mute

CULTURE AND POLITICS AFTER THE NET

THE PRECARIOUS ISSUE

> **PEAK OIL, PEAK WAR.
  PEAK VALUE**

> **AFRICAN ART REMIXED**

> **RETRENCHMENT: END OF THE
  'SURGE TO MERGE' IN
  BUSINESS_ACTIVISM_ART**

> **LOCATIVE MEDIA, CREATIVE
  REGEN AND THE DEATH OF DÉRIVE**

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PROUD TO BE FLESH

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THE ONE AND THE OTHER

Reaching its 10th birthday this November, *Mute* has hit a threshold. Our 'organ' is undergoing some changes, shifting its weight towards web based publishing and letting the print recede for a while. The idea is to search for new ways of combining these different media ecologies, combining the slowly cooked articles that normally appear in the magazine with the possibilities for flash-fried, just-in-time authorship, feedback, relay and linking that the web offers.

As Luce Irigaray has put it in respect to gender, neither egalitarian nor separatist strategies can resolve the problem of difference. We need to learn to 'approach the other as other' in 'love and civility'. Without wishing to trivialise her (albeit problematic) remarks, bringing together print and web publishing in new ways would ideally aspire to this form of resolution – not a subsumption of the one in the other, but a recognition of the one as a 'horizontal transcendence' of the other. If the durability and definitiveness of the printed word can be compared to the masculine form and the transience and mutability of web publishing to the female, then what we are interested in is how the two can learn from each other without becoming pure hybrid, engineered hermaphrodite.

'Horizontal transcendence' is a way of articulating the unbridgeable gap that exists between distinct identities – a preservation of the integrity of difference that nonetheless keeps open the terrain of negotiation in forming new subjects. This conundrum of

'negotiating the other as other' seems to recur throughout this issue of *Mute* in various ways. In our section on precariousness (the effect of a post-fordist economy on labour), Angela Mitropoulos (p.88) asks how the 'precariat's' struggle for rights can be reconciled with the need to elude capture by the same juridical process which rewards some with guarantees over pay and conditions and others with forcible deportation. Given the choice, she concludes, 'a different future, by definition, can only be constructed precariously, without firm grounds for doing so, without the measure of a general rule'. Rather than the hybrid dream of 'flexicurity' then, we need to harness the risky creativity of precariousness whilst creating *new* grounds for dependency and collective security.

Another parallel question can be seen emerging in our section examining the relationship between culture-led urban regeneration and public or site specific art (p.52); under what terms can artists operate when their work and general presence is converted into the compost of urban regeneration which simultaneously acts to regulate, economise and purge the communities and environments they take root in? How can art, produced and consumed as one of the 'creative industries' and overdetermined by its role as 'regeneration incubator', maintain some critical independence from economic imperatives? Clearly this is a relation that can't be negotiated only with 'civility and love'. In his article 'Basic Instinct'

(p.67) Anthony Davies examines the queasy parallels that prevail between economics, art and activism – in this case their reactionary retrenchment post 9/11. As with gender, what at an epiphenomenal level appears utterly distinct on closer inspection reveals itself to be deeply merged.

Simon Njami's survey of African contemporary art's negotiation by the Western art world from the '80s to the present day examines the question of difference once again (p.78). For him, the answer lies in the need to disconnect art works from their national and cultural contexts, to 'deterritorialise' them, to throw them up into the non-place of individual creativity. This seems to demand refusing the category African art per se. The pros and cons of maintaining categorical distinctions, differences, is also essential to discussions surrounding the Wages for Housework campaign which has born fruit in Venezuela with the passage of Article 88. As Laura Sullivan points out (p. 103), the problem with such wages is that they formalise and help maintain the historically contingent fact that housework and social reproduction is principally done by women, short-circuiting the more radical Marxist feminist goal of doing away with such labour divisions altogether. In thinking through Irigaray's proposition, the lived reality of preserving, progressing or ditching these identity distinctions should never kow tow to idealism.

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THE WAR ON IMMIGRANTS

The plight of Steve Kurtz of the Critical Art Ensemble arrested under 'war on terror' legislation has become a cause celebre on the new media art scene. But his case is not a unique masterpiece of injustice. As **Alisa Solomon** reports, the primary target of State repression has been not artists but immigrants

It's a fair guess that the residents of Midwood, Brooklyn have never heard of the Critical Art Ensemble. The Pakistani immigrants who dwell in this working-class neighbourhood and eke out a living in low-wage jobs around New York City, don't mingle much in the PoMo art world. Yet they have intimate knowledge of the fear, frustration, bewilderment, and rage that must have swept through CAE member Steve Kurtz last May when he found himself thrown down the rabbit hole of America's 'war on terror'. After all, America has bored that hole with restrictive regulations and draconian laws that have criminalised immigrants. The families of Midwood – and of immigrant communities all over the United States – have been in free-fall for the last three years.

As readers of *Mute* probably know, one night this May, Kurtz called for emergency help upon finding that his wife had collapsed. But when authorities arrived, they quickly shifted their focus from Kurtz's wife (who died of a heart attack) to equipment and books related to biotechnology that he had in his house – all material relevant to a CAE project raising questions about genetically modified organisms. They called the FBI, who confiscated not only Kurtz's wife's body, but also his computer, art materials, and even homework papers written by his university students. Soon thereafter, agents arrived at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams and seized pieces of the CAE exhibit *Free Range Grain* mounted as part of Mass MoCA's show, The Interventionists.

Less well-known is how 'security' forces rehearsed for the Kurtz debacle in neighbourhoods like Midwood, which lost more than 10,000 of its estimated 120,000 Pakistani residents in the last three years: more than 1,000 have been deported (in aeroplanes chartered expressly for the purpose) and the rest have fled out of fear, sometimes leaving businesses and family members behind. Historically, periods in which American citizens' freedoms are restricted usually begin with the curtailing of the rights of immigrants. From the invoking of the 1798 Enemy Alien Act during the 1941 internment of Japanese-American citizens to McCarthy's use of the tools of the 1919 Palmer raids in the witch-hunts of the 1950s, the Feds have repeatedly sharpened their teeth on immigrants before closing their jaws on such dissidents and undesirables

as anarchists, leftists, filmmakers and teachers, and now, interventionist artists.

The post-9/11 crackdown began with random sweeps in communities with significant populations of immigrant Muslim men. FBI and INS agents pounded on doors in the middle of the night and hauled hundreds of people away. In areas like Midwood, residents became so afraid to venture out of doors that they asked US-citizen neighbours to pick up groceries for them. Popular restaurants sat empty and local businesses withered from lack of customers.

Then came 'special registration', the law introduced in late 2002 requiring that men from 25 Arab and Muslim countries present themselves in immigration offices for interviews, photographs, and fingerprinting. The programme – suspended after a year – resulted in the deportation of some 14,000 undocumented immigrants without uncovering a single terrorist. 'Whenever the terror warnings come

Periods in which American citizens' freedoms are restricted usually begin with the curtailing of immigrants' rights

out, our community gets just as scared of what the American government will do to us,' Jagajit Singh, the director of programmes at the Council of Pakistani Organisations in Midwood, told me.

But it's not just in Muslim enclaves where this sentiment hangs in the air like an enervating humidity. Immigrants from all over the world, especially from Latin America and the Caribbean, are finding their communities just as devastated by detentions and deportations and a general sense that they are no longer welcome. In diverse neighbourhoods around New York, a survey by the grassroots group Families for Freedom found that more than half of the non-citizens polled – a majority of them legal permanent

residents – said they were afraid to seek help from government agencies (and thus most likely would think twice before calling paramedics upon finding a collapsed spouse).

The legal infrastructure supporting aggressive detentions and deportations was established in 1996 with restrictive laws pushed through by Congress (and signed by Bill Clinton). These laws expanded the scope of crimes considered deportable offenses, made detention mandatory for almost all people facing deportation, and increased the number of Border Patrol officers apprehending illegal entrants, especially in the Southwest. One result was a tripling over only a few short years of the number of immigrant detainees – the fastest-growing segment of America's exploding prison population. On September 10, 2001, there were some 20,000 people in detention proceedings being held in administrative detention by immigration authorities.

The security fervour that has swept over the country since 9/11 has only accelerated the upward arc in the numbers, even as the number of citizens convicted of crimes began to decline, reversing a decade-long trend that had produced a prison-building boom across America. In the wake of 9/11, CEOs of private prison companies brashly told their investors that the terrorist attacks – and the increased incarceration of immigrants likely to result – would be their financial salvation. Like agriculture, restaurants, hotels and other realms of American business, the prison-industrial complex now looks to undocumented immigrants as the most promising means of keeping itself afloat.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration has built elaborately upon the draconian network established in 1996. Worse – as in other policy realms – it has bypassed Congress and used various executive orders and backdoor means to press its extreme agenda. The resulting policies have decimated neighbourhoods, split families apart, cavalierly returned asylum-seekers and torture survivors to the places they fled, and eroded due process for non-citizens. And set the stage for similar wearing down of citizens' protections.

The climate worsened after the long-beleaguered Immigration and Naturalisation Service was dissolved in 2003 and its functions divided between a bureau dealing with such matters as visa renewals and naturalisation (US Citizen and Immigration Services, or USCIS), and another, residing in the Department of Homeland Security (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE), whose job it is to crack down. As advocates predicted, USCIS has been starved for funds, and routine applications – as in INS days – can take months, even years. Scores of the men who showed up for 'special registration' were put into deportation proceedings only because applications for, say, status through a family sponsor had been stuck in the backlog. What's more, immigrants with pending applications who show up for USCIS appointments, but are found to have some lingering

Top row from left ▷ The mosque in the Midwood area in Brooklyn, New York ▷ Midwood, Brooklyn ▷ Demonstration against 'Special Registration' in New York

Below ▷ Critical Art Ensemble, *Free Range Grain*, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, before and after FBI's visit
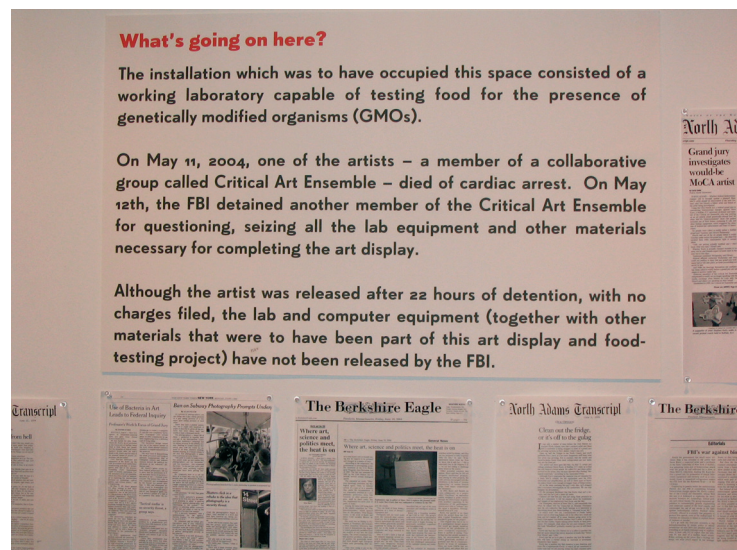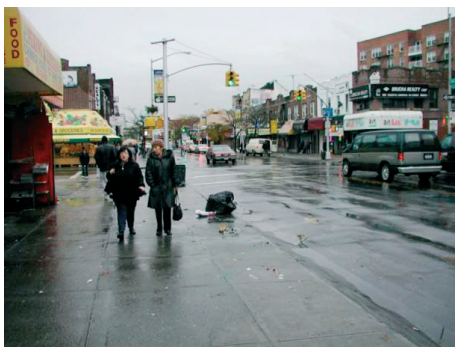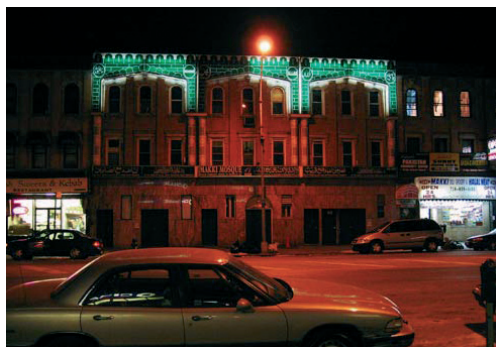
Isn't a forged social security card that enables work a kind of 'tactical media'?

violation, are handed over by the service division to the cold claws of ICE.

The hostile 'culture of no' bred at ICE has filtered down into the general atmosphere as one agency after another has been pressed into serving the war on immigrants, whether it wants to or not. The Department of Health and Human Services declared that in order to receive Medicaid funding, hospitals would have to collect information on patients' immigration status – even though medical personnel say such a policy has grave public health implications. Likewise, although police in half a dozen major cities have refused to become immigration agents – not least because they need the trust of the communities

they serve – a national crime database includes the names of those who have committed visa violations. If a cop pulls people over for, say, not wearing seat belts, he or she is expected to deliver them to ICE if the database shows them to be out of status.

The history of US immigration policy has always been schizophrenic, aiming both to welcome strangers and to shun them, and mirroring the quintessential question of the liberal state: is government's role to provide services to people or to police them? But since 9/11, the tension in this question has gone slack: immigration policy is now cast purely as a security matter. The country has undergone a significant paradigm shift and its agencies operate under a pervasive miasma of mistrust.

This all encompassing attitude has directly fed the recalcitrance and belligerence that have characterised the government's stance in the Steve Kurtz case. Indeed, the false assumptions that underlay the Kurtz arrest and that led authorities to bring charges against him – even after the chemicals in his possession were shown to be neither harmful nor illegal – come directly from the techniques and mindset fueling the round-ups, harassment, and deportations that have swept through immigrant communities since September 11th. More than that,

one might say that the Department of Homeland Security – like audiences exposed only to a particular, narrow style of art – has been so steeped in a hostile way of regarding people that they have become incapable of recognising the ironic strategies of the CAE. Their security frame prevents them from taking on what phenomenologists of aesthetics call the 'proper gaze' an artwork demands.

