift over time, with the influence of movements within social relations, energy levels and the production of the conditions for living or reflecting. That's how the present becomes instilled with optimism for the future and plans are made for possible futures which are critical to the present, as a future whose potential will enable belonging.

Belonging is strongly connected to natality, and is inscribed in the idea of connectedness between two separate entities as productive of an aggregate, but talking about one's own birth implies a degree of separation, which a social self in a social dynamic is supposed to have overcome. Such aggregates produced in natality may need to re-appear and be identified with in order for belonging to exist or be felt again.

In the video *Shulie* (1997), a documentary made by students at The School of Art Institute of Chicago in 1967, is painstakingly reconstructed by the video maker Elisabeth Subrin. An actress Kim Voss plays the future radical feminist Shulamith Firestone in her art student days reflecting on her feelings of being out of time and place and not identifying with her generation. Through reconstructing the film Elisabeth Subrin attempts to reposition Shulamith Firestone not as an heroic figure but as 'evidence of one's erasure in history, or as prediction of one's future' (Elisabeth Subrin). *Shulie* is a project that represents what Subrin identifies with and satisfies some of my desire to know more about what was on the mind of Shulamith Firestone prior to writing *The Dialectics of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, published in 1970, where she attacks the character of a patriarchal world that oppresses

women – ‘Women must be freed from the tyranny of their biology by any means available’ – and her vision of ‘cybernetic socialism’ which demands ‘complete technological control of reproduction’. She also wanted to dismantle parenthood whereby children ‘belong’ to their ‘biological’ parents, stating that sexual repression and neurosis is caused by the ‘increasing privatisation of family life’, and ‘its extreme subjugation of women’. When I read *The Dialectics of Sex* for the first time I was staying at the Copenhagen Free University (an institution whose campus comprises Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen’s flat), and became conscious of how the family structure still operated there. I lent the book to Henriette, and we began a discussion about how she experienced the family in a more complex way, and extended it to a more radical shift of interpersonal relations. This hinged on the idea of making it feel more possible to be a part of the family without being born into it, and thus opening its structure. Later I lent the book to Josephine and we discussed its boldness and what it would be like to make such projections today. What brings a person to make such radical gestures and how did it affect the feminist movement of the 1970s? The vision to create a safe utopic space for women to define and affirm their separate identity from and relationship to patriarchal structures forms around expressive practices and performances of identity politics that produce places, institutions and ways of doing things for women and by women. Identification with the needs and desires of other women and or feminist politics, at a particular time and over time creates the support and engagement in the interpersonal and organisational as a political field. During some research I made in 1998 around women’s housing issues in London, I read how in the mid 1980s the clinical psychologist Sue Holland acknowledged the feminist influence within London’s council infrastructure. The Women’s Committee of the GLC provided a ‘leap forward’ with greater financial support and feminist solidarity. Her work ‘From social abuse to social action, a neighborhood psychotherapy and social action project for women’ opened the possibility for women to have access to therapeutic intervention, whereby women can move through their psychic, social and political experiences and explore the construction of the self within a social dynamic. One group of ex-clients in White City formed ‘Women’s Action for Mental Health’ in a squatted flat as a drop in centre that in addition to offering support to women, promoted mental health as a community responsibility.

In my local park there is a One O’Clock Club. These are held in council owned buildings in some London parks. Each day parents can come from one until four o’clock with their baby or child, to play and socialise. The clubs started in Upper Norwood in 1964 and were founded by Jane Carrick and Bell Tutaev from Lambeth council. In the beginning it was a voluntary scheme, later workers were paid by Lambeth Council and eventually the GLC came to support the groups. Since the abolition of the GLC in 1986, funding became restricted again, but nevertheless the support network still exists. Unlike educational resources for children, the One O’Clock clubs are not postcode dependent, they are seen as play-orientated and emphasise the development of support networks between mothers that draw on the idea of community as an existing pool of knowledge and experience.

In Feminist consciousness-raising groups women tell their own stories. The act of presenting one’s story in public gives it the chance to become politically reinternalised in each person. Each person might have multiple and simultaneous identities and the process of consciousness raising should not be perceived as the consolidation of the whole self or the bringing together of one’s identity, but as a process that incorporates social relations. Each woman’s contribution works to demystify the construction of social groups and situations partly through her description of the process by which she came to be in the group – the result of political motivations and personal decisions.

‘Consciousness-raising groups were laboratories for all the different tendencies of feminism that would later turn around and diagnose those divisions, partially through the readings of Marx and Lacan that Mary Kelly and Laura Mulvey, among numerous others, foregrounded in their practices at that time. To them, the psychoanalytical was intensely political, perhaps due to its conceptual malleability and formatting of social and intersubjective relations as

necessarily imbricated at the level of psychic organisation. It was also political because it highlighted the socially constructed nature of women's oppression.'

Marina Vishmidt

A friend in Sweden wrote to me about the historical figure of Ellen Key who believed in conversation and in the work on one's self, as opposed to lecturing as the way to gain knowledge. In Stockholm in 1885 she started some loosely organised groups called 'Tofterna' (The Twelves) that consisted of 12 women and a leader in each group. They met without formalities. Lectures could occur around medicine, social life and other subjects, but most of the time was devoted to conversation.

A friend took a book from the library entitled *Off Screen: Women & Film in Italy*, edited by Giuliana Bruno and Maria Nadotti. I have been reading how in Italy between 1974 and 1982, there existed '150-hour courses' which were available initially to factory workers and farmers, but eventually extended to housewives and pensioners. These courses included some basic literacy, but the main emphasis was to explore the constructs of knowledge and power. The film *Scuola Senza Fine* by Adriana Monti records the outcome of collective research at the Affori School and the Gervasia Broxon Cooperative, a women-only group led by Lea Meandri. The film explores the students' relationship to knowledge, the teacher as connected to the mother-child relationship and some of the traces and causes of emotional and sexual subtexts and tensions – an idea that the group was committed to exploring.

Martina's Playhouse (1989) is a Super 8 film by Peggy Ahwesh made with her close friend Diane Torr and Diane's young daughter Martina. Peggy reflects on her experience as part of a women's study group reading Lacan and Freud and in parts of the film Martina reads some of the texts that Peggy has been reading. Peggy films Martina presenting explanations of images from magazines surrounded by soft toys, her community, interspersed with candid interactions between Peggy and another woman (a young Diane?) who expresses her expectation that she will seduce Peggy. Finally Peggy is brought into Martina and Diane's world through a re-enactment of the mothering role, but with Diane as the child who must be breastfed by Martina. These women and groups do not name their practices as explicitly political, although on reflection they often acknowledge the significance and impact of the feminist movement in the '70s and '80s. But the appearance of the feminist movement coupled with the increased distribution of women's literature, political writings, film, etc. highlighted the desire for women to identify their own idea of belonging, an attempt to realise one's selves. The not-yet-belonging fledgling projects that try to experience something close to working on their own terms, like self-institutions, are a far cry from the private, isolated, passive self. They are a refusal, an attempt at the absolute withdrawal from a patriarchal hierarchy that decides what it means to act or belong.

'Theory is the thing that allows you to see by distancing, or, allows you to look at something else. She was a mother; she was using theory and highlighting the function of mediation in the mother-child relationship, the mediation of documentation as well as that of the psychoanalytical schema, or even the mediation of artwork in the site of the most properly feminine creative act, childbirth. But theory was also a means to pleurably preoccupy herself, to distract her from the daily exigencies of motherhood, amalgamating these with theory to conjugate the maternal position in language and in the social, a node of instability for cultural discourses about nature, about women. Theory allows you to make an object of study. She was also parodying the nature of the scientific gaze, with all the obsessively detailed and methodical record keeping of her child's daily life. How is the experience different from itself? How is motherhood an experience that unites women, and yet is something that cannot be spoken except through standardised forms? Is motherhood then metonymic for all the ways in which women are divided, that biology and culture do not adhere?

But the 'third term' (psychoanalytic theory) works in another way also: Kelly describes it as not just an access into the symbolic, but also as the point of departure from the affective plenitude of early feminist groupings that located the moment of oppression in the subjective, but were as yet unwilling or unable to acknowledge that the feminist community was already stratified by disparities in class, race, age and sexual orientation, among others. But the trope of psychoanalytic theory filters through Mary Kelly's practice, a device that is always bracketed and figurative, rather than an unexamined trace.'

Marina Vishmidt

Hippoheimer the King

By Ron Silliman

A section from the long poem VOG, by Ron Silliman

Viewing Private Ryan,
weeks later I'll dream
the future of slasher flicks,
packed house applauds seventh arrow in the skull.
Laughing gull gives vent to its name.
Special white, mosquito about the ear.
Post-punk video ads
shown not on television
but against warehouse walls.
Sand flies by the cloud.
Every third mansion begets a museum.
Squirrel growls, mockingbirds wheeze.
But our concept of the mansion
abuts new tracts of
swollen executive homes.
Clouds forestall the sun
then smear with dawn color.
Behind reeds at pond's edge
I find an old lawn chair –
baby ducks (call fuzz) waddle up.
Garbage truck roars tank-like amid the tiny houses.
Goose cough. Flags left
to shred in the rain.
California job case
printer's type stand
popular now as wall mount for tchotchkes.
Editing is rape.
But rewriting, writing through
forms a mode of caress.
Woman on rollerblades
at dawn to the sea.
Giant water tower
serves as point of reference,
a blue paler than the sky.
Second worst point drop
in the history of the Dow

not even in Top 20
on a percentage basis.
Now and only now
my shadow as I write.
Old barbeque fork and tongs
long crusted with sauce.
Gold lamé one-piece swimsuits
calling everybody 'honey' –
wrist turned back
to let the cigarette dangle.
But to have not done
the new Parent Trap
with Mary-Kate & Ashley.
Two typos
in Declaration of Independence.
Two hours later, you feel the sun.
Hold the handle until it really flushes.
In this dream I'm given a key
that could only open the tiniest of locks
with no further explanation.
What appears to have been an alternative future
in reality becomes a part of
the variable past.
Hoping, mid-ocean, to find
most of the fuselage intact
that we might recover
more of what we think of as the bodies.
Projectile sneezing.
Dreaming of waiting
for the next bus to come
you burst into tears,
unable to afford the pink sombrero.
Dysfunction at the junction,
everybody c'mon right now.
Right pronounced rat,
only broader.
Sun quivering
in the haze ridden sky.
(I am not I.)
New style VW bug
invokes old brand equity
amid boomers.
Close, Mr. President,
but no cigar.
Nuns with giant wimples
cross the old plaza.
Refers to the computer as a 'build.'
The sound of flushing
heard as a sigh,
an electronic handshake,

Ciccolini's Satie
well before dawn.
Legos or logos, which one?
Roofers to the controller
with a bid.
Dressing in the dark.
The too sweet smell of a skunk.
Sneaker's tongue
permanently askew.
Lone small plane
audible before dawn
as is this cricket.

Ron Silliman's blog: [<http://ronsilliman.blogspot.com>]

The Politics of Verticality

By Eyal Weizman

The West Bank as an Architectural Construction by Eyal Weizman

Since the 1967 war, when Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza strip, a colossal project of strategic, territorial and architectural planning has lain at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For this artists project, Eyal Weizman, Anselm Franke and Rafi Segal have collaborated with the photographer Daniel Bauer to recreate the visual panorama they exhibited as part of Berlin Kunst Werke's 'Territories' exhibition last summer. The panorama is accompanied by extracts from Eyal Weizman's essay 'The Politics of Verticality', originally published on Opendemocracy.net. This artist's project follows co-exhibitor Kate Rich's account of 'Territories' and Phillip Misselwitz and Eyal Weizman's text 'Military Operations as Urban Planning', both of which can be found on Metamute.com, and concludes Mute's series on the subject

In the Middle East, the landscape and built environment have become the primary arena of conflict. Jewish settlements – statesponsored islands of 'territorial and personal democracy', manifestations of the Zionist pioneering ethos – are placed on hilltops overlooking the dense and rapidly changing fabric of Palestinian cities and villages. 'First' and 'Third' Worlds spread out in a fragmented patchwork: a territorial ecosystem of externally alienated, internally homogenised enclaves located next to, within, above or below each other. The border ceased long ago to be a single continuous line and broke up into a series of separate makeshift boundaries, internal checkpoints and security apparatuses. The total fragmentation of the terrain as it appears on the plan demanded the design of continuity across its territorial reality. Israeli roads and infrastructure thereafter connected settlements by stretching over, or diving underneath, Palestinian lands. Along similar lines, Ariel Sharon's most recent plan proposes a Palestinian State constituted on a few estranged territorial enclaves 'connected by tunnels and bridges', while further insisting that Israel retains sovereignty over the water aquifers underneath Palestinian areas and the airspace and electromagnetic fields above them.

Indeed, a new way of imagining territory has been developed for the West Bank. The region is no longer seen as the two-dimensional surface of a single territory, but as a large three-dimensional volume, containing a series of layered ethnic, political and strategic territories. Separate security corridors, infrastructure, and underground resources have thus been woven into an Escher-like domain that struggles to multiply unitary space.

I have named this process of splitting and serialising territory the ‘Politics of Verticality’. Having begun as a set of ideas, policies, projects and regulations proposed by Israeli state-technocrats, generals, archaeologists, planners and road engineers upon West Bank occupation, it now thrives as the predominant means by which territorial control is exercised, and territorial ‘solutions’ are sought.

Settlement master planners like Matityahu Drobles and Ariel Sharon aimed to secure territorial control from high-lying points. Former US president Bill Clinton also sincerely believed in a vertical solution to the problem of partitioning the Temple Mount. For his part, Ron Pundak, the ‘architect’ of the Oslo Accords, described partitioning the West Bank by means of a three-dimensional matrix of roads and tunnels as the only practical way to divide an indivisible territory. And Gilead Sher, Israeli chief negotiator at Camp David (and divorce lawyer) described such methods to me as simple techniques for negotiating and bridging, their apparent enlargement of the ‘cake’ leaving each side feeling it got more. Geo-politics is a flattening discourse. It largely ignores the vertical dimension, preferring to look across landscape than cut through it. This equates with the cartographic imagination inherited from the modern state’s military and political spatialities. Politics and law perceive geographical terrain only through tools available to them – in this case two dimensional maps and plans by which borders are drawn as lines.

Traditional international borders are political tools; following the principles of property law, their geometric form could be described as that of vertical planes extending from the centre of the earth to the height of the sky. The departure from a planar division of territory to the creation of three-dimensional boundaries across sovereign bulks defines anew the relationship between sovereignty and space.

The ‘Politics of Verticality’ entails revisioning existing cartographic techniques. It creates a territorial hologram in which political acts of manipulation and multiplication transform a two-dimensional surface into a three-dimensional volume, thereby evading established models of spatial analysis.

By-pass roads attempt to separate Israeli traffic networks from Palestinian ones, preferably without ever allowing them to cross. They illuminate how two separate geographies occupying the same landscape can overlap. At points where the networks cross, a makeshift separation is created. Most often, small dust roads are dug for Palestinians underneath the wide, high-speed motorways on which Israeli vans and military vehicles rush between settlements. More grandiose Israeli projects have proposed highways with which to bypass Palestinian towns in three dimensions. The Tunnel Road, for example, connects Jerusalem with the southern settlements of Gush Etzion and, beyond, to the Jewish neighbourhoods of Hebron. To accomplish this, it has to perform a double contortion: having stretched upwards as a bridge crossing over a cultivated Palestinian valley, it then dives into a tunnel under the Palestinian Bethlehem suburb of Bet Jallah.

The Israeli historian Meron Benvenisti writes: ‘And indeed the person travelling on the longest bridge in the country and penetrating the earth through the longest tunnel may ignore the fact that over his head there is a whole Palestinian town and that on his way from the housing projects [of the Jerusalem neighbourhood] of Gilo to the housing projects of the city of Efrat and Etzion (settlement) block he does not come across a single Arab.’

In the West Bank, bridges are no longer just devices engineered to overcome a natural boundary or connect disconnected points in space. Rather, they become the boundary itself, separating two national groups across the vertical dimension.

This type of a division was first proposed in the 1947 UN Partition Plan. At two locations within it, the ‘kissing points’ where the territories of Israel and Palestine were to cross and the single-dimensional boundary line was to become a nondimensional point, a bridge-over-tunnel design was proposed as the

solution for the maintenance of territorial contiguity. It was precisely at places where the border was 'reduced' in this manner that solutions had to depart from the two dimensional paradigm and adopt a three dimensional approach. The present demographic dispersal is even more demanding. The Camp David proposals for the partition of Jerusalem necessitate several of these 'kissing points' between separate Israeli and Palestinian neighbourhoods. Under the Clinton plan, Jerusalem would have had 64 kilometres of walls and 40 sovereign bridges and tunnels connecting the enclaves to each other. But the project requires intense effort from government legal experts, as there are almost no precedents for property and bilateral law in three dimensions.