By the same token, those of us attuned to the critical attitude artists like CAE seek to provoke might learn to look more attentively at the immigrants labouring in every realm of American life, delivering everything from our pizzas to our babies. As those without documents make their own subversive interventions into public space – isn't a forged social security card that enables work a kind of 'tactical media'? – they reveal the contradictions of an American system that depends both on their labour and on their criminalisation.

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MARKETING ELECTORALISM IN THE USA

Scott Evans reports on the sometimes surreal, relentlessly commercialised drive to 'get out the vote' in last year's US election

If you participated in the 2004 US election, you would have been eligible for a variety of perks. Even if you missed Ben & Jerry's 'Free Cone Day' you could still have picked up complimentary ring tones for your cell phone. Even better, if you could prove that you were registered to vote there was a free beer for you in Rochester, NY, tickets to the Bonnaroo Music Festival, or a night's stay at the Clinton Hotel in Miami! Registration was easy, just a dash to the 7-Eleven, and you could get a discount on Big Gulp® soda while you were at it. You could even sign up at the strip club.

This year 'get-out-the-vote' campaigns reached a fever pitch as capital shifted away from issue-oriented advertising and towards rallying the parties' bases. 'You need to do both,' said Grover Norquist, a leader of the conservative movement, 'But I think that dollar for dollar, get out the vote is going to be more important this time.'

And more was at stake than the profit margins of brand Kerry and brand Bush. With electoral participation languishing at around 50 percent of the voting age public and cynicism running high in the wake of the 2000 election, the American political sector has been working overtime to shore up popular stock in electoralism. Get-out-the-vote campaigns weren't simply hawking a politician, they were selling a forum for civic engagement.

ELECTORAL MARKET SEGMENATATION

No matter what market niche you inhabit, there was a campaign eager to sell you a piece of the American-style democracy pie. This year you could Rock the Vote, Rap the Vote, Blog the Vote, Click the Vote, Pray the Vote, Shop the Vote, Redeem the Vote, Zoom Out the Vote, or even Smack Down the Vote.

The original Rock the Vote, an organisation harnessing 'cutting-edge trends and pop culture to make political participation cool', still had the largest market share among young Americans. Bankrolled by media giant Viacom and a litany of corporate partners, RtV claims to have registered over a million people, but a search of their website fails to reveal how much money they made on their edgy clothing line (co-branded with FCUK™ and DKNY®). DKNY's new t-shirt series, said RtV president Jehmu Greene, 'ensures that a new generation of Americans will fully enjoy the fruits of democracy.'

Decidedly less hip, but noteworthy nonetheless

were the various big-business committees that gambled extraordinary resources on boosting employee electoral turnout. The Association Committee of 100, the Business Industry Political Action Committee (BIPAC), and the US Chamber of Commerce all ran campaigns to provide pro-business 'voter education' and registration in the workplace. BIPAC's 'Prosperity Project' worked with some 500 companies, targeting an estimated 20 million employees.

And of course, there were '527s', political organisations that could accept unlimited 'soft money'

With so much capital being poured into marketing the democratic process, you might think America's political sector was engaged in crisis management

contributions from corporations, unions, and wealthy individuals thanks to newly created loopholes in Section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code. These ostensibly non-partisan groups allowed some of America's richest businessmen to flex their investment muscle where $100,000 contribution limits would have otherwise tied their hands. Peter Lewis, a self-described billionaire 'screwball', wrote $14.78 million worth of cheques. He even gave money to a 527 for punk rockers!

With so much capital being poured into marketing the democratic process, an outside observer might have had the feeling that America's political sector was engaged in crisis management.

MARKET RECESSION

The marketing of a product is affected not only by the strength of its brand and comparison with its competitors, but also by the overall standing of the whole class of products and their sector.
— MORI Social Research Institute, 'Why Politics Needs Marketing'

Since 2000 the United States has had two recessions, the best documented of which was economic. Far less has been written about the political recession that started on 3 November, almost four years ago. Following the dramatic failure of American political structures in the Bush-Gore presidential race, Washington's longstanding goodwill deficit threatened to explode into a crisis of legitimacy.

Americans have long been suspicious that their votes don't really count. Thanks to the Electoral College, an antiquated constitutional mechanism, presidents are appointed by state electors rather than by direct popular vote. As a side effect, individual votes in competitive 'swing states' count for more than others. With only ten to twenty swing states in any given election, over half of Americans live in political dead-zones where elector outcomes are virtually pre-determined.

Of course, a ballot having more or less value assumes that it makes it into the final tally. According to a nationwide study by Caltech, four to six million votes were lost during the 2000 election. That's roughly 1 in 25 ballots! But accidents happen, right?

Despite at least peripheral awareness of these shortcomings, half of the eligible American population continue to drag themselves to the polls every four years and engage in this ancient Greek ritual. The 2000 election, however, significantly challenged this tenuous popular support. Millions of Americans watched in horror as national reports emerged of widespread fraud and voter disenfranchisement. One well documented offence involved the illegal purging of 90,000 disproportionately black voters from Florida's state registries. Following a now infamous Supreme Court decision handing Florida to Bush, 14 members of the Congressional Black Caucus attempted to submit a formal objection. They needed the support of only one senator, but not a single member of the all white Senate was willing to stand with them.

The objection was sabotaged, but anger among voters, particularly African Americans, was not. The Reverend Jesse Jackson called the election 'a corrupted, tainted process.'

The Democratic Party, deriving a significant percentage of its power from African American support, was quick to recognise the potential damage it would suffer from a major blow to faith in the electoral system. And so the spin-doctors began working to revise history. Politicians retold the story of Florida, leaving out the chapters on vote suppression, with a new moral: 'Bush won by only 537 votes, therefore, every vote counts.' Never mind the fact that every vote didn't count. Liberals largely abandoned

use of the word 'disenfranchisement' and the much-discussed electoral reforms failed to materialise.

SUSTAINABLE MARKET DOMINANCE

Maintaining a frenzied state of civic urgency has become the political sector's most powerful weapon in distracting public attention from the faulty nature of its product. Americans are constantly reminded that this is the most important election ever, an assurance that has been replayed every year since 1960 when both Kennedy and Nixon first leveled the dire prognosis.

Whether or not 50 percent of Americans continue to buy it is an open question at the time of writing, but some abstentionists have organised campaigns to undermine this year's crop of spin. A 'voter's guide' put out by the Don't Just Vote, Get Active campaign argued that voting is the 'least efficient and effective means of applying political power.' Operating out of a dozen states and relying on a varied stock of print material and street action, many activists have tried to demonstrate the desirability of directly democratic social relationships.

While the mass boycott of America's cheap-imitation democracy is unlikely to abate, lasting change won't be won by absenteeism alone. Sooner or later, disenfranchised voters will have to look for the real thing.

Top left ⊳ Free Ben & Jerry ice cream for potential voters
All other photos ⊳ Rock The Vote Bus on the road, June 2004

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FREE SPEECH ZONES AND PREEMPTIVE DETENTIONS

Daniel Berchenko reports on recent developments in legal protest in the US and offers a critical analysis of the 'state of inclusion'

The protests at the American national party conventions this summer were met with the deployment of the largest security forces ever assembled in Boston and New York. Combined with the presumed threat of terror attacks, the protests provided local governments with a pretext to parade their ranks of newly trained and outfitted police and to exercise hitherto unseen techniques of biopolitical control on the largely benign crowds gathered. New York City used the occasion of the Republican National Convention to demonstrate that it has, in the words of Kevin Sheekey, an advisor to Mayor Bloomberg, 'the only police force capable of dealing with the modern anarchist threat.' In doing so, its explicit goal was to attract other large events to the city – most notably the 2012 Olympics. These events not only generate capital for the city's coffers but also provide it with opportunities to push through its ruthless development agendas. Given such stakes, the purpose of the new policing tactics in evidence at the conventions was to maintain the fiction of a benevolent democratic state in the teeth of an increasingly unruly opposition.

Prior to the conventions, protests in the United States were principally contained through the use of protest permits. These permits are issued at the discretion of city officials and confine marches and demonstrations within determinate boundaries. By declaring the right to protest to be in force only within those boundaries, protest permits compel demonstrators to occupy sites where direct action and the destruction of private property are difficult, if not impossible, and where representation is the only form of political activity available. Using the obverse of this logic, police in Boston and New York this summer deployed physical barriers to delimit states of exception where the right to protest is suspended and where anyone perceived threatening disruption could be preemptively detained.

In his epoch-making study *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben defines the state of exception as the condition of that which is taken outside of the normal juridical order. This state is not defined by a simple absence of law. What is excluded from the juridical order is still held in relation to the law in the act of the law's suspension – in limning its own boundaries, the law constitutes situations where it is no longer in force and where anything is possible. Generally the decision that produces the exception is only exercised during declared states of emergency – for example during wartime, when curfews are imposed and violators can be shot on sight. But since September 11th, the United States has increasingly passed into a

de facto state of emergency where the production of states of exception has become part of the normal functioning of the state, for instance in the detention and de-nationalisation of presumed terrorists.

The construction of the Free Speech Zone at the Democratic National Convention in Boston marked an intermediary stage between the older logic of protest

> **Protestors at the DNC were expected to voluntarily confine themselves to the Free Speech Zone, which was bounded by high fencing and coiled razor wire**

containment and the more sinister logic of preemptive detainment through exception in evidence in New York. Protesters at the DNC were expected to voluntarily confine themselves to the Free Speech Zone, which was bounded by high fencing and coiled razor wire. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) likened the area to an internment camp – a comparison that a judge in Boston referred to as 'an understatement'. However to understand the Free Speech Zone solely as an effort to physically contain or intern protesters is to overlook its fundamental biopolitical purpose. By creating a state of inclusion in which citizens' rights of representation were in force, the Free Speech Zone implicitly produced an Indiscriminate Arrest Zone outside of it where those rights were withheld.

As a physically present barrier, it dramatised the convergence of objective forms of police control and the techniques of subjectivisation that bind individuals to those forms. Protesters were literally compelled to find themselves on one side of the fence or the other – constituting themselves a priori as lawful or unlawful protesters (prior, that is, to any factual activity that could be judged by the law) – in a decision that seemed to be their own but that subjected them to the immediate exercise of State power.

At the Republican National Convention in New York, this logic of inclusion and exception was taken further. Police deployed orange mesh netting in the midst of the demonstrations, at the discretion of on-site

commanders, to delimit *mobile* states of exception. Once surrounded by the orange netting, anyone could be arrested and detained before presenting even the threat of disruption. The behaviour of individuals trapped in the orange netting was not treated as some external fact to which the law was applied *a posteriori*. Rather, the exercise of police power in the deployment of the netting produced the situation that it was compelled to judge, resulting in what Agamben has described as a total indistinction between fact and law. Once again, unlawful protesting was not contained by these barriers, *it was constituted by them* – protesting only became unlawful after it was topographically divided from lawful protesting.

As a result, not only were protesters indiscriminately determined to be engaging in unlawful activity – many bystanders and onlookers were also deemed to be exceeding their (suspended) rights and detained. These included, according to the *New York Times*, a building superintendent taking out his garbage, a man leaving a sushi restaurant, a businessman returning from work, and a woman leaving her gym, among others. The legal status of these citizens was thrown into such radical ambiguity that the de rigueur references to Kafka seem prosaic here. All are guilty before, or behind, the orange netting. The indistinction produced by these police tactics was noted but fundamentally misinterpreted by civil rights advocates. Christopher Dunn of the ACLU remarked that, 'in their quest to maintain tight control over protesters, the police too often have lost sight of the difference between lawful and unlawful activity.' This oversight was no accident however, nor was it the result of an over-extension of police power – it is at the foundation of the juridical functioning of the State in response to these protests.

As was widely reported in the popular press, detainees at the convention in New York were corralled onto buses and deported to a makeshift detention facility at Pier 57 on the Hudson River. Many were held there for several days without access to legal council, medical attention, or adequate food and water. In light of the generally abysmal conditions of the facility, Pier 57 came to be known among detainees as 'Little Guantanamo on the Hudson'. As a state of exception it was, in its likeness to an internment camp, nearly identical to the state of *inclusion* produced by the Free Speech Zone. The ultimate coincidence of these spaces where rights were respectively held in abeyance and in force points up the truth of Agamben's dictum that the camp is the 'nomos of the modern'. As a localisation of the law's

This picture and below ▷ Inside New York's Pier 57 Detention Center, 31 August 2004, photos by Jacob Richards and Connie Murillo Below right ▷ Inside the Free Speech Zone at the 2004 Democratic National Convention

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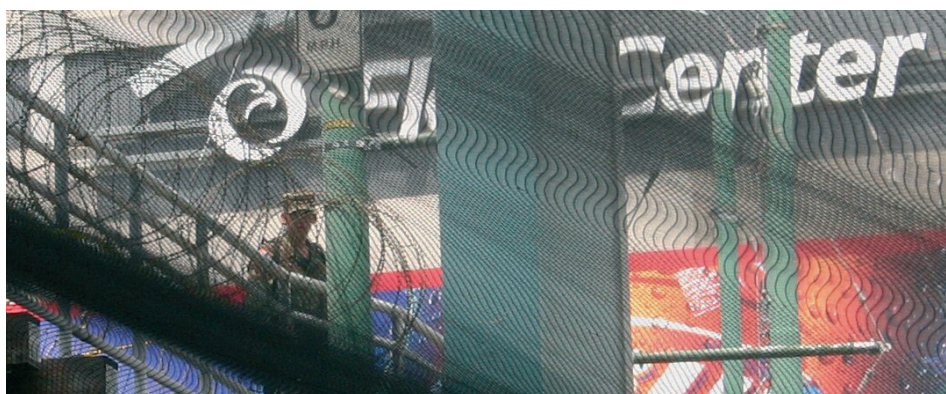
suspension, the camp brings to light the centrality of the state of exception to the functioning of the modern state. What was once produced only in factual states of emergency is now used purposively by governments to constitute situations where individuals are subject to indiscriminate arrest and detainment.