The connection of Gaza and the West Bank – the two estranged Palestinian territories that, according to the Oslo accord, are to form a single political unit – poses similar problems, only on a larger scale. The distance between them is 47 kilometres as the crow flies. But the so called 'safe passage' might well still be the same as that proposed throughout all peace negotiations – a Palestinian route including six-lane motorways, two railway lines, high-voltage electricity cables and an oil pipe connecting the two enclaves across Israeli territory. Israeli and Palestinian engineers proposed a bewildering variety of possible solutions to that particular engineering challenge. A tunnel, a ditch, a land road cut off from the landscape with dykes on either side, a viaduct... The political debate turned very quickly to the question of 'who's on top'. Avoiding the integrative solution of a land road, Israel asked for the Palestinian sovereign road to run through a seven-metre deep ditch. The Palestinians naturally preferred a bridge. They would hold sovereignty over the road, while Israel's sovereignty would extend to the under-part of the viaduct and its columns. The thermodynamic joint would act as an international border.

'The Politics of Verticality' (here I am referring to the complete essay) attempts to provide both a political critique of architecture and an architectural critique of politics. The former looks at the way in which, fixated by and responding to the paranoid drive for separation and segregation, architecture and planning appropriates landscape to turn it into a tool of domination and control. The latter describes how, attempting to base national authentications on the production of imaginary geographies, the idea of 'territory' is multiplied into a series of physical and metaphorical 'territories' to be organised in a multi-layered construction. The political deployment of aesthetic categories relating to landscape, archaeology, architecture and cartography have turned the West Bank into a theoretically constructed artifice. What may at first glance seem to be a pastoral natural landscape for the possession of which conflict is waged, is in effect the artificial arrangement of a totally synthetic environment as consciously designed as any built one. In it, 'natural' elements like streams, mountains, forest orchards, rocks and ruins function not as elements to fight over but as the weapons and ammunition of the conflict itself – sometimes even as the very subject waging the war.

With the technologies and infrastructure required for the physical segregation of Israelis and Palestinians running along such complex volumetric borders, it seems, furthermore, as if the intricate geo-political problem of the Middle East has gone through a scale-shift to take on positively architectural dimensions. Here, the West Bank appears to have been re-assembled to resemble a complex building with multiple enclaves, observation points, security corridors, infrastructural networks – and associated archaeological traces. Like in a conventional archaeological site, these elements of the landscape now function as evidence through which the political process can be investigated.

The complete version of 'The Politics of Verticality' can be found on OpenDemocracy:
[<http://www.opendemocracy.net>]

Eyal Weizman <eyal AT eruv.net > is an architect based in London and Tel Aviv

The Hollow Land

By Daniel Bauer (photographer), Anselm Franke, Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman

a panoramic view of the West Bank by Daniel Bauer (photographer), Anselm Franke, Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman

I Break Horses (I don't tend to them)

By Matthew Hyland

Matthew Hyland on the triumph of vocational training which has succeeded in disguising the moulding of workers as a voyage of personal development

Just Sugaring the Pill?

By Miria Swain

Miria Swain on recent sci-art and its vicissitudes

We Saw it Â Like a Flash

By Ruth MacLennan

Ruth MacLennan on televisual language and how it continues to support science's reign as the most objective form of knowledge

Extremely (In)Different

By Ian Hunt

Extreme Beauty edited by J. Swearingen and J. Cutting-Gray Reviewed by Ian Hunt

At The Hearth Of Language

By Cameron Bain

Here I Am by Lev Rubenstein Reviewed by Cameron Bain

Alternative Globalisations

By Jon Beasley-Murray

The Age of Consent by George Monbiot Reviewed by Jon Beasley-Murray

Not The What But The Where

By Mike Sperlinger

Where is the Photograph? edited by David Green Reviewed by Mike Sperlinger

Use Faults; Disturb Conventions; Exploit Idiosyncrasies

By Andrew Goffey

Behind the Blip by Matthew Fuller Reviewed by Andrew Goffey

(Another) Story Of Art

By Vali Djordjevic and Diana McCarty

Women, Art & Technology edited by Judy Malloy Reviewed by Vali Djordjevic and Diana McCarty

Artists in Non-Residence

By Peter Carty

[IMAGE]

‘OK. You can have the television and the video for fifteen quid.’ The haggling is speeding up as this dwelling in London’s East End is stripped of everything that has made it home. The house is Dickensian: a one-up, one-down in an alleyway. Its artist occupant is being thrown out so the owner can cash in on rising property prices. And in inimitable fashion, the art collective C6 is turning the eviction into an event. The makeshift bar is busy, and DJs are flipping discs frenetically. There’s a bonfire in the garden releasing aromatic wood smoke into the air. All the while humanity spills from the front door, clutching clothing, books, ornaments, carpets and sex toys, everything exchanged for derisory amounts of money.

The event was called Everything Must Go (EMG), and it was mounted by C6 in conjunction with in.sect.corp. C6 has documented it at [<http://www.c6.org>]. EMG is the latest example of divestment art. In contrast to Michael Landy’s Oxford Street shred-fest, nihilism was not on offer. Instead, the public was encouraged to play with an identity it was more than familiar with: the consumer. Perhaps the temporariness of the event meant that it had more in common with Rachel Whiteread’s House than Landy’s Breakdown. Like EMG, House emphasised the strong emotional resonances of East End dwellings for the urban poor. But the closest conceptual resemblance is to the work of Michael Mandiberg who, on New Year’s Day 2001, sold all his possessions online with more than a nod to theorist Frederic Jameson. ‘In this Post-Modern era,’ said Mandiberg, ‘art and commerce are often indistinguishable.’ Mandiberg attempted to make their indistinctness distinct: his ability to do so differentiates him from the likes of Landy or Whiteread whose works’ critical edge was blunted by their acquiescence in the fine art game. C6 refuses to play the game too, remaining resolutely anonymous and non-commercial. A recent mobile action/installation, On the Fly, involved spraying 1,260 stencilled flies on the windows of a London Underground central line train. Its aim? ‘To fight against ugliness using the wildlife of the everyday’. Fuck You enabled the public to vent anger and abuse down a phone line at the time of the second Gulf War. Lately, commentators have attempted to pindown C6 with the tactical art tag; a label the collective has not dismissed. In the meantime ‘sold’ stickers are rapidly appearing on the artists’ remaining possessions. One of the last items to go is the

cooker, and soon a human dung beetle is proudly staggering up the alleyway under an unwieldy consumer durable. EMG has obviously not stopped gentrification in the East End, but it has thrown the issues into stark relief. And it was fun, too.

Peter Carty
C6 [<http://www.c6.org>]

Fashionable Noise

By John Cayley

[IMAGE]

Fashionable Noise: On Digital Poetics contains a selection of half a dozen pieces of writing, all of which can be seen as in some sense process-generated; the co-work of Brian Kim Stefans and certain of his digital familiars – demons that drive both him and his media.

Stefans mixes theory and poetry seamlessly and apparently effortlessly although, as he readily acknowledges, the burden of work is often shared by generative algorithms. In the midst of the book's other pieces – a transcribed IRC dialogue, some 'Reflections on Cyberpoetry' (recasting Eliot on vers libre), a 'dos and donts' of new media practice (derived from Blake's 'Proverbs of Hell'), more 'Notes on New Poetrie,' and 'A Poem of Attitudes' – the main portion of the book consists of 'a critique of hypertext'. This chapter, for me, was the book's demonic heart, one of the most considered, wide-ranging, creative and critical treatments of writing in networked and programmable media that I have come across.

'Stops and Rebels' is constructed around a poem that has been algorithmically collaged from a number of source texts. The bulk of the writing, however, consists of footnotes on the poem, written as if by 'an over-zealous student'. Chiefly, the piece is clear discursive prose, but the structure makes it more useful for later reference since individual notes tend to organise around distinct topics: noise and interpretation; carnival and database aesthetics; Language poetry; artificial intelligence; ambient poetics; fashionable coding, etc. Labelled as articles, these notes might appear as fragments from a lost or future encyclopaedia of new media rhetoric. '*Fashionable Noise*' signifies far more than mediaspeak irony or the author's self-denigration. At first it seems to point to the transient, modish effects of a 'big noise' on the fringes of poetic practice and literary art. These challenging, negative connotations would not, I suspect, be entirely disavowed by Stefans, but they are self-contextualised, embedded in a title phrase that proves to be generative and engaged. The two words could, in fact, be set as a one-line emblematic poem with the current subtitle promoted to title. 'Fashionable' here is derived from the verb as well as from its frequently foppish noun. It indicates that the 'noise' of digital poetics is programmed, manipulated, 'fashioned fit' and shifted so as to work with and influence literary and social convention. Noise is far from being mere linguistic waste or excess. It is many things in Stefan's text: the stuff and matter of language on the cusp of symbolic meaning, the non- or posthuman aspects of new media writing, algorithm itself and its fragmentary, found, chance-selected sources. This is 'noise' as the representation of a downgraded but integral aspect of signification. Noise gains rights in this context because the entire world of language is the poet and writer's proper (if potential) palette – not those few notes plucked out of the soundscape by convention and tradition, but everything from letters to their dreamlife, from noise to silence. Because new media makes poetic noise fashionable, it becomes impossible for artists to ignore these admittedly fashionable ways of 'making it new'.

Fashionable Noise is all but uniquely responsive to both traditional and 'bleeding edge' language art practice. As a critique of hypertext begun in 1996, 'Stops and Rebels' was way ahead of its time. It remains so, since much of its close analysis of writing in programmable media is still poorly understood, while in practice, there are few writers like Stefans who are also able to program what they prescribe. *Fashionable Noise* contains code segments that will reconfigure digital poetics.

John Cayley

Fashionable Noise: On Digital Poetics // Brian Kim Stefans // Berkeley: Atelos // 2003 // pb available from SPD [<http://www.spdbooks.org>] US\$ 12.95 plus delivery, see also [<http://www.atelos.org/fashionable.htm>] // ISBN 1-891190-14-8

The Attic Tapes 1974-1978

By Howard Slater

Slipstreamed out a little by the recent art world worship of Throbbing Gristle, this 3CD release of early Cabaret Voltaire material is something of a crucial release. Never ones for the limelight and shying away from the exhibitionist excesses of performance art that propelled TG into public view, CV got on with making experiments in their early years that are as provocative if not 'better' produced than the tracks they began to commit to vinyl from 1978. This collection of tracks highlights what's missing in music practice these days: a blissful lack of conceited self-consciousness and a determination to use the force of sound as a means to change consciousness rather than to trade in 'sign value'. At times there is almost a fourth member to the trio, a quite corporeal sense of a collective unconscious space into which anything doesn't quite go, but, if you half try, will fit because incongruity and chance and alter-egos and hope-in-the- Aks have to have their space made. Beginning with test-tapes of 'treated voice' and 'treated clarinet' etc., the elements come together in a kind of form riven from intimacy; a kind of abreacted openness that relies on the strength of relation between the members to allow for an unembarrassed and improvisational approach bounded by the solitary beats of a drum box; beats that seem to demand that space be pointillistically filled rather than destrudo'd out (cf. 'Capsules, Oh Roger'). Add to this conspiracy-thriller tape-cut up tracks like 'Calling Moscow' as well as the surrealist sci-fi stories read out in distorted northern tones on 'Bedtime Stories' and 'Photophobia', and we can't avoid hearing in *The Attic Tapes*, which aren't just plunderphonics but antipara- state propaganda too, harbingers of a future yet to come; unleashers, along with many others, of transformative productive forces that, in producing new listeners, produce new subjects and new modes of feeling.

This is Cabaret Voltaire's avant-popism: the sound forms are at times recognisable as 'songs' but the treatment of them, the discontented content, makes them unlyrical. At other times, when they leave the 'song' alone, the content becomes the form. Running through both is a use of language that, in the cut-ups, is clearly audible, but with the 'songs' is deformed yet intelligible, as with dub. There is, then, a meeting point between the quoted language of the cut-up (mostly clearly presented) and the invented language of the narratives (mostly distorted) which has the effect of communicating a reluctance, a faltering of the powers of communication that are overcome by the use of, at least back then, unfamiliar sounds (treated guitar, treated clarinet). This aspect of avantgardism, the self-critique of expression as power, not only accounts for the discrete aspect of Cabaret Voltaire at this time (one impending cassette release on TG's Industrial Records), it also informs their 'choice' to make electronic music. The most overpowering technology is made unsure of itself; a threatening prop. If we contrast this to the persistently hopeless state of institutionalised avantgarde music, a music in thrall to the technics of form that reduces musical practice to the pinprick of opus, then with Cabaret Voltaire, the fear and attraction of expression leads to an unfiltered heterogeneity and a projective

participation from us listeners. Whilst the dabs of historic reference abound, the melting pot that is The Attic Tapes assures us that, beyond nostalgia, there can be a collision of idea-times, expressive residues, that don't obey the times, don't adapt to the usual categorical chronologies: split second feelings.

Howard Slater

The Attic Tapes 1974-1978 // Cabaret Voltaire // Mute – Grey Area // 2003

Domain Errors!

By Josephine Berry

Josephine Berry reviews *Domain Errors!*

This collection of essays, whose editors worked in collaboration with the cyberfeminist group of activists and theorists, subRosa, is largely a work of redress. Begun in '99, its intention has been to 'initiate a feminist and postcolonial critique of embodiment, difference, and racial prejudice within cyberspace, biotechnologies and cyberfeminism.' This easy to read paperback is without doubt a useful vehicle for the popularisation of such a critical project. What is disappointing, though, is that its writers so often cast the technological spectrum and associated conditions as a force to be combatted, an assault to be parried. Despite the writers' refreshing reminders of older techniques such as self-help and consciousness raising groups, spiritually oriented therapies (Reiki), and refusal per se, their severance from all but the communicative possibilities digital technologies offer amounts to a failure of vision. One is left wondering where the 'cyber' – a prefix that still retains some vestige of its original futurity – meets the feminism. Or more accurately how refusal could be joined to any progressive idea of how these technologies might be deployed. A key text which seems to highlight the reactionary streak running through the book is subRosa's 'Stolen Rhetoric: the Appropriation of Choice by ART [Assisted Reproductive Technologies] Industries'. This concerns the hijack of 1970s feminist struggles for control over reproduction and sexuality by the biotech industry, which transforms the unrealised dream of freedom from biological destiny into the profitability of 'reproductive liberalism' encapsulated by the mantra: 'A woman's right to choose'. In their zeal to expose the cynical logic of the industry, subRosa end up advancing a hopelessly vague programme premised on the defence of 'women's bodily sovereignty'. SubRosa proposes the sharing of knowledge about 'sexual and reproductive options' using information networks and performative practices. This is a far cry from the audacity of radical feminists such as Shulamith Firestone who, in the mid-'60s, envisaged a dismantling of patriarchal capitalism premised on the total biotechnological control over reproduction that was doubtless in the offing. A vision that subRosa dismisses as 'too compromised to be useful to feminists any longer.'

But in a curious way, both positions are comparably absolutist: Firestone's evangelism of the technological fix is inversely mirrored by subRosa's rejection of any technological invasion of 'bodily sovereignty'. In both cases, the female embodied subject is understood as (at least potentially) in full possession of herself. This possessive individualism belies appeals made by both to the integrative powers of connection, collectivities and networks of solidarity. But where Firestone prophesied a cyborgian and cooperative assemblage of technology, flesh and society, the cyberfeminists in this book appear to restrict the progressive functioning of digital technologies to the realm of communication alone. The highly complex moment at which the communication of bodies, (digitally encoded) information, and matter (organic and inorganic) meet is never sufficiently tackled. Given the research being done into the non-linear and nonteleological character of reproduction and evolution (see Luciana Parisi's 'Abstract Sex' in this issue, p. 42) the diversion of cyberfeminist energies into a defence of a notionally natural bodily sovereignty seems misguided. But even a more tangible

discussion of how the networked capacity of computing power (databasing, sequencing, compiling) and science might, through social ownership, be brought to bear on ecological problems or the control of diseases etc., would have been welcome.

If *Domain Errors!* fails to offer a diversity of analysis, it certainly offers a diversity of styles and concerns: Lucia Sommer on the commodification of children, Irina Aristarkhova's psychogram of Moscow, Rhadika Gajjala & Annapurna Mamidipudi's exchange about Indian communities of production, and Faith Wilding's hilarious 'Rant of the Menopausal Cyborg' are just some of them.

Josephine Berry Slater

Domain Errors! Cyberfeminist Practices // eds. Maria Fernandez, Faith Wilding and Michelle M. Wright // Autonomedia // 2002 // ISBN: 1-57027-141-0

Stewart Home

Shooting Stars: Drugs, Hollywood and the Movies // Harry Shapiro // Serpent's Tail // pb £14.99 // 352 pp // ISBN: 1852426519 *Mainlines, Blood Feasts and Bad Taste: A Lester Bangs Reader* // edited by John Morthland // Serpent's Tail // £9.99 // 400 pp // ISBN: 0375713670

Infoanarchy vs. Discordia?

ByQuim Gil

Two different collaborative filtering projects, one well-established, the other virtually new – but which is best? In fact there's no contest, since these initiatives don't so much compete as complement each other. In one corner we have InfoAnarchy, a three-year-old weblog and wiki for the development of information about file sharing and anonymity tools. This very interesting resource explores the social and political aspects of peer-to-peer, both its greatness and the ongoing prosecution of its users and developers. In the other corner stands Discordia, a fledgling weblog just nine months old, dedicated to 'the intersection of art, activism and emerging networked technologies' and promoted by a group of net artists and academics. Point your nose at Nettime, Ars Electronica and even our own Mute environment and you'll scent its direction.