These new tactics should not be taken as sheer audacity on the part of the State. They are an index of the depth of the crises it faces and the lengths it must go to in order to maintain the semblance of normal juridical rule. After the convention, the *New York Times* congratulated local authorities on their

handling of the protests: 'it appears that the New York Police Department may have successfully redefined the post-Seattle era, by showing that protest tactics designed to create chaos and attract the world's attention can be effectively countered with intense planning and a well-disciplined use of force.' As we have seen, the efficacy of intense planning and well-disciplined force here relies on the hidden premise that protesters can be seized by the State's biopolitical mechanisms and compelled to submit to the logic of a protest situation defined a priori by the police. When the State begins to

preemptively constitute its subjects as criminals, with complete disregard to their factual behaviour, the legal status of all citizens becomes radically ambiguous. In this light, the effective policing of the protests was a Pyrrhic victory. One must begin to ask to what extent order is truly maintained when the exception becomes the rule. ⚐

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THE VORTEX VOID OF INHUMANITY

Dark, fast and heroically anti-social, Black Metal is perhaps more renowned for its practioners' acts of violence and murder than its musical form. But is there more to it than burning churches and diabolical pseudonyms? **Cameron Bain** looks into the abyss

Earlier this year the Horse Hospital in London hosted an exhibition of portraits of Norwegian Black Metal musicians by the photographer Peter Beste. One of the most striking photos is of Kvitrafn, then drummer for the band Gorgoroth, alongside an older passer-by. It's a beautiful photo. The contrast between the elderly representative of 'straight society', with her curiously resigned, vaguely disapproving expression, and the grim, freakish figure in Black Metal's characteristic 'corpsepaint' make-up glaring out at the viewer, runs the risk of perhaps seeming slightly obvious or clichéd, but there is a poignancy to the photo that transcends this. This poignancy arises from the setting: the clean, narrow street, with its small, tidy, clean-lined homes; it is this very homeliness that imbues the image with its subtle,

At its most immediate, physical level Black Metal is a sonic blizzard of negation

affecting pathos. Kvitrafn is patently not the denizen of some festering, Babylonian megalopolis. There's the sense of a smalltown kid trying to shock his way out of the clean, airtight Christian quotidian. It's this pathos, arising from the conflict between the

abrasive, alienating aesthetics of Black Metal, and the obscure existential impulses that perhaps shape these aesthetics, that is the subject of this article.

Rather than going over in detail the field-day-for-the-Sundays arsons and murders linked to the Black Metal scene (although these no doubt contribute to its fascination), or addressing the squalid – often plain loopy – 'political views' espoused by a few of its leading proponents (for this, see Michael Moynihan and Didrik Søderlind's book, *Lords of Chaos: the Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*) I want to talk about the music itself and its aesthetic appeal.[1]

Black Metal is essentially hermetic; it is wilfully alienating musically and the musicians present themselves in a highly ambiguous light, somewhere

Black Metal represents an eruption of suppressed fury at society's lack of engagement with death

between comic book supervillainy (the band Immortal) and literally deadly earnest (Varg Vikernes of Burzum, serving time for murder). It also subverts the broader metal genre in several interesting ways. Immediately striking is the sheer primitivism of a number of the genre's touchstone albums, like Darkthrone's *A Blaze in the Northern Sky* and *Transilvanian Hunger*, or Burzum's *Hvis Lyset Tar Oss* ('If The Light Takes Us'). Bass presence is virtually non-existent, drums a fast, staccato, monomaniacal clatter, the guitars extremely distorted and trebly, and often played in a kinda buzzsaw thrash style that really has more in common with '80s hardcore or surf guitar than with traditional metal guitar techniques and timbres. Unlike more technically obsessed metal genres (Thrash and Death, for example), with their complex time changes and riff variation, Black Metal song structures tend towards minimalism and hypnotic repetition. In fact, although there are certainly exceptions, Black Metal tends to eschew altogether the displays of virtuosity which are an abiding formal feature in other forms of metal. Solos are relatively rare. Such solos as there are are often quite atypical. The end of Immortal's 'Frozen by Icewinds', for example, features an amazing reverbed whammy bar feedback howl that seems to tear a cavernous hole in the very fabric of the song, which then stops abruptly. It is both disorienting and beautiful.

Black Metal vocals generally consist of unintelligible, excoriating screams, the voice in a blasted state, reduced to particles, as opposed to the wavelike ebb and swell of 'proper' melodic singing. Actually, the music as a whole could be characterised

by this 'particle state'; one of distortion, breaking up, atomisation, dissolution. At its most immediate, physical level, it's a sonic blizzard of negation. This rejection of the norms of intelligibility, this fierce urge to defy comprehension as manifested in Black Metal could be seen as a way of denying the loathed, stultifying, Christian host society; as a literal, visceral denial of the Logos, and even of humanity itself.

There is a disjunction though, between this surface of wilful, alienating unintelligibility and the simple fact that all the albums have lyric sheets. While occult sounding nommes de guerre are de rigeur in Black Metal: (Demonaz Doom Occulta, Nocturno Culto, Samoth, Fenriz) the demon warriors, it seems, are all too human after all in their wish to be understood. It is a basic, paradoxical human frailty to need to be recognised as a sovereign individual *by others*. In addition to the Forest, Battle, and Death, the recurring themes in the lyrics of these *soi-disant* cosmic criminals are grandiose proclamations of immortality and pompous, megalomaniacal claims to be in possession of some privileged arcane knowledge: 'For I have read the signs / And I have solved the riddle / Of eternal life…', from 'I Am Thy Labyrinth', by Mayhem.**2**

It's all so much adolescent hubris of course, but I think it stems from a real, passionate desire to engage with the brute fact of mortality, self-aggrandising Tolkienesque escapism notwithstanding. Here we come to the (inverted) crux of the matter. I see Black Metal (and, in fact, the crimes associated with the scene) as representing an eruption of suppressed fury at the general societal lack of engagement with this central issue of death. I find something weirdly life-affirming and perversely noble (I reiterate, purely in aesthetic terms; not with regard to arson and murder) in its vicious insistence on forcing a confrontation, however melodramatic, with the enormity of mortality in a society – not just Norway – which often seems predisposed to gloss over death as if it were something that can be 'managed' and contained by platitudes. Pål Mathiesen, a Norwegian writer on theological issues who is interviewed in *Lords of Chaos*, makes a similar point: 'If you look at Satanism as a reflection of the spiritual life and spiritual tradition that we are

standing in, I feel it makes the Satanists more human. It makes them moral people who actually have a cause, and who are trying to say something to us. If you see some of the leaders, they are bright and reflective people, they are people with integrity. I would look upon them as moral people, and we have to take seriously what they are saying.'**3**

The music is the fun, darkly ecstatic manifestation of this moral fury. Naïve attempts to actually be 'evil' are doomed (morbidity by its very nature is unsustainable) and herein lies the pathos. While the music offers a salutary blast of negation, the depressing, macabre sideshow of the actual, brutal crimes seems like a tawdry betrayal of the 'ideals' which may have inspired them – would-be Lucifers reduced to petty vicious hoods. The crimes come to seem like the tragic, pathetic flailings of young men trying to orientate themselves in the face of a void brought into all too stark relief by the intensity of their own hatred; it is, perhaps, the very abyss which Nietzsche warned against staring into for too long.

Cameron Bain <c.bain@sseees.ac.uk>, despite his myriad flaws, is generally a sympathetic character. Discuss…

RETURN OF THE BROWSER JEDI?

If you thought the browser wars of old were all washed up, think again. With Apple, Mozilla and Opera all getting together to develop HTML based web applications, argues **Danny O'Brien**, it looks like Microsoft could be left in the shade

I've always felt there weren't enough *Cosmopolitan*-style personality tests in *Mute*. Take a look at the three boxes on the facing page. Pick the one you find most reassuring. After you've done that, I'll draw some specious conclusions about the current battle between Microsoft and the rest of the world, and why that Browser War people endlessly banged on about in the '90s isn't quite over yet.

Was it number three? It wasn't? Then I have no further use for you and you may leave. (Go on, say it was number three.)

The three boxes are, in turn, snippets of the way you code a standard Windows C application, the way Microsoft would like you to code in the future, and the way the web is coded.

If you picked number three, it was probably because you've seen bits of web code, either in popular culture, scrolling past in an OCR font to indicate generic internet activity, or a web page that you were viewing broke and you saw its code guts spill out in an error message. Alternatively, you're a web designer, or have dabbled a bit with building websites, hitting 'View Source' in your browser and cutting and pasting other people's HTML code together into your own site, uploading and reloading until it looks just fine.

Historically, that's how most people started to code the web – looking at the code for other people's web pages, clanking it together for their own. It has its disadvantages – folk dismissively describe it as 'cargo cult' programming – but it works, and it's how the web was won. Every new webpage learnt from another; anyone, in theory, could use the tools they had in front of them and create a new site.

Clanking it together was also how the first microcomputer code was built. Indeed, before the concept was polished into a high political sheen, that was one of the key attractions of Open Source software: its pedagogical dimension. With Open Source, you could look inside the machine crafted by your predecessors, and learn from their work. Shoulder-surfing giants, as it were.

But it all got a bit more hidden over time, as applications became more complex, and the source grew more closed, and the gulf between computer user and computer programmer widened.

Unless you're a programmer, it's unlikely that you'll have seen anything like Box 1. That's Windows code, the end result of that gulf, and it takes a long time to get the hang of it. There's historical oddities to be learnt, and Microsoft paradigms to grok, and old dead ends to be avoided. It's ugly but it's not impossible,

Illustration and colophon

BOX 1

```
if (_wcsicmp(bstrName,CComBSTR("HTML
Profile"))==0) // Specify an HTML profile.
{
// Set the profile in the source group.
if ( SUCCEEDED( hr ) )
{
hr = pSrcGrp->put_Profile(CComVariant(pPro));
break;
}
}
}
```

BOX 2

```
using System.Xml;
using NUnit.Core;

public class XmlResultVisitor : ResultVisitor
{

private XmlTextWriter xmlWriter;
private TextWriter writer;
```

BOX 3

```
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type"
content="text/html; charset=iso-8859-1">
<script language="JavaScript">
<!--
function
MM_openBrWindow(theURL,winName,features)
{ //v2.0
  window.open(theURL,winName,features);
}
//-->
</script>
<style type="text/css">
<!--
-->
</style>
</head>
```

and it's certainly not uncommon to learn it. If you're a developer, you can buy almost every bit of code and advice Microsoft has to offer for $375 in their independent software vendor programme. And, as you might have noticed, there's a lot of people developing Windows software.

But there are more web pages; and web pages don't depend on Microsoft, and you can build them using Notepad, which doesn't even cost $375.

That, in essence, was the pitch that Netscape made to coders all those years ago. Come with us and our browser, and write for the web, they said in 1995, and you'll be free. Netscape promised then that the web would become the platform, just like Windows. That you'd be able to write web pages that worked just like, say, Microsoft Word. Only they'd be *your* web application, and all that lovely money that went to Microsoft whenever anyone bought Word would go to you, whenever anyone used your web page. We will call them 'web applications', and we will all be rich, do you hear me? Rich! And freeeeeeeee!

It didn't quite pan out that way. No one knew how to make web pages sing like applications. Even Netscape didn't know how to do it – yet. And while they worked hard trying to figure out how, they neglected to maintain their browser, and Microsoft

came by and fucked them over with Internet Explorer 5, and Netscape died and it was the end. And everyone went back to writing Windows applications, because it may be dirty work, but it was familiar dirty work. At least Microsoft – and programmers – knew how to write one of those.

Bolt upright in bed, covered in sweat, let us return to the present day. We sort of know how to do web applications now: Google's Gmail is a good example. It's a bit of a bitch to do, however, because Internet Explorer is deliberately designed not to permit web pages to do anything like what a desktop application can do. The web has been successfully shackled.

Except: Scared by Explorer's security flaws and general bit-rottenness, a few percent of Windows users are going over to Mozilla, the Open Source remnants of the Netscape expeditionary force (you should too – it's a fantastic browser, http://www.mozilla.org/).

And Apple has Safari, their own browser.
And Apple has Steve Jobs.
And Steve Jobs has a plan.

Apple has made it known that they're extending HTML, the code of the web, to do desktop-like applications. Oh, nothing for Microsoft to get worried about: it's just silliness really – international clocks,

games of Minesweeper. Mere fripperies. But they're also working together with the Mozilla and Opera people to standardise these extensions.

And if it all works the way it should, those extensions will be the extras that the web needs to do applications.

And what's Microsoft doing while this goes on? Well, they're hard at work producing .Net, which is that middle box above. Which is a beautiful work of art. It gets rid of almost all the fugliness of Box 1. It's the future for programming for Microsoft.

Unfortunately, it's a little unfamiliar to most Windows coders. Faced with throwing away all their old knowledge, where should they go? With Microsoft to the promised land of .Net? Or just add a few extensions to what these coders already know about building web pages?

It's not clear which way most of them will lean. It's not clear that Apple and Mozilla will be able to pull off for a second time what Netscape so royally screwed up before. But there's a chance – and watching contenders with the barest chance take on Microsoft is a pleasure you see only once a decade.

Danny O'Brien <danny@spesh.com> is co-editor of NTK in exile

SHORTCUTS

COMMON PROPERTY

The Sixth Werkleitz Biennial may not have taken place in Werkleitz, but this year's festival and the week of open workshops and seminars preceding it combined cultural and political responses to 'the tightening of ownership structures and property rights' with a certain sense of place. **Yukiko Jungesblut** reports

Do you know Halle? Imagine an ordinary city in Eastern Germany – with houses, old fashioned trams, a little bit of green. Not particularly fashionable, (re)construction sites, restored Wilhelminian mansions, newly opened shops, medieval churches, a market square that feels distinctly undercrowded. It is orderly, no one is in much of a hurry, the atmosphere covered by a sepia filter. This is Halle. Zoom out. A city spreading out in an area that once was the core of the chemical industry of the GDR, 238,000 people going about their daily lives. Pan, touch lightly on Halle Neustadt – obsolete claim for an architectural vision of perfect, centralised planning become stone, a socialist monument to Utopia now brightly retinted, yet still a zone of disenchantment, prey to desertion. Pan on. Back to the historical parts of the city. Now zoom in.