So what do these websites have in common? Well, both sit on the top of Scoop – a free software tool that any shaky, PHPNuke-based rolling content site should consider switching to. And both want to help us liberate ourselves from, or, at least, improve our awareness of, the social, cultural and technological apparati that are possibly controlling us more than we know. Also, since their core groups are spread across several continents, both projects were conceived and developed over email more than through face-to-face meetings. But the real reason why they should be considered together is that their trajectories look set to converge at some point in the future.

InfoAnarchy has history on its side and the so-called infoanarchists seem to come from very practical and hands-on backgrounds. Looking through the regular staff links you find promoters, developers, editors and active supporters of a wide variety of projects from ShouldExist to The Origins of Peace and Violence; from FreeNet to Der Humanist; Java to Python; Gameboy to post-Napster tools; cyber-liberties to IP, not to mention a myriad of personal weblogs. While InfoAnarchy counts among its contributors a team involved in SETI, the worldwide collaborative effort to find radio signals from intelligent alien civilisations, the site itself is growing into a rather unique and intelligent wiki-planet of content, with material on file sharing, copyright, and the gift economy, plus peer-to-peer research, information tools and all possible interconnections in between. For example, the infoanarchists have

built a very comprehensive RIAA/Boycott page which I found via a link from the GTK-Gnutella website to the Gnutella page on their wiki. Discordia, although still more potential than actual, seems to be on a mission to push theory into practice and to bring essayism down to earth for a minoritymainstream located on the outskirts of net.art, activism and Indymedia. The project is presented as quite technologyoriented, deploying Scoop as a platform because, with regards to social filtering and collaborative moderation, it seems to combine the best of Active (one of the Indymedia tools) and Slash (the operative outcome of the Slashdot experience). While acknowledging their critical legacy, Discordia also seeks to escape the limitations of Nettime's mailing list format and Rhizome's community enclosure.

If you are a Mute reader, have attended any Next Five Minutes event, are into plagiarism, know how Consume relates to wireless internet and/or subscribe to Nettime, the list of Discordia's developers will sound very familiar. In fact, as part of the OpenMute project's core team I could say they probably provide competition for our sister site, Metamute :-) which plans to implement features already up and running on Discordia. It would be great to find out in three years time that they (or us, or anybody else) had developed a specialised wiki as cool and useful as InfoAnarchy's is in its field. Oh, I forgot to say something important: both these projects seem to love chaotic structures. Doesn't that make you smile?

Quim Gil

InfoAnarchy – [<http://www.infoanarchy.org>]

Discordia – [<http://www.discordia.us>]

Nettime – [<http://www.nettime.org>]

Ars Electronica – [<http://www.aec.at>]

Scoop – [<http://scoop.kuro5hin.org>]

ShouldExist – [<http://www.shouldexist.org>]

The Origins of Peace and Violence – [<http://www.violence.de>]

FreeNet – [<http://freenet.sourceforge.net>]

Der Humanist – [<http://www.humanist.de>]

SETI@Home – [<http://www.setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu>]

Active – [<http://tech.sfimc.net>]

Indymedia – [<http://www.indymedia.org>]

Slash – [<http://slashcode.com>]

Rhizome – [<http://www.rhizome.org>]

Radical Entertainment

By Ian White

Exceeding the minor scale on which it occurred, and somehow moving beyond its host institution's low-key support, the ICA's July new media event Radical Entertainment pulled off a small feat of transformation. The season may have explored the modifications of submerged and emerging technologies and the renegade strategies that a specific, dominant gaming culture has induced: both tendencies may also have been shown in the context of the actual and ubiquitously mediated youth market in which this gaming culture thrives. But new media curators Lina Dzuverovic- Russell (now ex-ICA) and Lauren Cornell (of Williamsburg's Ocularis screening house) managed, ultimately, to make this a festival about something much broader. Not so much a collection of parts as a collection of those parts' frames, their modes of exhibition.

Work by Radical Software Group/Alex Galloway, Natalie Bookchin, People Like Us, and Nullpointer ran in the ICA's digital studio. There were two cinema programmes which included videos by Seth Price and Negativland amongst others, and an alt-dérive, organised by the Space Hijackers, through

the streets of London and stimulated by the idea of ‘holding your breath and not touching the floor.’ In Bookchin’s seriously durational *Metapet* (2003) the viewer/player is cast as the committed long-term manager of a ‘virtual pet’, a worker within a generic corporate structure hell-bent on career advancement. My own personal horror was at the lack of any immediate payrises, no matter how many drugs I fed my pet. *Futurefarmers’ antiwargame* (2003) worked an obvious line with semantic aplomb: the inevitable killer virus wasting US citizens or the outbreak of nuclear war are both gags to be obsessively enjoyed.

But it was the work of artist collective Paper Rad and Cory Arcangel that prompted the best insight into *Radical Entertainment*: moving beyond technical fetishism, the fascination with exposing code or revealing/determining social structures through extended play, the work seemed to stray into the realm of the romantic tradition. Paper Rad’s website is a work of art: layer upon layer of glaring, flashing 1980s-inspired logos saturate a page with links to diaries, projects, music, cartoons and comic strips. Situated on the edge of functionalism, its hypnotic retinal impact takes you beyond information, into joyful exhilaration. Arcangel’s *Super Mario Clouds* (2002) is sublime: an emptying out of everything from the original game but for the clouds and sky, it becomes an 8-bit void, full of profundity. Like all good romanticism, it is in the fissures of common culture that this work opens up. It is here that we glimpse romanticism’s baseline preoccupation: being alive. The shift from white cube to black box is now a commonplace gallery construct which usually fails to produce a clash of registers or pose any political questions about art’s commercial system. *Radical Entertainment*’s achievement was to flamboyantly stage this problematic dynamic of art production and consumption, conceptual space and physical action, movement and stasis, imaginary lives and self-expression.

Ian White

Radical Entertainment was at the ICA from 9-26 July 2003 [<http://www.ica.org.uk>] Cory Arcangel [<http://www.beigerecords.com/cory/index.html>] PaperRad [<http://www.paperrad.org>] Natalie Bookchin’s *Metapet* [<http://www.metapet.net>] *Futurefarmers’ antiwargame* [<http://www.antiwargame.org>] *Ocularis* [<http://www.ocularis.net>] You can read a longer version of this article in *Metamute.com*’s Webexclusive section

New Media 1740-1915

ByCharlie Gere

[IMAGE]

New Media 1740 – 1915 has one of those titles that is as much a polemic as it is a description of the book’s content or a label for easy identification. The jarring anachronism of juxtaposing the contemporary formulation ‘new media’ with ‘1740 – 1915’, a stretch of time in which neither the term nor the phenomena it is usually supposed to represent would have existed, is of course deliberate. It lets the potential reader know what the book is likely to be about; a demonstration that our experience of the disruptions and challenges brought about by the emergence of new means of communication and representation is neither new nor unprecedented and that, even if the term itself was not used, people have been dealing with ‘new media’ since at least the middle of the 18th century. To point out that new media are always emerging and always challenging our preconceptions is a useful antidote to our current state of ‘future shock’. It is also a valuable corrective to the smug ahistoricism of much writing about contemporary developments in media and technology, which appears to regard what is happening now as without precedent and even without a past.

Such an approach, however, is not without methodological dangers. The most obvious is that, in the

zeal to connect current and historical phenomena, the specificities and complexities of the past could be occluded – in particular its irreducible distance from and difference to our own experiences. In fairness, the editors and most of the authors have avoided this particular pitfall. (The possible exception being Ellen Gruber Garvey whose otherwise excellent ‘Scissoring and Scrapbooks: Nineteenth-Century Reading, Remaking and Recirculating’ was perhaps a little too determined to compare current activities on the web with the practices she describes.)

These small points aside, this is an excellent collection. The editors have intelligently resisted many of the lures that await those embarking on such projects, including the temptation to feature well-known contributors, or to stuff in too many essays. Instead they have put together ten carefully chosen papers by young and comparatively unknown academics, none of which is longer than thirty pages, notes included, and each of which is highly readable, intelligent and informative. Unusually I read the book from beginning to end, from Erin C. Blake’s fascinating account of an early device for creating the illusion of three-dimensions from a twodimensional image called the Zograscope, through to Paul Young’s brilliant essay showing the relation between early film and the telegraph. I would be hard pressed to single out any of the essays given the overall quality of the collection, though I did find Diane Zimmerman Umble’s account of the Amish reaction to the telephone particularly worthwhile. Some potential readers may be put off by the almost total concentration on the United States; a rule to which Blake’s paper dealing with 18th century England was the only exception. But this would be a shame, given the riches offered here.

Charlie Gere

New Media 1740-1915 // Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree eds. // MIT Press // 2003 // 304 pp // £23.50 // ISBN 0-262-07245-9

Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed

ByMelanie Gilligan

[IMAGE]

In *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*, William E. Connolly attempts to integrate recent research into neuroscience with an ethics of cultural plurality. Restaging the classic liberal opposition – plurality-intolerance – at the level of mental processes, he sees the contemporary experience of speed and shock as productive of a mental predisposition toward difference. In fact, for Connolly a certain plurality is endemic to the brain. For instance, neurological evidence shows that ‘higher functions’ of conscious, deliberative thought always relay through a brain region that was developed much earlier in our evolution and which transmits more ‘basic’ emotional responses.

This admixture of emotion and thought is non-causal and, though far from being arbitrary, is open to a degree of contingency – a possibility previously unacknowledged in scientific cognitive theories. The problem for Connolly is how to instantiate an ethics of pluralism in this context. The (hardly novel) proposition that conscious, logical thought is in fact laced with streams of primordial responses, unthought and affect-imbued, seems to him to contain a key. A Deleuzian of sorts, he presents the interaction between conscious thought and affective, non-verbal responses as far from simple, containing variegated interacting registers that are intensive combinations of cultural and biological effects. Later he parallels his image of cultural plurality with this layering of the self. Despite his insistence that the complex interrelation between different modes of thought and culture constitute them as such, he simplifies the political dimensions of his argument to such a degree that it becomes impressively sterile.

What remains? For Connolly, a Deleuzo-Pavlovian practice of neurological ‘self-fashioning’ is critical for the production of the ‘deep plurality’ adequate to the present accelerated culture of information. Connolly shows how one can use ‘techniques’ to mould layers of unconscious affect to produce ethical behaviour. Film, for instance, brings structural aspects of the mind to our attention thus provoking changes in patterns of thought. Deploying a Deleuzestyle notion of compound-identities and becomings, *Neuropolitics* adds the injunction that one can physically develop a greater tolerance of difference and flux through ‘thought exercises.’ This turns out to be the full extent of the politics promised in the book’s title. Connolly appeals to us to become more ‘generous’ and to work against mental habits of intolerance by cultivating creativity, fluidity and adaptability, but never exhibits any awareness that these personality characteristics have long been valorised as enabling the smoother extraction of profit. Not only do Connolly’s thought exercises resemble other techniques which work on unconscious processes such as ‘biofeedback’ therapy – the American medical industry’s answer to unassimilable behaviour like anger and anxiety – but he seems unaware that his well-intentioned theorising actually submits aspects of the self hitherto deemed resistant to new types of quantification and organisation. Connolly does not claim that the contemporary sciences of complexity (of which cognitive science is one) though inter-relational, contingent and nonteleological, are entirely adequate as a diagnostic tool for cultural and subject formations. However, he does argue that they afford a more flexible comprehension of culture than conventional science with its world of discrete and ascertainable systems. His next step is to dispense entirely with the notion of any separation between the cultural and scientific fields, accusing both science and cultural theory of a retrogressive tendency to separate nature and culture, rendering both their positions reductive.

Although this critique is worthwhile, Connolly’s own approach, which consists of synthesising what he finds valuable within both fields, lacks an analysis of the economic and historical factors that shape their interplay, leaving the already political construction of empirical, biological knowledge unchallenged. When Connolly does mention in passing the arch-philosopher of ‘tactics of the self’ and biopower, Michel Foucault, he fails to consider the biopolitical Pandora’s box his own notion of self-fashioningthrough- Cognitive Science opens up.

Melanie Gilligan

Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed // William E. Connolly // Minnesota Press – Theory Out of Bounds series // 2002 // pb £14 // ISBN 081664022X

Peering the Torrent

By Benjamin Mako Hill

As celebrants continue to laud the web as a medium where everyone can be a publisher, the fine print reads something like: ‘unless you’ve got money, you’d better hope you don’t get popular.’ Hosting companies charge by the megabyte and, in the case of many non-commercial video and audio distributors, publishing all too often boils down to a choice between handouts, debt, or silence. Peer-to-peer (P2P) technology has succeeded in sidestepping the traditional server-client paradigm altogether. However, the emphasis in most major P2P systems to date has been on aggregating smaller media collections into massive distributed libraries. These systems are simply not optimised for distributing a single chunk of data to thousands quickly and cheaply. BitTorrent is a P2P protocol that, while more than two years old, has steadily been gaining visibility in the P2P world as a result of filling this niche. From an interface perspective, downloading a file with BitTorrent is similar to downloading the same file over the web or through file transfer protocol (FTP). However, rather than pulling the file directly from a server, BitTorrent connects users to a ‘tracker’ that connects to peers with the file in question. As each client downloads it, BitTorrent simultaneously uploads downloaded

data to others. As more people download a file, the upload capacity for that file increases. In simple economic terms: as demand increases, supply rises to meet it. The BitTorrent system handles the dynamic 'source' of the data elegantly by organising distribution so that network bandwidth is always used as efficiently as possible. Perhaps BitTorrent's first major breakthrough was in March 2003, and related to a widely read Slashdot.org article which announced the availability of RedHat 9.0 CD Images. RedHat, which had suffered under the costs of giving away bandwidth, had begun charging \$60 per year for access to FTP servers hosting the two gigabyte images. BitTorrent, which featured prominently in the Slashdot article, harnessed the help of over 3000 RedHat users to create an alternative and free, distribution system that served nearly 2,500 CDs worth of data in the first four hours alone. Beyond allowing the community to move more data than any single member could afford, it allowed for the distribution of more data than the network infrastructure could have supported. This success is repeated thousands of times a day in less high-profile cases. Movies, videos, music, software and more are 'torrented' and transferred by ad hoc file-sharing communities that form around particular pieces of data at particular moments. Unsurprisingly, companies, music fans, and independent media activists have noticed the usefulness of BitTorrent and put it to work. As a result, it seems poised for continued success in helping media distributors realise the much-vaunted promise of P2P.

Benjamin Mako Hill

Download the BitTorrent client(s) at:
[<http://bitconjurer.org/BitTorrent/download.html>]

re:Play

By Martin Conrads

[IMAGE]

Slowly, the art system is beginning to acknowledge the existence of computer games made by artists. Shows such as Games: Computer Games by Artists, held in Dortmund this Autumn and curated by Tilman Baumgärtel, Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler, are even winning accolades. Games was described as the exceptional show of 2003 by the German section of the International Association of Art Critics. But the show <re:Play>, curated by r a d i o q u a l i a (Honor Hager and Adam Hyde) and the Institute for Contemporary Art in Cape Town, is taking the next step. Where Games presents artists' computer games as a general phenomenon, <re:Play> shifts the focus to the game subject and, by extension, the political dimension of computer games. <re:Play> was designed both for The Lounge in Cape Town's Jo'Burg Bar, and as a set of curated links for the web with an interface that manages to be enjoyably simple yet sensitively contextualising. Even if the approaches of the six invited artists/groups differ strongly in their technical and political orientation, the aim of the exhibition remains clear: all the works 'use game formats to make political observations' – from Andy Deck's Space Invaders Act 1732 (1997), to the escapefromwoomera collective's Escape from Woomera (2003). The latter, which is viewable as a trailer or website of a 3D adventure game still in development, constructs the user as a migrant attempting to escape from the Australian detention centre of Woomera. Space Invaders recalls those early '90s plans to launch commercial billboards into orbit big enough to be read from earth, an adventure mercifully foiled by the 1993 US Space Advertising Prohibition Act. Armed with phrases from the Act which function as ammunition, the playerscum-congressmen shoot at invading corporate logos using the Capitol Building as a gun.

Less confident of the emancipatory bent of US legislation, Josh On/Futurefarmers Antiwargame (2001) casts players as political decision makers (see also Ian White's webexclusive, 'Romancing the Black Box', on Metamute.com). Here you are the President of the USA and, echoing a rather familiar story, after your country has been attacked by terrorists you are advised to set national spending on military and business, schmooze the media, etc. After a short while, the only way to avoid being assassinated is the hawkish indulgence of sending troops abroad. If you are a bad gamer, of course, your troops will desert and you will be killed pretty quickly. Nevertheless, it remains unlikely that you will be attacked by the dove who symbolises social movements – as it turns out, this character's interests are more repressive than emancipatory: 'Get DSL,' he commands, before switching to 'No war.'