Volkspark – originally a somewhat austere workers' club, it has been redesigned as an exhibition space. This was the new home of the Werkleitz Biennial, September 2004. Tag line: Common Property/ Allgemeingut. Duration: five days of workshops, five days of exhibitions. In its established half film festival, half art biennial mix, time and space were dedicated to the discussion, the twisting, the materialisation, the musicalisation, the reflection, the pingponging of one term – 'common property' – seen as a theme with variations and subthemes, installed as a net of associations with the occasional political kick. This was in line with the former function of the building – a space for debate.

'Addressing the cultural, social and economic conditions and consequences effected by the tightening of current ownership structures and property rights,' the Biennial featured 'artistic positions that, in view of the debates on intellectual property, raise pivotal questions concerning the access and claim to knowledge and information as well as the demand for common property.' Like an octopus (with more than eight arms) the Biennial branched out into the space of discourses, the imaginary space of collective memory, into urban space and web space. Consider the rooms of the Volkspark as the principal space: a series of installations – a lot of them intervention based, many of them with a decidedly sociological or politicological leaning – were on display. An entire room was set aside for the internet and internet projects, with a supersonic screen saver – 100,000 images from commercial photo archives,

dashing by at a frequency that made discerning individual images impossible. In addition there were also archive rooms and club rooms. The debates with the experts ranged from arguing about the implications of patent restrictions to those of copyright. These were presented in the bigger halls and were quite eagerly attended.

Echoing the design and culture of the traditional workers's club there was also a room in which outputs from the 'kindergarten' of the Halle School of Common Property, held at the local school for the blind in the first week, were re-presented during the art show. The discussion and (inter)action loaded days of the workshops reappeared in the solidified form of a panel display.

Like an octopus (with more than eight arms) the Biennial branched out into the space of discourses, collective memory, urban space and web space

Excursions to local knowledge archives (museums, parks) and some interventions in the city itself made the link between the representational space of the Biennial and its urban space, while objects on loan from the public museums of Halle could be found in the exhibition space.

In contrast to the Biennial's often rather dry, if well informed, installations, a beautifully compiled film programme seemed to function as the heart of the event. Mixing genres, formats, eras and continents, there were striking images and testimonies – classics by Alain Resnais or Len Lye, funkadelic energy with Craig Baldwin. The multitude of films and angles was impressive, spanning registers of sheer anger, philosophical contemplation, joyful sarcasm to silent mourning – and usually took a firm stance on a common property related issue.

By bringing together different points of view on and manifestations of the topic, Werkleitz confronted you with a material condensation of your own implicit

knowledge about common property. The films and the Biennial more generally made this elusive concept more tangible and more real, even if it remained impossible to give one definite statement on what 'common property' really means and implies. Different (classes of) people have different views. For many working in what is deemed the cultural sector, questions concerning the rather immaterial issues of intellectual property or copyright/authorship and remuneration might seem the most obvious point of departure, whereas for a health worker, directly confronted with the fatal scarcity of affordable medication that arises from the protection of copyrighted drugs, the point of attack obviously lies elsewhere.

The most theoretical of the various workshops which addressed the issue of common property in different ways was *Mute's*. It was mainly devoted to developing ideas for a project called 'KnowFuture' and involved much discussion of the 'intellectual commons'. In particular the meaning of 'free' (as in libre as opposed to just gratis) was a flashpoint: how could the 'free system' be maintained considering that the contributors to this system also need something to live on (and this may well be 'the enemy'). There was a quick tour through the information technology necessary to embark on file sharing and related practices (not always self-explanatory to an outsider),

which led to a heated debate about the status of piracy. Apart from the apparent benefits of enabling individuals and groups to consume (im)material products at a lower price, should piracy be seen as a truly subversive (and socially transformative) practice or rather more as a representational or symbolic action, a 'statement' about sharing, so to speak? No agreement was reached.

Beyond this, the debates confronted the place of copyright within a web of administrative, legal or even political technicalities (the structure of licensing, bi-lateral versus multilateral treaties, etc.) which would be too complex to report here. What remained a question throughout, however, was how a non-expert might intervene in all these issues (undoubtedly of universal relevance) without having to become a legal and political adept themselves.

Perhaps an event like Werkleitz helps to provide a better grasp of the issues by giving *physical* access to a debate which, although very real, by its nature often remains hidden. And this aspect of the physicality or materiality of representation leads on to what was really interesting about Werkleitz: you could meet people there who have (to a degree) a common interest. Activists, culture jammers, pirates, protesters and also of course more moderate 'versions' of these – all of them engaged in what for some is a battle, for some a quest, for some a field

of study but for all an attempt to make things better, and most of them driven by some sense of urgency. If you were not already in the individual circles from which they came, how would you meet 'them'? The space, in this case, really did make meetings and exchanges possible.

In the end, the Biennial left me with a sense of collective agency or a willingness to act. Not only at the Biennial but beyond its doors in the dystopian space of Halle Neustadt, perhaps, there is self-organised resistance to the appropriation of common property which affects us all. Maybe in the future the Biennial will manage to tie in more closely with the city and the struggles which surround it, allowing, to a greater extent, specialist knowledge to be exchanged with that of the everyday. ⚑

CONTROL FREAKERY AT THE UK-ESF

The organisational chaos that engulfed London's European Social Forum this October is by now legendary. The SWP-SA dominated Coordinating Committee, with its centralist and doctrinaire practices, has a lot to answer for. **Laura Sullivan**, writing in the weeks before the event, gives a behind the scenes account of the process, laying special emphasis on the role of culture

Tensions and developments coalescing around the cultural elements of London's European Social
Forum this October are emblematic of the power struggles that have blighted the UK-ESF organising process from the start. The emergence of equivalent factions had already occurred at the Paris ESF in the fall of 2003. The UK-ESF saw, on the one side, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) contingent, who lobbied hard and ultimately successfully for London to get the bid for 2004. On the other, members of the London Social Forum**1** and other grassroots organisations, who argued that 2005 was a more feasible target date. From the first UK meetings in the winter of 2003, members of the SWP and the more secretive Socialist Action party, firmly ensconced within the offices of the GLA, demonstrated principles and behaviour far removed from the democratic consensus model espoused by the Porto Allegre Charter of Principles of the World Social Forum. At the first organising meeting held at the GLA (directly contravening the Charter's prohibition of meetings in state institutions), Redmond O'Neill, one of London mayor Ken Livingstone's right-hand men at the GLA and prime mover within Socialist Action, outraged the grassroots activists in attendance by unilaterally 'declaring all working groups (e.g., practicalities, programme, accommodation) to be hereby abolished.'

Significantly, after O'Neil's nullifying announcement, the Culture Working Group (CWG), uniquely continued to meet. A hybrid of independent activist-artists, and a few SWP members, the CWG managed to maintain a civil and productive relationship through the winter months, while in every other area of UK-ESF organising the SWP-SA wreaked havoc, offending everyone, and causing most of the grassroots left to leave the process entirely. I know from personal experience that the way these folks sought to control the meetings and policies was eerily and frustratingly Stalinesque.

From the start, it was clear that the SWP-SA stronghold had visions of an ESF which marginalised cultural and artistic endeavours, particularly those with a more explicit anti-capitalist perspective. This stance reflected the increasingly obvious reformist agenda of these groups, who sought to use the ESF to advance their party platforms and to heighten the profiles of their 'star' players – not only the GLA's Livingstone, who was significantly up for re-election in June 2004, but also the SWP-heavy Respect coalition's George Galloway, now on the programme as a plenary speaker. This same ethos was evident in O'Neil and company's repeated refrain equating 'culture at the ESF' with a 'big rally in Trafalgar Square with Ms. Dynamite'. Hostility and disdain for cultural or artistic

In every other area of UK-ESF organising, the SWP-SA wreaked havoc, offending everyone, and causing most of the grassroots left to leave the process entirely

projects with any substantive content was revealed at a 25 March 2004 meeting of the Coordinating Committee (another SWP-SA formation that in actuality functioned as a 'central committee', making all decisions in lieu of the larger, less frequent Organising Committee meetings, where CC decisions would be 'reported'). Two representatives of the Brazilian-based *Mosaico de Livros – Biblioteca Social Mundial* (Mosaic of Books – World Social Library) requested time at the upcoming Birmingham OC meeting, but when O'Neill called their project 'irrelevant', all at once we were expected to go along with the idea that showing a WSF-sponsored film at an OC meeting was ludicrous. In April 2004, the unilateral control of all cultural production and information continued, with SA insistence that no one outside of the SA-SWP alliance be allowed to participate in the production or design of the official website (which ultimately cost over £40,000). Not surprisingly, when discussions about UK-ESF graphics and logos began, instead of open calls for contributions or invitations

for anyone outside of the hallowed circle of power to make suggestions, SWP member Noel Douglas was appointed to create preliminary designs for the logo for the website and ESF publicity.

Meanwhile, another group of artists/activists were gathering to put together events making culture and art central to the ESF. Calling themselves the European Creative Forum (ECF), by early spring of 2004 the group was completely uninterested in participating in the official ESF organising process, while the CWG was still working within the official framework. At the end of March, members of both groups met to discuss their joint participation in the first of the European Creative Forums, planned for the second Saturday of each month from April through to the ESF. In total contrast to the chaos and ill will characterising official ESF meetings dominated by the SA-SWP faction, this planning session saw close to 30 people treating each other with respect and encouragement, bubbling over with energy and creativity. Held at the squatted artists' warehouse Area 10 in Peckham, London, the first ECF on 10 April 2004 was especially designed to give the CWG a boost. It kicked off with a Creatives Assembly, where 60 artists and activists of all hues gathered to share ideas about collaborative projects to launch in the run-up to or during ESF. Performance artists, shamanic poets, painters, independent film-makers, DJs, peaceniks, singers, drummers, rappers, new media 'geeks', digital artists, actors – the sheer range of interests and talents of the people attending was staggering. A huge success, the April ECF was attended by more than 450 people from all sectors of political, activist, artistic, and grassroots organisations, including people from the local community of Peckham.

Without doubt, the scale and success of the first European Creative Forum hit the SWP-SA's radar; several SWP members were sent to investigate the second ECF in May. In the Creatives Assembly, they denied what they called 'false rumours' of the tensions surrounding the organising meetings. Recognising the blatant lies of these SWPers, no one – including those non-aligned independents, aka 'horizontals', who had been fighting for democracy in the organising process for months – was fooled by the SWP's attempts to do 'damage control' and limit the participation of the ECF in the larger ESF itself. Their snide remarks in the breaks at the event, slagging it off as 'hippy bullshit', for example, did nothing to boost their credibility.

At a CWG meeting to choose the group who would vet programme proposals involving 'culture', SWP members made sure their pet people, such as Douglas, were selected, and specifically insisted that they would 'only *allow* one "horizontal" to be on this committee' of four. This directive was in keeping with all previous behaviour of the SWP-SA faction, in which they attempted to keep 'horizontals' out of all working groups and the office staff. Their overall strategy was to control every aspect of the UK-ESF organising process so as to make the event itself a

combination of SWP recruitment rally and GLA/Ken Livingstone photo-op. They sought to control both participation and information at all levels. For example, without consensus or consultation of anyone else involved, they held unannounced 'outreach' meetings for particular groups, such as 'women' or 'refugees', and always, again, at the GLA. This proprietary attitude was exemplified by SA member Milena Buyum who, at a gathering of programme working group members at the Birmingham OC meeting, blurted, 'I'm in charge of the black groups – I don't want anyone else contacting them or having meetings with them.' For the SWP and SA, sectors are objectified pieces to be moved around on a chessboard.

ESF graphic material produced by Douglas also reflects the entrenched SWP agenda infiltrating every aspect of the organising process. The logos and leaflets are not only atrociously designed, they are also uncannily and disturbingly reminiscent of SWP/Respect Coalition party graphics with their rainbow colour schemes. The imagery is as visually illiterate as it is politically problematic: on the publicity leaflet's cover, the unthinking adoption of the colonialist Mercator projection clashes tellingly with the slogan, 'another world is possible', an insulting juxtaposition betraying an underlying naivety and conservatism. And the fold-out poster inside features a collage of people marching in protest, the requisite 'diversity' of the composite crowd emphatically apparent, waving generic, deliberately unidentifiable multi-coloured flags.

Similarly, the language of the publicity material imports SWP concerns and terminology wholesale, featuring phrases that were shoved down the throats of the horizontally minded participants at programme group meetings throughout the spring. Instead of overtly anti-neoliberal or anti-capitalist slogans, we get 'for global justice' and 'against privatisation'. The more radical and politically substantive language of the original calls for ESF participation has been so watered down or distorted as to completely diverge from the intent of the social forums themselves, as expressed in the Charter of Principles. Criticisms of preceding European and World Social Forums include debates about whether these efforts are inherently reformist and complicit with capital, especially given the heavy involvement of NGOs and state structures, or whether they help move forward anti-capitalist efforts. While subject to these same criticisms, the UK-ESF organising process has been hijacked in an even more vicious and politically reactionary manner.