Martin Conrads

<re:Play> // The Lounge at Jo'Burg Bar, Cape Town // 8 October – 1 November, 2003 // [http://www.radioqualia.net/replay]

Shooting Stars / A Lester Bangs Reader

By Stewart Home

Harry Shapiro's *Shooting Stars: Drugs, Hollywood and the Movies* is not just another book about sleaze cinema. In an already overcrowded field, Shapiro is almost unique in transforming his lack of empathy towards this subject into an intellectual disadvantage. Cheech and Chong's six pot movies are dismissed in a paragraph, while horror genre LSD flicks *The Tingler* and *Blue Sunshine* barely merit a sentence. Shapiro concentrates on what can be characterised as 'thecinema of quality' to the detriment of any proper understanding of either drugs or celluloid culture. I don't particularly like Cheech and Chong either, but they nevertheless merit proper consideration as a popular manifestation of the drug culture. Shapiro's tastes are distinctly middle-brow and, since his book lacks illustrations, it doesn't even compete with a coffee table work like *Grindhouse* by Eddie Muller and Daniel Faris in terms of its treatment of poverty row anti-drugs movies. Likewise, the sympathetic coverage LSD movies receive in Steven Puchalski's *Slimetime* completely eclipses the dull chapters Shapiro devotes to this subject. And again, having read *Dope Girls* I was unimpressed by Shapiro's rehash of Marek Kohn's analysis of the racist nature of anti-drugs hysteria. Worse yet, Shapiro writes: 'In London in the late 1960s there was a detective in the Metropolitan Police who made it his business to bust pop stars...' This description fits former drug squad detective Norman Pilcher. In other books, for example Geoffrey Giuliano's *Lennon In America*, Pilcher is 'named and shamed' as 'shady'. This is hardly a contentious matter 30 years after Judge Melford Stevenson handed Pilcher a four year jail sentence and simultaneously told him: 'You poisoned the wells of criminal justice.' The protective anonymity Shapiro offers this bent cop and even extends to a tabloid newspaper is pusillanimous. Shapiro's book is also littered with comments such as: 'nothing causes more revulsion than the idea of willingly sticking a needle in your arm.' Hysteria of this type is particularly unbecoming in the prose of a self-styled drugs expert. Shapiro is specifically writing about heroin users, but diabetics voluntarily inject insulin into their arms and I can see nothing intrinsically repulsive about either self-medication or recreational drug use involving a hypodermic syringe. *Shooting Stars* is sloppily written, ill thought out and politically reactionary. Its main merit is to unintentionally illustrate the duplicitous nature of liberal discourse. While I often disagree with the aesthetic judgements of rock critic Lester Bangs, his second posthumous collection of journalism nevertheless demonstrates how he worked his way through material and this contrasts sharply with the approach of noodleheads like Harry Shapiro, who passively accept the values of the dominant culture. Bangs remains well known for his willingness to change his opinions. Here we get his initial negative take on the MC5, the one he should have stuck with. There are also two opposing views of *On The Corner*, the best album recorded by Miles Davis.

Bangs merits a gander for his gonzo methodology, despite too many words in this collection being devoted to celebrities like The Rolling Stones.

Stewart Home

Shooting Stars: Drugs, Hollywood and the Movies
// Harry Shapiro // Serpent's Tail // pb £14.99 //
352 pp // ISBN: 1852426519

Mainlines, Blood Feasts and Bad Taste: A Lester
Bangs Reader // edited by John Morthland //
Serpent's Tail // £9.99 // 400 pp // ISBN:
0375713670

Lucy McKenzie's MMIV

By Demetra Kotouza

Lucy McKenzie's recent exhibition MMIV in Tate Britain's Art Now series was publicised as a 'critique of socially engaged art'. Predictably, it had less to do with artists' social engagement than with contemporary manifestations of carefully researched and engineered, socially useful art. The main feature of the exhibition was a short video recording of a performance by McKenzie and her Polish collaborator Paulina Ołowska called *Oblique Composition*. The two actresses, impersonating an architect and a painter respectively, pose coldly and ponderously in their shared workspace and engage in mundane telephone conversations until, eventually, the painter sketches a portrait of the architect. They are surrounded by objects that suggest an art-historical rebus, not particularly easy to decipher: an oblique De Stijl wall painting in the background, a Gioconda-style portrait lacking an eye, a director's chair emblazoned with the spray-gunned slogan 'but for "us" it wasn't Utopia', and a dadaist collage proclaiming 'sztugasamego zycia' ('art through life' in Polish, but untranslated). Many viewers felt compelled to watch the 5-minute video two or three times, presumably hoping to solve the riddle. The key perhaps lies somewhere in the De Stijl background. The movement's ideal was to erase distinctions between art and life so that everything produced by humans, from teacups to town plans, would participate in a universal visual and intellectual harmony. It could be that such ideas of an engineered utopia with the aesthetic at its centre are what preoccupies the caricatured female cultural workers in the video. Perhaps their air of distanced calculation is necessary for the creation of transformative, utilitarian art – but it could work equally well in the realm of social administration, networking and career advancement. For McKenzie, these artists are 'inorganic' (sic) cogwheels in the production of art-on-demand; so much so that a Lurcher dog featured in the video appears to be the only remaining 'organic' element. Their products are bleak, as illustrated by the ambitious but desolate highrise blocks of '80s Glasgow in McKenzie's monochrome drawings. Another exhibit, a generic empty year planner for MMIV (i.e. 2004) with its weekends highlighted, seems to suggest these artists have orderly but unexciting lives. The alternative McKenzie endorsed in her gallery talk was being true to one's own feelings and immediate social environment. In contrast to the cliché of the expressionist's creative catharsis however, she also endorsed the preservation of energies, and the production of failures and understatements. This is momentarily exemplified in the video, when the artist roughly sketches her colleague's portrait without caring about accuracy or purpose, but more than anything it is manifest in the entire exhibition, which nonchalantly evades any easy decoding and is at

ease with its own mundanity. The self-referential nature of this work makes it difficult to overlook McKenzie's own contradictory, but all too familiar, status: a young artist seeking institutional recognition while trying to remain critical of the power structures within which she works. Here, her site-specific tactic has been to underwhelm the visitor. Honesty alone, however, does not redeem art from its usefulness to administrators. Being genuine and refusing to fulfil artworld expectations within the art museum does not prevent art (and life) from inadvertently ornamenting the public image of funders and patrons. Such critique, moreover, and McKenzie's own work, problematically perpetuates rather than challenges Thomas Mann's quoted dichotomy between artists who feel 'too much' and thus fail to communicate effectively, and those who suspend all feeling in favour of a completely analytical approach to their work. This viewpoint creates a false dilemma whereby the desire and potential for creative activity and communication beyond the artworld disappears behind the labels of either utilitarianism or naïve romanticism.

Demetra Kotouza

Art Now: Lucy McKenzie // Tate Britain // 20
September – 9 November 2003

Makrolab Â North 056? 48' 182Â

By Peter Edwards

Started by Marko Peljhan in 1994, and first realised at Documenta X in Kassel in 1997, Makrolab is an autonomous communications, research and living space, capable of sustaining four people in isolation conditions for up to 120 days. This publication catalogues a two-month period between May and June 2002 when Makrolab was planted in the remote moorland of the Atholl Estate in the Scottish Highlands. The format mixes (some) interesting essays with diary entries contributed by the artists who made up the seven crews staying in the structure over this period. This works well when read in parallel, especially during the opening essay (a short exposition of Peljhan's ideas) where the diary provides some light relief. Fraser MacDonald's essay is particularly enjoyable – he remarks that 'life in the Makrolab was sometimes more about bathos than sublimity' – something borne out in the bulk of the diary entries. His main thesis concerns the 'performance of historiography', adopting Walter Benjamin's practice of 'telescoping the past through the present' to produce a comparative study of Makrolab and the 18th-century hermitage that stands 30 miles away from its temporary home. The hermitage was once a viewing house for an adjacent waterfall, the aesthetic appreciation of which was intensified for the visitor by the mirror-lined hall leading up to it and which was revealed only after a suitable period of incarceration in a dark antechamber. In Makrolab, the sublime sight of the waterfall is replaced by the communications networks in which it embeds itself, and the suspense provided by the unreliability of the hardware used to access them. Two of the artists featured in the catalogue, Helen Evans and Calum Stirling, used their environment (satellite images of weather systems and 3D modelling of the area surrounding Makrolab, respectively) to create Cagean soundscapes. In Evans' case, the satellite images drove software which collaged audio samples of radio transmissions in a re-conceptualisation of Cage's *Williams Mix* 50 years on. Stirling used computer generated models to create MIDI sound maps from contours in the surrounding landscape, a grounded *Atlas Eclipticalis* with the ethereality removed. It would have been good to hear these pieces to see if they work. The star of the show was the Makrolab itself, a grounded space capsule which seems to have amplified the triteness of some of the participants' thinking as much as the datasphere it was designed to tap into. As chief says in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* – 'everything else is postcards.'