The status of the cultural and artistic aspects of the ESF is still very troubled. An email in August requested that people check the official website for their cultural proposal – apparently, they'd lost some of the original ones. (Such ineptitude has been pervasive, another by-product of the unfortunate SWP-SA control freakery characterising the organising process.) At the time of writing, less than two weeks before the ESF itself, there is still no finalised cultural programme online and the online registration system of the expensively procured website has been plagued with problems. Is it any

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE

european social forum
14–17 October 2004, London ✳ www.fse-esf.org
stop the war ✳ no to racism ✳ end privatisation
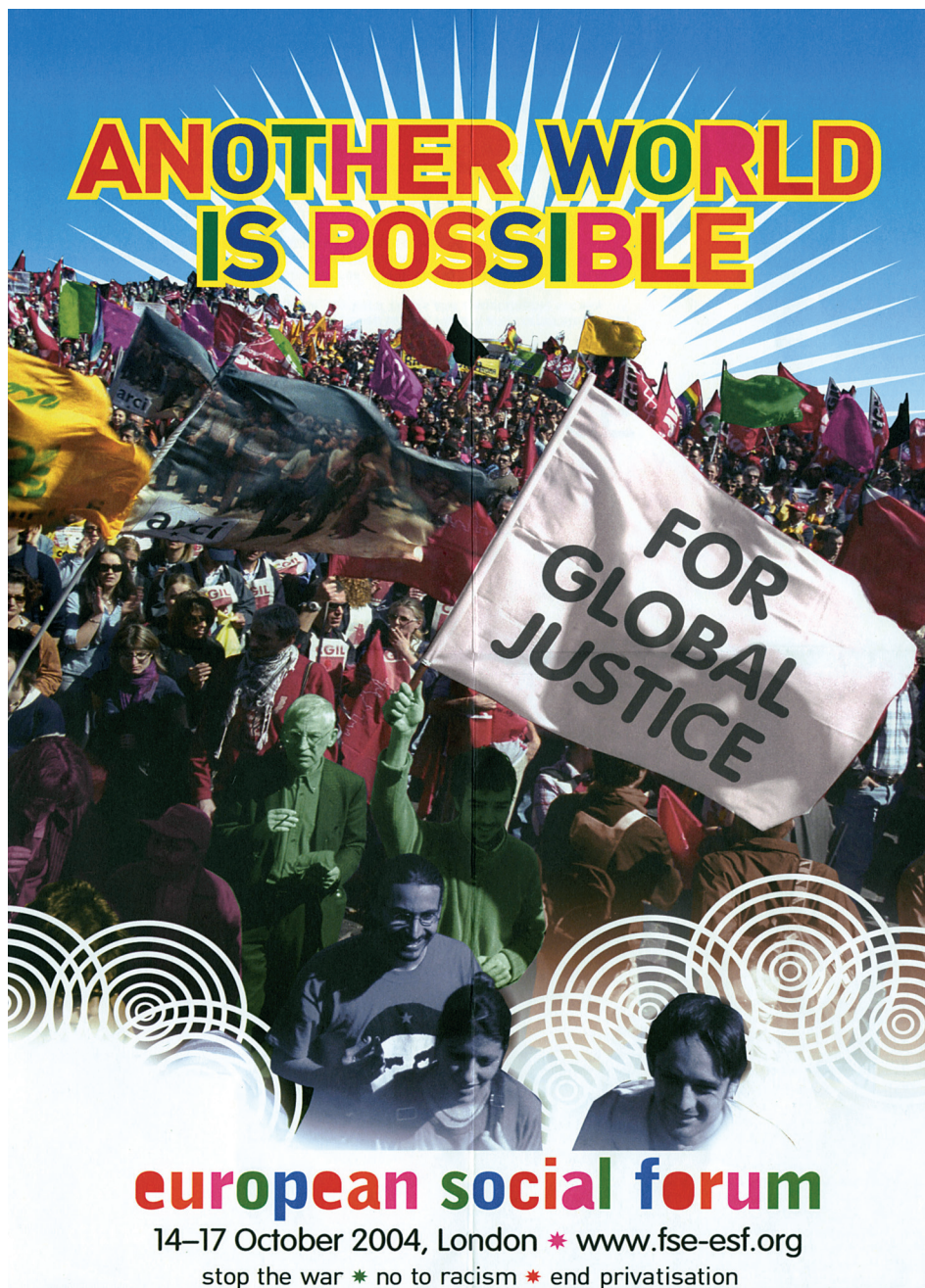
wonder that as the October weekend of the ESF approaches, we are being told that while many proposals for provocative and powerful artistic and cultural events and workshops have been accepted, there is no money to provide the technical or other infrastructure needed to put on most of these events? And given the completely undemocratic history of the UK-ESF organising process, is it surprising that much of the vibrancy of cultural efforts and artistic productions will be channelled into the alternative spaces of the ESF instead of the overpriced, badly organised official event? 🏃

LINKS

official UK-ESF site http://www.fse-esf.org/
alternative UK-ESF site http://www.esf2004.net
horizontals' 'Call for Democracy'
http://esf2004.net/en/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=6
WSF Charter of Principles http://www.wsfindia.org/charter.php
ECF http://www.europeancreativeforum.org/
Mosaic of Books
http://pwweb2.procempa.com.br/pmpa/Mosaico_Livro/
Area 10
http://interoperable.org.uk/area10/Xoops206/html/modules/news/

FOOTNOTES

1 Complementing the World and Regional Social Forums, local chapters such as the London Social Forums meet regularly and organise political events

Laura Sullivan <alchemical44@yahoo.co.uk> is a writer, digital artist and counsellor providing emotional support for activists, amongst others

BASS RESONANCE

The Design Museum's recent exhibition of trail-blazing film title designer Saul Bass provided interesting clues for both the history and future of digital poetics with its emphasis on real-time and trans-medial experimentation. Reviewed by **John Cayley**

Was Saul Bass a writer? Was he a poet? Given that his film title 'texts' are not 'his' – not his compositions in the accepted sense – what is his art and how can it be seen as a writer's art, a literal art? N. Katherine Hayles, an important theorist of writing in new media, suggests that the materiality of any text, 'emerges as a dance between the medium's physical characteristics and the work's signifying strategies.' Saul Bass does this dance with words. We need, says Hayles, to follow the dance when we read and write because our moves require a 'media specific' analysis of language art. The physical characteristics of the

essays of art language practitioners (Holtzer), and also, of course, what writing there is that exists in programmable media. Given that time-based, dynamic writing is here to stay, on screen or wherever it next migrates, its largely unacknowledged and little analysed early history deserves far greater attention. And not only for a history of the form and its aesthetics – readers like you and I are now, for example, increasingly subject to advertising's appropriation of 'type in motion'. To my mind, there has recently been a marked increase in hi-end ads with sophisticated dynamic textuality. We need tools for its critical reading.

The major exhibition of Saul Bass's graphic and film title work at London's Design Museum was, therefore, essential. Saul Bass was the first film title designer to be given a screen credit by the Director's Guild of America (for Preminger's *Carmen Jones* 1954) and remains an all but uniquely name-checkable artist in the film titles field. Yet his fame derives equally if not in greater measure from his related, more purely graphic work, where he is a central figure in that late '50s, early '60s school of jazz-rhythmic, cool, flat, monochromatic design, with a clever use of abstraction that allowed for significant interaction between normally distinct representational modes: paper cut-out silhouettes become body parts, become an assembled corpse, become (once more) a potential and actual surface for writing (see his titles for *Anatomy of a Murder*, 1959, with the process I've just described encapsulated in the film's famous posters). Many visitors to the exhibition will have gone there simply to revisit one source of a perennially hip graphic style.

Nonetheless the film title work is crucial. Certain aspects of the style I've characterised are also vital to the dynamic writing of Bass's most important titles. Bass uses abstraction in a manner that recalls Scott McCloud's brilliant sketch of the subject in *Understanding Comics*. For McCloud, the disjuncture between visual abstraction and written language is a creative problem. He suggests a continuum from the extremes of graphic abstraction to conventional signs of writing. The folk etymologies of pictorial word-signs (early letter-forms, hieroglyphics, Chinese characters) lend their evocative history to a range of suggestive procedures. Don't get me wrong. I'm not (and neither is McCloud) a theoretical naïf, or wedded to an orientalist hallucination of ideography. The disjuncture between language and graphics remains clear. The two practices are materially distinct because their signifying strategies and physical characteristics are radically different. Nonetheless, suggestive links are links, and such links may signify. They can do more than this. They can constitute a rhetoric and materiality of their own, a trans-medial art practice.

Like McCloud's 'invisible art', graphic design, particularly typographic design, is a trans-medial art par excellence, part of an engaged project which strives to make the visual and sub-linguistic aspects of writing signify. Graphic design proceeds to set out writing's

media that both deliver and constitute writing are in flux, and writers are using novel or re-emergent signifying strategies to generate their meanings as literal art. The work of Saul Bass re-emerges, and can be shown to underlie the so-called new.

Words move. The graphic bodies of language – from letters to words, from phrases to entire texts – translate, scale and morph on our private and public screens in a bewildering and so-far uncatalogued array of transitions. As readers, we are more and more habituated to such literal dynamism, a kinetic textuality that is hard to square with capital-l

Literature's notions of the copy-text, the edition, the authorised textual event and the royalties that accompany this moment of authorial reification.

When did words begin to move? This question pulls me back from a familiar, if utopic and theoretical, 'new textuality' rant to the work of Saul Bass, to a history of practice. Written words first moved on film. Film titling, in particular, is where we must look for a self-conscious and aestheticised practice of dynamic typography and, indeed, of dynamic writing. This work predates the small body of video-based language work (Kostelanetz), the few but significant

'paratextual' properties – conventional and creative aspects of writing's layout and framing – and render them not only aesthetically but substantively meaningful. How else can the performances of typography be appreciated? What need of typographers otherwise? Saul Bass, through the reality of the once new technology of film and its illusion of animation, gave us the first literal performances of this necessary and vital interplay between language-as-visual-form and language-as-symbolic-representation. He animated the bodies of words along with their paratextual demons and familiars.

Bass achieved this during the second half of the 1950s, in his groundbreaking titles for films from *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955) through *Psycho* (1960) and, to a certain extent, *Spartacus* (1960). The latter marks a distinct shift in his practice, after which, in the 1960s and 1970s, he turned away from film titling and worked more directly with the visual imaginary of cinema, as then understood. *Spartacus* uses photorealist images of objects – especially a bronze bust – but shot such that they hover on the edge of the silhouette-abstraction that had become a Bass trademark. From *Spartacus* on, the actual words of his titles are distinct typographic forms floating over or through the visual imaginary that they caption. In *Spartacus*, a letter-edge might still have caught on the edge of a silhouette. By contrast, none of the words in the titles for *Cape Fear* (1991) would share a surface with the water and shadow over which they move.

This more familiar, later work – in what has become the established mode of film titling – sets the innovations of Bass's 1950s work into sharp relief. The typographic 'rule' – typically a printed bar of ink – was an important trans-medial element in his film titles of the time. Rules are quintessentially paratextual. They share the surface of writing and they share its graphic materiality – particularly contrasting monochrome colour. They manage and marshal the spaces in which writing is set, but they are not writing in the strict sense of symbolic representation. At one and the same time, rules are also lines, lines that may shape themselves into abstract *visual* representations.

Titles for *The Man with the Golden Arm* demonstrate this perfectly. A single heavy rule sweeps down to mark the director's credit; three more are propagated and, while introducing the names of the (three) lead actors, suggest, to my eye, walking legs. Three of the four vanish leaving one upper rule, with the three now returning, sweeping in from the other screen edges, to set out the superbly composed spaces of the film's title. The same rules go on to organise and punctuate
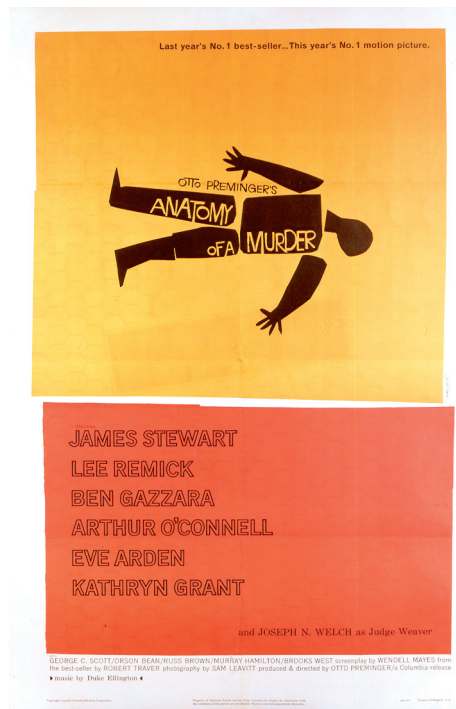
the remaining credits, suggesting more visual forms and spaces, and also, I would argue, letter forms, before finally and infamously combining to become the jagged silhouette of the 'golden arm' itself.

Rules in Bass's work do not typically become letters, but they do interfere with the surfaces of writing – sometimes making the switch from foreground to background and becoming a newly delineated surface of inscription. This is shown, for example, if we consider the torn-out surface spaces of *Bunny Lake is Missing* as in some sense a special type of rule. Rules can also interfere directly with writing, which provides a reading of the titles for 'Psycho' where they become manic and overwhelming, slicing through the caption words, momentarily allowing us to glimpse and read, before destroying legibility in a striated frenzy that is permanently linked with cinema's most notorious shocker.

Bass's masterpiece is the title sequence for *North by Northwest* (1959) where rules are present in their primary role as the squared lines supporting text. But further, in this sequence, their formation of a (archi)textual gridwork also provides a direct link to a world of real images, and also an unconscious premonitory graphic representation not only of the interaction of the symbolic and the real but of the information-age virtual and the real. These titles are a 'central processor' of writing in new media, before its time had come.

The sequence opens with a landscape-aspect grid receding in perspective, not yet quite recognizable as the surface of a modernist office block. Words of the titles glide in on the gridlines and, in particular, glide up and down the vertical lines where they meet and come momentarily to rest for reading. As they do so, their movements are suddenly like those of elevators in a building, giving us one of the first visual clues to a real-world referent for the signifier of the abstract grid.

This resemblance of the words' movements to elevators marks a relatively uncharacteristic evocation of Concrete poetics – bodies of words behave like

objects. Words in Bass's *Goodfellas* (1990) titles imitate coke-accelerated cars, but I can't think of other prominent examples. In fact, his work is remarkable for its avoidance of Concrete. Paratextual elements, like rules, are allowed to cross over, via abstraction, into the visual, but words remain set in legibility, as tokens of the symbolic. The important thing in Bass's titles is the continuum that is played out in literal time-based art; a continuum of rhetorical possibilities and signifying strategies that cross and recross from visual to linguistic media and back, in evocative iterative performance, without ever losing a grip on their specific materialities.

The ruled gridlines of *North by Northwest* are faithful to graphics, typography, visuality and text all at once. As the sequence progresses this becomes clear. The words of the title perform their function – we can simply read the credits – and give material pleasure in their design and movement. At a certain point the grid moves away from abstraction and is filled in with the mirrored glass windows of a modernist office block. It becomes real or rather more than real because it is also a mirror, a surface providing one particular, privileged representation of the world. We see people and traffic alive and moving in the mirror-world and the world of filmic naturalism. Meanwhile, the title words continue to share this same surface. They are still well-set and respectful of typographic principles, but now they share a surface of visual representation that is simultaneously a real object (the building) in the (film) world. It's a tour de force. These titles embody a continuum of signifying strategies across media that could only be performed in time.

The potential for the now familiar screenic surface of programmable media as a site of a literal trans-medial art is discovered in the titles for *North by Northwest*. It's as simple and as richly suggestive as that. Where do we go from here? In his work on *West Side Story* (1961) Bass quietly and wittily played with real surfaces as a site for (title) writing, with the credits expressed as graffiti and intermixed with signage. One of the recognised artists in contemporary film titles, Kyle Cooper, literally etched the credits for 'Se7en' (1995) onto film stock. Some suggestions: We continue to write with a Bass-resonant reverential materialism, with respect for the surfaces on which we make our inscriptions. We move writing from surface to surface, from media to media, with this same respect, not only from the pseudo-transparent surface of print to the screen or the virtual surfaces of artistic performance, but onto real surfaces. We do this writing in real and in human time. ⚉

BODY SHOP HERMENEUTICS

This autumn's Black Atlantic festival in Berlin epitomised the culture industry's postcolonial turn. But, asks **Tirdad Zolghadr**, how do the struggles that underlie the discourse compete with their 'critical consumption' by an art audience?
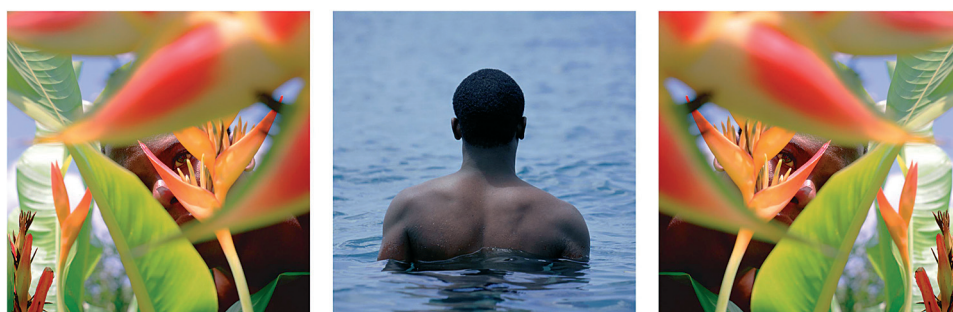
'So now the Americans are coming over here, telling us how to be radical.' I was standing outside the US pavilion featuring Fred Wilson at the Venice Biennial 2003, talking to an art theorist from Karlsruhe. Wilson had chosen to reveal the unacknowledged history of African slaves and migrants in Venice, and there was something almost sublime about my irritated, perspiring German friend, in his drenched Mike Kelley T-shirt and Diesel khakis, reprimanding Fred Wilson, of all people, for American expansionism – declaring Wilson the flagship of the very US culturati that would regularly mistake him for the porter at his own openings.

For the sake of argument, I tried to defend Wilson with some conventional postcolonial wisdom, stating that art was always instrumentalised in some way or other, and that at least the ideological agenda of the US pavilion – just like this autumn's Black Atlantic festival at the House of World Cultures in Berlin – is openly stated and pursued. But it is indeed undeniable that, with minority representatives gradually having established themselves in the Euro-American *Kulturindustrie* over the '80s and '90s, the critical/postcolonial agenda needs to be fine tuned, or defined more incisively. For one thing, various forms of political tokenism and essentialism have continued to be brokered and disseminated, through events and exhibitions asserting national, racial, or ethnic identities – albeit under epithets that are postcolonial, or otherwise 'theoretically informed'.

For another, the institutionalisation of critical theory and minority voices is making things rather muddled, and slightly paranoid. These days, the very critique of

Eurocentrism and the museal modus operandi, the very gesture of bewailing the establishment, rarely offers more than a marketing opportunity, a chance for the institution to prove its postmodern finesse, and to pack off its critics into a dismal *mise-en-abîme* of auto-reflexive perplexity.

In light of the above, if the geopolitical theme park setting in the Venice Giardini isn't dicey enough, when it comes to a place dubbed the House of World Cultures, how can the paternalistic aura of an ethnic food fair possibly be avoided? It's one thing if an artist is being radically critical, it's quite another if a state museum assembles large quantities of subversive positionings for an audience that enjoys being flattered by its own multicultural credentials.

To be fair, Body Shop hermeneutics, the cushy sense of ideological superiority through critical consumption, is a phenomenon that supersedes any particular exhibition context. Generally speaking, it seems as if the difference between, on the one hand, political struggles in situ and, on the other, the dramatised, emotionally pumped up consumption of

video installations and festivals representing them, is getting increasingly blurred.

At the House of World Cultures, Paul Gilroy's introduction to the Black Atlantic programme states the museum's ambitions to reflect on the 'contributions of the Black diaspora' through arts and culture, but also to explore the 'changing character of Western civilisation', along with other 'general aspects of contemporary art and culture', such as 'trans-nationality and trans-culturality', but also to reexamine 'overly innocent conceptions of modernity' in Western Europe and – while we're at it – to prove that 'culture itself will have to be reconceptualised'. (After another barrage of commendable claims and objectives, Gilroy reassures the reader that 'the Black Atlantic favours low frequencies.')

The sound and the fury of the Epochal Moment, the drama of the Historical Threshold is something many different strands of contemporary internationalism have in common – a poetics of exigency accompanied by an outraged rhetoric of unveiling, of exposing hidden histories and backstage mechanisms.

But perhaps the one utterly unexpected moment in the press kit to the Black Atlantic is the candid affirmation that 'trans-culturalisation' supplies 'significant resources [for] enhancing Europe's multi-cultural democracy'. Here, instead of repeating the dramatic grievances of thus far unacknowledged voices, the text allows for a rare and sombre insight into the very preconditions of critical consumption. At the risk of sounding cynical, it's not the successful transfiguration of solidarity into a political token or commodity that is regrettable (heartfelt attempts to evade commodification are cheesy at best) but the fact that it's happening pretty much unwittingly. If Africans are 'coming over here' to tell us how to be mainstream social democrats, then the luscious irony of the situation should be enjoyed precisely as such. 🏃

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THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

The Anti-Deutsch (aka Anti-Germans) are a vocal and highly visible group within the German anti-fascist movement. Their curious politics – communist (but pro-Bush), anti-nationalist (but pro-Israel) – have recently become a topic of discussion and debate outside Germany. UK-based German activist **Tadzio Müller** gives his analysis of the Anti-Germans' mutant Marxism and assesses their significance for the German left and beyond

Recently, some German anti-fascists have been adopting some, let's say, 'surprising' political positions: their solidarity with Israel is 'unconditional'; their support for US-led wars unwavering, while their polemics against the alter-globalisation movement are vicious; and when a movement emerges in Germany to fight against welfare cuts, they stay a mile away and decry the protests as populist. But why? What could turn dedicated anti-fascists into bellicose reactionaries? The answer lies in a reinterpretation of global politics and economics that Orwell would have been proud of. Welcome, then, to the upside-down world of Anti-German communism.

These Anti-Germans emerged within the German anti-fascist movement, drawing on (autonomous) communist and anti-national discourses. Their earliest roots lie in the early 1990s, when two processes changed the coordinates of radical politics in Germany: first, German 'reunification' rekindled fears of a renewed imperialist drive by a newly self-

confident Germany; and second, the wave of anti-immigrant pogroms sweeping Germany in 1992 reminded these communists of a lesson that German critical theory had drawn from the horrors of National Socialism and Auschwitz: that the 'proletariat' could not be trusted to be the collective agent of the transcendence of capitalism to communism – that collective, mass politics were in fact just as, if not more, likely to lead to fascism than to communism.

As a result, and drawing on Adorno's reformulation of the idea of the categorical imperative – to do everything so that Auschwitz or something similar may never be repeated – the Anti-Germans structure their entire political universe around the struggle against anti-Semitism. They suggest that capitalism, since Auschwitz, tends not towards its revolutionary sublation in communism, but a kind of capitalist transcendence of capitalism, such that the class-antagonism inherent to capital is transcended in the

persecution of the jew: capital and labour overcome their mutual differences and focus their destructive energies on the social group historically identified in Europe with the 'dark', greedy side of capitalism, and by destroying this 'other' they allow capitalism to survive. Thus, the general tendency of capitalism in crisis is to 'save itself' through anti-Semitism and, since capital is in crisis all the time today, it always and everywhere tends towards anti-Semitism. Therefore, it is imperative for anti-capitalists to first and foremost struggle against anti-Semitism to avoid a non-communist, fascist closure of capitalism's class antagonism.

But, if capitalism in crisis tends towards anti-Semitism, and we can't trust the working class anymore – how do we get to communism? To answer this question, the Anti-Germans endorse an extremely crude Marxist developmentalism (Marxism before the fall of the '50s and '60s, so to speak, before even dependency theory), whereby we first need more, or proper capitalism in the rest of the world – especially in underdeveloped, 'Arab/Islamic fascist' regimes – until we can get to communism. Thus the problem for the Anti-Germans is not too much Western imperialism, but too little of it: since anti-Semitism emerges primarily under conditions of stunted capitalist development, those agents that bring 'proper' Western capitalist development – in the current political constellation, read the US and its allies in the 'war on terror' – are deserving of the support of Anti-German communists.

The recent invasion of Iraq, for example, can be read through this inverted political looking glass: capital tends towards its non-communist sublation in anti-Semitism; Saddam Hussein is an Arab fascist and anti-Semite; Bush fights against Arab fascism, thus preventing the non-communist closure of the class antagonism *and* bringing proper Western capitalism to the backward Arabs; thus supporting Bush's war in Iraq is the necessary position of the Anti-German communist.

The Anti-Germans are in fact positively enamoured with the 'European Enlightenment', wanting to spread it to the rest of the world – an emancipatory process

The problem for the Anti-Germans is not too much Western imperialism, but too little of it

that unfortunately usually takes the form of bombing people into liberty, but that's the price to be paid (by 'backwards' people) for progress. Interestingly, having thus used Marx to argue for 'modernisation' and imperialism, the Anti-Germans find themselves in

a similar position to the American neo-conservatives, who started their political journey in Trotskyism in the 1930s, and also arrived at the conclusion that, in order to get to communism, we first would have to spread American-style capitalism and 'democracy' to the rest of the world. Whether the rest of the world wanted that or not.

As we know, today's NeoCons at some point made the jump from the left to the right, and this may also be the goal of the Anti-Germans. Having ditched all identifiably left positions, and displaying an extremely overt dislike for the 'symbols' of the left, they seem to be preparing their exit from left politics for good. Today, the term 'communism' is still used extensively in their political propaganda, but really only as an empty place around which one's political views can move from the left to the right. If the struggle for communism in the future implies the taking of reactionary positions today, how long until the future referent disappears entirely, and we are left with unadulterated imperialist developmentalism?

But these Anti-Germans with their reactionary politics wouldn't be such a problem if, in the last few years, they hadn't split and partly immobilised the German radical left: fist fights at demonstrations, political groups and collectives as well as friendships breaking up... So what happened?

After their emergence in the early 1990s, the Anti-Germans initially remained confined to the realm of publishing (yet another interesting parallel to the neo-conservatives). From this ideological base however, (especially in the journal *Bahamas*), they gradually began influencing some of the most widely read radical left publications in Germany (*Konkret*, *Jungle World*), acquiring a position that enabled them to exert substantial influence once the events of '9/11' reconfigured the global political landscape. Prior to this, they had already vociferously attacked the alter-globalisation movement for its 'structural anti-Semitism' – witness its attacks on finance capital, and for finance capital read 'jew' – and substantially limited the involvement of the radical left in that movement. After September 11th, their discourses, structured around an axis not dissimilar to that of the Bush administration ('Western progress' vs. 'Islamic reaction'), began to obtain more and more support in the activist community, to a point where today their influence is such that the radical German left was reluctant to get involved in protests against a massive programme of welfare cuts (the 'anti-Hartz protests'), lest the slogans at these demonstrations acquire too much of a 'popular' and hence possibly anti-Semitic character. Recall here the Anti-Germans' fear of popular action, *especially* by Germans: as soon as a few Germans gather, the anti-Semitic mob is near!

Again, much of this might seem odd, but it is important to remember that the accusation of anti-Semitism (justifiedly) carries substantial political and moral weight in Germany, and no German radical – including myself, although an expat for a number of

The Anti-Germans wouldn't be such a problem, if in the last few years they hadn't split and partly immobilised the German radical left

years already – can easily ignore it. And ironically, this is where the Anti-German 'movement' might have the most corrosive and dangerous impact, not in splitting the radical left in Germany, but in diminishing the weight of the accusation of anti-Semitism. By accusing any position that diverges from theirs of actual, latent, structural, or whatever form of anti-Semitism, there is a real danger that in the near future, such a charge will not be taken seriously anymore.