Peter Edwards

Makrolab // The Arts Catalyst and Zavod Projekt
Atol in association with Tramway // 2003 //
ISBN: 0953454622

What the Newsreel Does Not Show

By David Panos

In the increasingly domesticated figure of the 'media activist' the National Film Theatre (NFT) found a contemporary alibi for its season of political and campaigning film from the past 70 years. Alternative newsreels from the 1930s, stodgy propaganda from the institutional left and the output of radical film and video collectives from the '70s and '80s were presented as historical precedents for today's tactical media in this six-night event. The programme notes shed light on the curatorial mission-cum-sales pitch: to 'reveal' the 'hidden links between the imagery of up-to-the-minute issues and the film heritage preserved in the National Film and Television Archives.' 'Twas ever thus – protests then, protests now. The political and technological paradigm shifts of the last decade are elided in favour of the glib consolation of continuity, contestation is transmuted into heritage. Organised in strict chronological order, the screenings offered a potted history of the British left's political gambits and struggles, by turns farcical and tragic. Commissioned work from the CPGB, the TUC and Quaker peace groups were as drab as the corseting politics that motivated them, producing cinema that only the dispassionate eye of the archivist could appreciate. The accounts of the endgame of the organised left – the union struggles over the de-industrialisation of the '60s and '70s – were well made romantic epics about the heroism of the industrial working class. The selection of work from film collectives and videoworkshops of the '70s and '80s was more sympathetic. Using interviews with 'ordinary' people to construct detailed political arguments, films such as *An Egg is not a Chicken* (Newsreel Collective UK 1975), about abortion rights, and *The People's Account* (Ceddo Film & Video UK 1986), an exploration of the aftermath of the Broadwater Farm riots, share a formal leanness and DIY sensibility reminiscent of punk. Freed of the platitudes of the organised left, they ground their analysis of the systemic oppression of British capitalism in the quotidian struggles of the working class. *The Miners' Campaign Video Tapes* are another triumph from this period, blending caustic analysis with passionate, partisan amateurism whilst exploiting the emergent potential of video distribution to sidestep mainstream media. Ironically, given its thematic centrality, the least convincing work was the selection of DV films representing the current period. In their startling homogeneity, these films appear to be symptomatic of an increasingly formalised culture within the 'anti-globalisation' and direct action movement. Their MTV-style fast cutting, queasy tribal house soundtracks and obligatory close-ups of action at the barricades are reminiscent of extreme sports videos and disclose an increasingly professionalised cadre bound up in protest-as-lifestyle. The contemporary face of activism presented by the NFT comes off as increasingly self-regarding and untroubled by analysis. Documentation of the independent media infrastructures and the protest itself become primary, while argument is reduced to a series of vague assertions about the evils of corporate dominance. At a time when political discourse has been reduced to a crude morality play this is a fatal course. The language of film has given way to the formal possibilities of digital communications. The camera becomes a verification device used to record protest and any possible police violence. Montage is superseded by the live stream, merely creating an 'alternative' to the CNN culture of spectacle and immediacy rather than a rejection of its assumptions.

David Panos

What The Newsreel Does Not Show: Film and
Video Activism 1930 – 2003 // NFT, London //
September 2003

Inventing a Future for Art

By MICHAEL WORTHINGTON

In the last two years interactive work has been coming out of art schools and colleges but only in the last six months has it began to be seen as a long term medium and not just a trendy catchphrase a la 'cyberspace', 'hypermedia' et al. It has begun to make an impact on the design business and also the public consciousness. Multimedia, the Net and Futuretech are fast becoming mainstream news. A side effect of this media onslaught in favour of the future is the glut of small press rearguard action magazines that have recently sprouted. Covering a multitude of subjects their common ground is that they seem to be fuelled by a fear of the future. This is traditionally true of the designer but not always of the artist - surely the ability to openly employ irony and comic elements make the new media more open to exploitation by fine artists? Besides shouldn't we all be embracing the new infant technology and helping it to grow? And irony is a necessary postmodern lesson to be learnt.

Already people have set themselves up as multimedia experts often on the evidence of little output or understanding of the medium, let alone any theoretical questioning of exactly how and what they are doing (there are notable exceptions such as Brenda Laurel). There is indeed very little work that satisfies the theoretical or creative criteria that exists in fine art/design critique. As design guru Mr Keedy says 'To be an authority you just need to be first'. At present first is not necessarily enough.

It is inevitable that interactive media will become a mainstream medium for communication and entertainment, and will develop its own visual conventions and constraints - its own language will be ready for use as parody and message carrier by the art world. However it seems at the moment this language is being decided upon by designers and programmers, and its vast potential rarely considered by artists. Multimedia offers incredible scope for conceptual pieces. a chance to fuse a myriad of mediums experimented with in art since the 20s - sound, moving image, performance - so is this reluctance to take up the virtual gauntlet another example of technophobia?

What must be understood is that multimedia doesn't mean the death of art or the book or any other 'craft' (craft itself is merely a description of an outdated form of artmaking). Radio didn't kill books, TV didn't kill radio: what it did do was to alter their function. Where would the art world be (still in realism?) if the camera hadn't been invented and forced the use of the concept and communication techniques in art?

The technology that is currently cutting edge will rapidly become outdated and just another dull corporate implement, leading to a number of ulterior possibilities, particularly a stimulating underground. Right now you can buy a writable CD player and create your own CDs for very little money and distribute them yourself. The next step is that soon you will be able to send complex digital works across the net, for access by thousands of people around the globe - the virtual gallery will become reality. The virtual gallery will exist in time but not in actual space. Everyone will be able to exhibit in a gallery that is infinite. Also the introduction of artwork onto the net makes the artist completely anonymous - what gender, race, age is the artist? You can enter into any role you wish, the individual is empowered to pose as anyone they wish to be. Will this facet of the future render irrelevant the current themes in art such as the body, and gender/ sexuality issues by hiding the identity

of the artist?

The downside of the virtual gallery may well be that the experiential side of art is removed, at least until the net's virtuality becomes so real as to be indistinguishable from reality and eventually becomes hyperreal - considered more real than reality.

It seems that with science fact as well as science fiction there are optimistic and pessimistic viewpoints. On the optimistic side, the new media means personal agendas and opinions become more readily available for exposure to a larger audience, the pessimistic side is a Big Brother style network of censorship and control. Whatever the outcome of the new media, artists and designers should be looking to the future seeing what can be done, not what is being done now, as Alan Kay so precisely states 'The only way to predict the future is to invent it.'

As this future is being invented it is clear that many things will be different, the rules of modernism, postmodernism, classicism etc and their advocates will not be changed overnight. It is, however, clear that communication and the means of communication to the masses, will change radically especially with the advent of interactive and online TV. Art will undoubtedly become involved in this, art should encompass all fields of popular life after all. But how will art tackle the new ground?

In recent years much conceptual work and communication art has employed the visual language of design and advertising. Will the way the art world tackles multimedia rely on how designers tackle multimedia? As a designer having crossed over into multimedia one thing of interest to me is how typography will change -at present the main means of communication, in tandem with the image. It seems to me that, in multimedia, typography as a communicator becomes obsolete-noone wants to read from a screen-instead type will become more textural than textual, in short anything longer than a flash message will be communicated with sound, leaving the realm of typography to be used as either image or not used at all. The most important development of this may be the responsibility replaced on the image. Artists working with multimedia should be precise and accurate in their choice of image because the typographic language used to communicate in certain art (eg Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger) is destined to become more ambiguous. Type will be used as background image for ambience and atmosphere -its secondary signifiers already established from a print tradition. Similar issues will also be raised by the use of video and sound, likewise the way they are read will already be established from current styles and genres.

Of course type will still have a role for information storage and retrieval but in terms of art, not design, its creative role will change. In the same way that photography reinvented painting by challenging its role as the prime carrier of realism, so shifting it and forcing it to become another kind of art altogether, so multimedia will also force new issues: a change in environment; the importance of role playing and gaming; a change in the medium; a new audience (at home, leisure based); a new gallery (the modern gallery will not exist in real life, nor will it be a virtual gallery resembling a physical one instead it will be truly interactive and exist with new works of art created for that medium, piped into people's homes); all these elements will have to be considered if art is to survive technology. The gallery experience itself will be challenged and reassessed. It may currently exist as an imitation/simulation but it will soon shift to something new, specific to the medium.

What remains to be seen is whether artists will follow the visual language being set up by designers or whether they will create their own, and whether they will participate in the creation of new types of work for the new medium or merely use the existing visual language for their own means.