And that would be more than a pity, it would be a danger. The Anti-Germans have some interesting critiques of standard left discourses: why, for example, do some Swedish radicals wear hoodies reading 'burn, Israel, burn'? *Is* there in fact a political danger in the mainstream alter-globalisation movement's focus on the critique of finance capital? *Is* support for the current Second Intifada perhaps actually support for a fundamentalist terror movement? Such debates ought to be had – but unfortunately, neither the Anti-Germans' extremely aggressive style of criticism, nor their packaging of such criticisms in an ideology that is ignorant of real power relations in the world make it likely that they will be had.

All pictures ▷ **Anti-German demonstration in Berlin, 3 October 2004**

Tadzio Müller <tadziom@yahoo.com> has been active in the European anti-capitalist movement, and is working on his PhD on the relationship between the global power of capital and local anti-capitalism at the University of Sussex

AUTOLABS: CRITIQUING UTOPIA

If government and corporate media are increasingly 'tactical' and 'devolved', do tactical media projects mirror strategic capitalist objectives or create real opportunities for oppositional expression? Brazil's 'third way' government has made high speed internet access on open source platforms available to its people through Telecentros across the country. **David Garcia** reports on a non-governmental project which tried to help the urban poor use these new resources to their own ends

LIBERTE-C!

MAIS MÚSICA MENOS TV
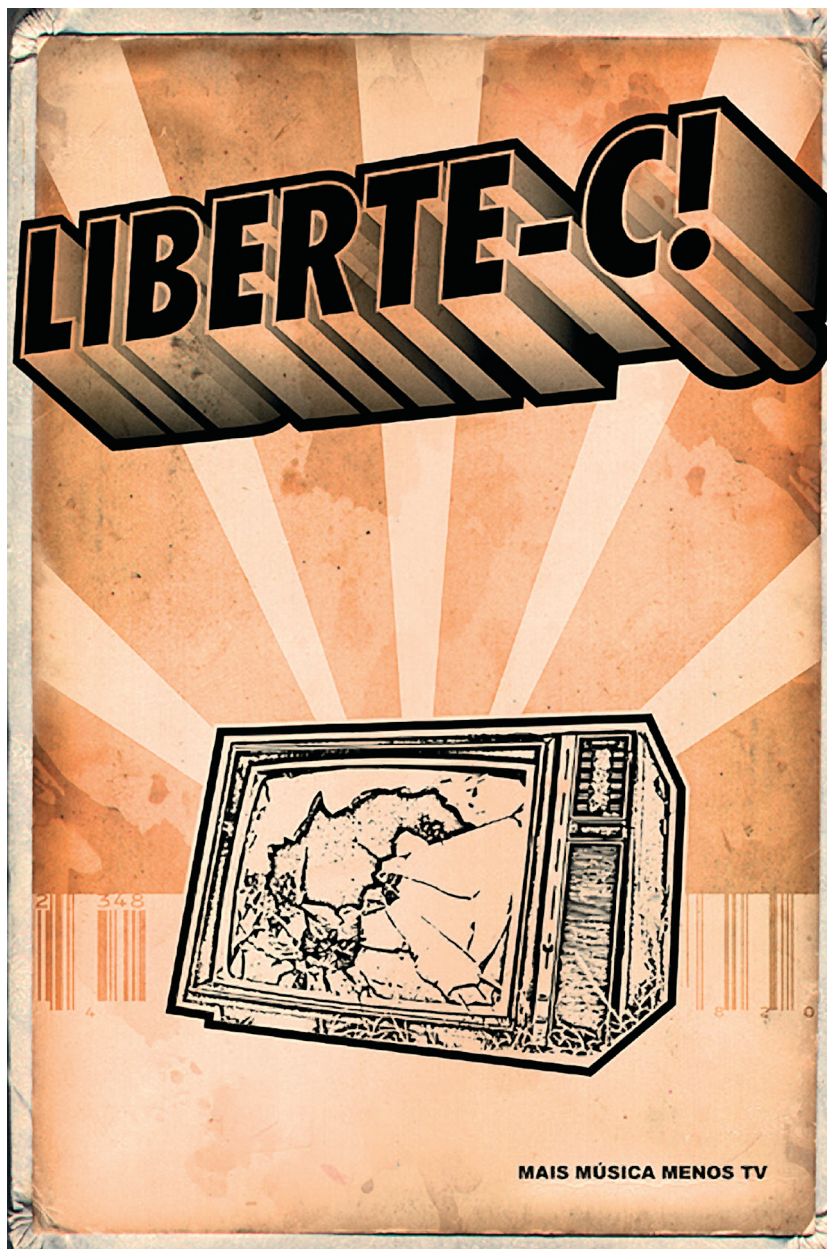
In Itaquera, one of the many poor districts on the eastern edge of Sao Paulo, something strange has been happening. Among the market stalls and street traders a surprising number of high priced shops can be found selling furniture and consumer electronics. In one of these shops a minor disturbance has broken out among the slick salesmen whose job it is to entice the local populace into a lifetime of debt. On their expensive widescreen TVs instead of football or the media giant Globo's endless diet of glossy soaps, through bursts of static the inflammatory graphic artist Latuff suddenly appears. A group of wide eyed youngsters watch as he demonstrates how stamps can be used to print provocative political slogans onto bank notes. Latuff is quickly followed by a group of teenage girls (some as young as 14) teaching other kids how to avoid pregnancy and AIDS with a hilarious demonstration of condom use. Obviously illegal, this intervention creates a momentary tear in the fabric of Brazil's hegemonic broadcast media reality, briefly signaling the existence of another world of expressive possibilities. But the fabric is swiftly re-stitched, the TVs almost immediately re-tuned, and their normal function as the narcotic dream machines of the Favelas resumes.

These interruptions to normal service originate from a series of live pirate transmissions whose source is a party just across the street. It's one of a series of events to mark the completion of Autolabs, an experiment in transplanting tactical media labs in free software from the comparatively privileged networks frequented by well educated artists and activists into three poor districts in the east of the city: Ermelino Matarazzo, Itaquera and São Miguel Paulista.

The fact that I was witnessing something more than just another NGO exercise in community education (the soft police) was evident from the fact that some of the instructors were winding up the project with a live practical demonstration of how to make pirate television. Brazil's government has already established the Telecentros, a justly famous network of free public internet access centres running on free software, but Autolabs tries to take things further. As its founders believe, extending and intensifying the free circulation of knowledge is not necessarily liberating in and of itself. They want to do more than merely perpetuate 'communicative capitalism's endless reflexive circuits of discussion.' Autolabs' alternative is to emphasise the critical and above all *expressive* potential of tactical media. Autolabs set out to create a network of autonomous spaces owned and maintained by people from the 'peripheral communities' in order to make their own media and develop 'visual, sonic and textual sensitivities, making social actions of collective utility possible.'

Since February 2004 Autolabs have been attempting to teach the principles and practices of tactical media where it matters most. Initiated by artist Giseli Vasconcelos 18 months after the success of the first Brazilian Tactical Media Lab (Mídia Tática), Autolabs was set up in close collaboration with the

All pictures this page ▷ **The Web Radio project in Ermelino Matarazzo**

I was witnessing something more than just another NGO exercise in community education (the soft police)

other members of the Mídia Tática group, Tatiana Wells and Ricardo Rosas. Each lab was constructed out of discarded computers, reconditioned, upgraded and connected into functioning networks. By the end of June 2004 three new media centres had been established based not only on open free software but also on a belief in and practice of autonomy. But this simple presentation of facts hides a complex and difficult journey marked by painful concessions and contradictions.

AUTONOMY AND REALITY

Many of the problems were caused by the organisers' understandable decision to pay not only Autolabs' instructors but also its participants. Naturally Autolabs was wildly over-subscribed. In the early weeks of the project the instructors were quite overwhelmed by the numbers. Many of the kids who turned up were simply there for the money, occasionally browsing the websites of popular TV programmes. It was only when Autolabs stopped paying participants that Autolabs proper could actually begin. With only the motivated students remaining, there was finally time and space for real communication and teaching to happen. Projects of real value gradually started to emerge: a

hip hop outfit set up their own website and mixed their CDs in the lab; a free radio group formed; also the above mentioned group of teenage girls, many of whom had been pregnant, began taking their safe sex message around the schools of the eastern zone. Confirming both Autolabs' success and its problematic proximity to mainstream media, the Autolabs are now being taken over as part of the government's Telecentros programme, with the most motivated of the kids themselves being employed as teachers. This is some way from the original lofty goal of creating truly autonomous centres, however, and the connection with Telecentros is seen by many as too much of a compromise.

EXCEPTIONAL BRAZIL?

Autolabs' ambiguous success cannot be understood without looking a bit more closely at Brazil's unique and contradictory media and software politics. From some perspectives there could not be a more hospitable soil for tactical media than Brazil. The national government has the world's most active policy on free software and the creative commons. There are enough facts to support the conclusion that this is not simply a matter of lip service. To begin with

there is a bill currently before the Brazilian parliament seeking to introduce a default Creative Commons licence for all cultural immaterial labour carried out in Brazil. A populist symbol of the current administration's commitment is the decision of the charismatic minister of culture and popular musician, Gilberto Gil, to release his next CD under a Creative Commons licence, much to the consternation of his record company.

The drive to integrate free software and media at all levels of society can also be seen in the Telecentros project, with hundreds of computer and media centres opened in poor districts providing high speed internet on open source platforms. One of the principal architects of the Telecentros, Sergio Amadeu, is currently being sued by Microsoft after an interview in which he compared the corporation to 'drug dealers' getting poor countries hooked by giving their products away.

The minister of culture's long term friend and associate Claudio Prado is now the driving force behind the ministry's latest ambitious initiative: the Polos Digitais, which involves a high speed roll out of hundreds of new media centres with training and guidance taking place in a large 'mothership' in the centre of Sao Paolo. Many local activists remain critical of the Polos Digitais programme, believing that the imminent regional elections will cause an otherwise worthwhile initiative to fail through excessive haste and a lack of understanding about which elements of the scheme will actually work in practice.

Brazil's radical approach to creative commons policy does not mean that the ruling Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, the Workers Party) is committed to wider social transformation. On this subject the sense of betrayal among activists in Sao Paulo is

Do Autolabs (and similar tactical projects) simply appear critical, at best providing a few jobs for the most cooperative members of the excluded classes?

palpable. Pablo Ortellado of Indymedia Brazil articulated the general disappointment, describing how the PT had once been 'as good [as] a political party can be', succeeding in uniting the radical splinters of the left into a coherent party with a real chance of power. But after narrowly losing the election before last, the PT transformed itself into a third way social democratic organisation. This has left the radical left more disillusioned than most. One symptom of its apathy is that a mega-city on the scale of Sao Paulo could only muster 7,000 marchers in the protests preceding the Iraq war. Rightly or wrongly the blame for much of this is laid at the door of the media giant, Globo. Globo's power to determine the outcomes of elections and influence key policy decisions is well known and the forest of aerials and satellite dishes across the rooftops of the shanty towns makes it plain. Even the poorest of the poor have television, if not refrigerators.

Bearing the government's third way agenda in mind, the new media training centres of the Polos Digitais programme look less benign. There is a temptation to dismiss or bypass such initiatives as boot camps designed to retrain, discipline and control a potential workforce for a neoliberal, IT orientated industrial era. But for Autolabs, at least, this paralysing critique is far too deterministic. Like all tactical media, Autolabs is based on the fact that new media are not just media, they are tools, making outcomes difficult to determine. Autolabs only makes sense if we assume that the intentions of strategic players do not inevitably prevail. As always the name of the game is appropriation. And the main question is, who

appropriates who? Those operating on the frontline of community activism understand that there is more to our world than ideology.

CRITICAL VOICES

At 'Finde', an event marking the end of the Autolabs project, some of the questions haunting tactical projects were given an airing. Wasn't the fetishisation of media itself a distraction from the real problems of poverty and class? Wasn't it time to reinstate the economic as the master signifier in such hegemonic struggles? But when I put this point to the free radio warriors and activists of Submídia (one of the groups acting as instructors at Autolabs as well as contributing their expertise in pirate media to help in the project's dissemination), they rejected the proposition without a moment's hesitation. Brazil, they insist, is a mediatised society of a particularly virulent nature in which vast swathes of the population are literally sedated by Globo's stream of soap operas. In the struggle against fundamental economic inequality, the reappropriation of media must come first.

But the questions continued to recur in various forms, both during and after the project's completion and assimilation into the Telecentros programme. Do Autolabs (and similar tactical projects) simply *appear* critical, at best providing a few jobs for the most cooperative members of the excluded classes? In a recent discussion with the Autolabs organisers I pursued this point in more detail, asking what kind of new 'critical' or oppositional options Autolabs have opened up for their participants. Can a project originating from 'outside' a community become the property of that community? One of the organisers, Tatiana Wells, responded by writing:

During my workshops I was sure it was owned by the community and we have many tapes and insights to prove it. Our participants 'also learnt how to have fun!' … discovering how the expressive use of the media can put us in control of our desires, that we are then free to communicate, in many different ways.
This is precisely the dimension denied in similar projects, such as the Telecentros. So learning low-tech editing, DIY sites and movies, graphic experimentation, free radio, learning how to recognise and interact with our desires is for me as critical as it gets.

Later in our exchange, Wells revealed a little more about the uncertainties surrounding the future of the existing Autolabs:

There was the moment that the project became distant from the community; it was when the last autolab workshop finished. The first thing they did was to change back the name it will be to 'Telecentro Caju SMP'. But for sure it will be a different kind of Telecenter if hosted by those who were part of the Autolabs, there [are] plans that at least one of the labs will host a radio station and cinema sessions. But our own participation is over and at the moment we are very unsure of how we can approach it again or continue [to] influence its workings.

BEYOND THE COMMONS

If the Brazilian State's use of the language and protocols of the Creative Commons to confront the increasingly restrictive dominion of intellectual property is unequalled, the work of the Mídia Tática group serves to illuminate the impotence of a policy of radical informational politics without a wider agenda for social and economic transformation. The hard lessons of Autolabs have not paralysed Mídia Tática: Digitophagy, their show at the Museum of Image and Sound in Sâo Paulo in October 2004, will directly address many of the questions raised by Autolabs while, through such projects, important new links are being forged both inside and outside of Latin America. Indeed the reason that the Autolabs project was not completely uncoupled from its values by entrenched local power brokers was that the organisers never lost touch with the autonomous forms of knowledge arising from their relationship to global networks of resistance. 🏃
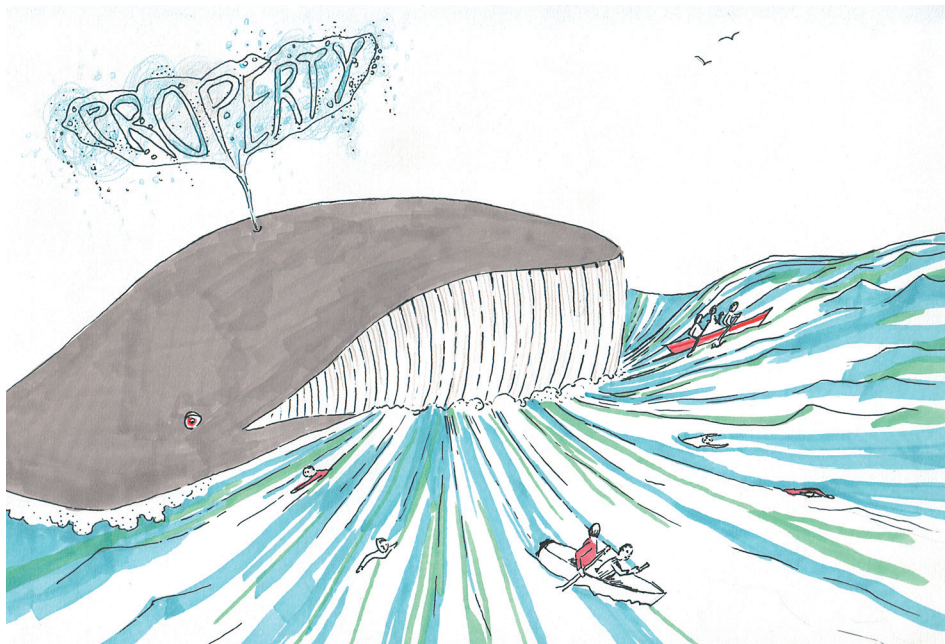
SIGNING AWAY SUBVERSION

JJ King observes with dismay the signing of this year's Berlin Declaration on Collectively Managed Online Rights, and suggests that it's high time to consider what we really mean when we talk about the 'commons'

A major project of this year's Wizards of OS conference in Berlin was the drafting of the Berlin Declaration on Collectively Managed Online Rights (subtitled, 'Compensation without Control'). Rightly condemning mass prosecution of file-sharers by corporate copyright holders, the Berlin Declaration offers an 'alternative compensation system'. Under this system,

rights holders would license their on-line rights to a collecting society [overseeing] the measurement of transfers of protected works over the internet and then compensat[ing] the rights holders based on the actual use of their files by end users. The funds from which the rights holders are compensated could be raised through any of a number of sources: voluntary subscription payments by end-users or proxies for them or levies on relevant associated goods and services, such as broadband internet connections, MP3 players and others, in addition to the levies on blank media, photo copiers, and so on which are already collected today.

An excellent article by Rasmus Fleisher has spelt out the various shortcomings of this proposal, which

are many. The surveillance implications alone – were such a system really to attempt tracking 'actual' use, rather than simply sampling it – are distressing, and suggestive of the sort of micro-control that should be lobbied *against* rather than for. In discussions around the proposal, network historian Florian Cramer has pointed out that it also demonstrates a limited understanding of the way in which networks are becoming increasingly ad hoc and unregulatable. The darknets growing within the internet, and the freenets gradually constituting themselves in cities and elsewhere will not submit easily to taxing and surveillance.

What is interesting about the Berlin Declaration (drafted explicitly 'to the European Commission') is that it represents one of the first real political forks within the so-called FLOSS 'movement'. It has helped define political boundaries in a field that, for some time now, has been rather resistant to delineation. The Declaration proposes a path of least resistance for a market threatened by the network/digital paradigm, using the compulsory licence model which (as must be well known by the majority of the signatories) would continue to provide revenue flow to traditional copyright holders for as long as they were able to maintain

control over majority media consumption. Under the proposed system, as Fleisher points out, Microsoft would stand to gain far more than, say, Debian or any other GNU-Linux flavour; Disney would benefit as much from its millions of goggling eyeballs as Indymedia would suffer from its (relatively) critical few. Which Free Software advocate, or proponent of 'free culture', would support a system which merely reproduces, and even entrenches the prevailing media regime?

Those who have seen in certain modes of organisation and distribution offered by communications technologies the possibility of a thoroughgoing disruption in property relations – not just in software, music or other 'creative' endeavours – have been disappointed to find advocates of 'free culture' backing this 'alternative' system. Didn't free culture mean, precisely, no more Microsoft, no more Hollywood? Apparently not. Wasn't the commons we were building supposed to outmode proprietary culture? Apparently not. If the Berlin signatories still believe any of this could happen, why would they make such a huge concession now, just when things were looking so promising?

And those of us who reject 'practical' quick-fix scenarios like the Berlin Declaration will be told that we are just dyed-in-the-wool anarchists, sacrificing real, pragmatic gains to idealism. Is your alternative, we will be asked, that everyone must work for free? No: just that proposals for 'remuneration' and 'compensation' for creative works take into account what many who are working in 'commons-based peer production' take as a given: that they are not simply working for free in the hope that some bright spark will come up with a way for them to get paid. They are also labouring under the noble idea that the modes of work they are developing are delineating a set of non-proprietary social relations for the future.

The Berlin Declaration ignores this rather prevalent sentiment entirely. This may be because its drafters do not believe it is a practicable dream. But the issue goes to the heart of what 'commons' actually means to those who so often invoke its name. To the drafters and signatories of the Berlin Declaration, the commons can only be conceived as subsisting within the current order, negotiated by its rules, existing by its dispensation and, some might suspect, serving its needs. Others still hope that the new modes of peer production and consumption they are experimenting with may grow to change the fabric of today's social relations. If the dreamers are right, then a system like the one proposed by the Berlin Declaration is bound to fail, as the culture industry it panders to crumbles around it. And if the dreamers are wrong? Well, it will certainly need more than a Declaration to save us. 🏃

WHAT MONEY CAN'T BUY

Benetton's corporate PR campaign against the Mapuche people in Argentina has broken up on the wave of independent media activism. **Sebastian Hacher** reports

The region called Patagonia reaches from the center of Argentina to where the continent touches the South Pole, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Andes mountain range. Patagonia is 30 percent of the territory of Argentina, about 780,000 km^2 where 80 percent of the oil reserves of the country are concentrated, as well as great water resources and some surviving areas of virgin land.

Mapuche means people of the land. They have been living in Patagonia for the last 13,000 years on both sides of the Andes (Argentina and Chile). The Mapuche considered themselves part of nature, with their own traditions, social and political organisations and language.

From 1872, the Argentine State tried to conquer their territory by all means possible. Julio A. Roca, Minister of War and later the country's president, finally achieved this goal annexing that great portion of land to Argentina using the tools of war: concentration camps and Remington machine guns.

As a result of the conquest, during the year 1885, the government made a one-off gift of 4,750,471 hectares of land to 541 people. Among them, one of the most important groups was the CTSA (Compañía Tierras del Sur Argentino, which means Lands of the Argentine South Company), formed in 1889, with offices in London and Buenos Aires.

BENETTON, THE NEW KING

A century later, during the 1990s, Argentina was going through a time of privatisation, the closing down of various industries and financial speculation. The land underwent the same fate and many foreign businessmen took advantage of the opportunity to buy wire-fenced paradises. All of them became owners of thousands of hectares, but nobody managed to reach the same level as Benetton. In 1991, the Italian group bought the CTSA and other lands which altogether added 900,000 hectares, about 9,000 km2.

From those lands, Benetton obtained 10-20 percent of the wool used in more than 100 million garments produced by the corporation every year. The group has 280,000 sheep and 16,000 cattle on its land. Benetton has also begun to diversify its activities over the last few years. One of the new businesses is logging. In 5,200 hectares of land they have planted a total of 5,500,000 pines of North American origin. 'As time goes by, the forest industry will gain in importance and perhaps equal or surpass the others', says Diego Perazzo, vice-president of the CTSA.

A NEW CONQUEST

From their arrival, the Benetton group became a symbol of the new colonisation of Patagonia. This became more evident in October 2002, when the Mapuche Curiñanco-Nahuelquir family were evicted from 500 hectares of land in Santa Rosa, an area located in Cordón de Leleque within the boundaries of Benetton's property. On 30 August, 2002 the local

Benetton office declared that the Santa Rosa ranch was owned by the company, issued a report claiming that the property was not to be used for cattle rearing and stated their intention to take control of it. After two months, the police dismantled and seized the Curiñanco´s belongings and the family returned to the city of Esquel. The same piece of land remains unoccupied today.

In May 2004, the provincial courts restored definitively that piece of land to the CTSA company, stating at the same time that the Mapuche family was innocent of any usurpation crime.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMERCIAL IMAGE

Ever since the conflict with the Mapuche people began, all the press strategy of the Benetton group has been in the hands of Burson Marsteller (BM)**1**, one of the world's greatest public relations corporations.

Although it's an almost unknown entity for the Argentine public, BM has a long tradition of working in the country. Its debut was during 1978, when it was contracted to white-wash the image of dictatorial president Jorge Rafael Videla and his government. The soccer World Championship was about to begin, and meanwhile 30,000 people had been kidnapped, tortured and assassinated; events which formed the backdrop to BM's famous campagin which ran the slogan 'Argentineans are right and human'. One of its objectives was to try to deflect the denunciations of human rights violations by the survivors, people in exile and the relatives of the disappeared.

BM present themselves as a consultancy firm 'managing relations between organisations and their different publics: clients, shareholders, mass media, government, community or employees'. They also sell themselves as experts in handling crisis, neutralising groups of activists and, above all, as capable of 'orientating the perception' of the great public.

HIDE THE MAPUCHE

Regarding the conflict with the Mapuche people, the strategy of BM and Benetton changed over time, but they always had a clear goal: to try to hide the real conflict. In the beginning, their activity was centered on denying that it was a political conflict, trying to demonstrate that this was a case of 'common delinquency'.
On the contrary, for the Mapuche it is a political and even an historic problem. In February 2003, the '11 de Octubre' organisation of the Mapuche community declared that 'Benetton's racism had become clear when they sued the Mapuche Curiñanco-Nahuelquir family for damages.' While circulating on the internet, the mainstream media didn't pay any attention to these Mapuche statements. It was only in September 2003 that some independent journalists made and showed a TV documentary about the conflict. At the same time, the circulation of information and pictures about the Benetton-Mapuche conflict grew across independent sites such as [http://argentina.indymedia.org/features/pueblos/] and [http://www.nodo50.org/azkintuwe].

On November 2003, an article dealing with this problem was published for the first time in English on [http://www.metamute.org] and another on [www.corpwatch.org]. Since then, the spontaneous translations, the screenings and the republishing of articles has become a near daily event on a huge scale.

In an official presentation, BM made a statement that would become unwittingly prophetic: 'A Company's reputation and the internet can be a dangerous combination … Once information is issued, it stays in cyberspace forever, it is impossible to erase it and, as such, it is necessary to deal with it.'

TO INVADE THE INTERNET

Since the net became 'Mapuche territory', Benetton's PR strategy has changed, and become increasingly desperate. 'We are dealing with a group of activists', said Federico Sartor, head of Benetton's press office, when talking about the Curiñanco-Nahuelquir family. At the same time, Sartor said that Company Lands of the Argentine South 'were independent of the Benetton group'. He also stated that their 900,000 hectares in Patagonia represented 'no more than 10 times the size of the nation's capital city'; when every school kid knows that the city of Buenos Aires is only 20,000 hectares.

But a new phenomenon was in the making. The international mainstream media, which had in the last year scarcely mentioned the conflict, was now catching on and had to use journalistic material produced by the alternative media as its main resource.

Two months before the trial in May 2004, a new website was launched [http://benetton.linefeed.org/] with dozens of translations reviewing the conflict with the Mapuche people. Other websites such as [http://www.mapuche-nation.org/] and [http://www.mapuche.nl/] had whole sections dedicated to the conflict. It also started to circulate a video internationally made by the group Gente de la Tierra (People of the Earth). As the trial came nearer, it became clear that activists' plan to 'overwhelm the public with alternative information' had paid off.

THE LAST ROUND

Things were difficult for Benetton. Seeing their PR strategy failing, when the trial date was at hand, BM and Benetton radically changed their approach stating that they had always wanted to dialogue with the Curiñanco family and that they did not consider them delinquents. In addition, Benetton claimed that they were preparing investments to employ more people in Argentina.

But it was already too late. On 26 May, the day of the trial, local TV channels transmitted live the legal discussion between the Curiñanco-Nahuelquir Mapuche family and the multinational Benetton. People could talk of nothing else.

In the court room, representatives of the Mapuche filed in, especially many female elders. At the end of the first trial day, after the judge ruled that the Mapuche could not be accused of delinquency, these same women improvised a traditional dance in the streets which was transmitted live to the rest of the country. Inside, while trying to get a journalist to listen to their version, one of Benetton's press officers wept with frustration.

Mauro Millán, the spokesman of the 'Organización Mapuche-Tehuelche 11 de Octubre', explained that 'We have managed to strike a big blow to Benetton, without even 1 percent of their resources'. On the failure of the corporate PR campaign he added 'there are things that money can't buy.' 🏃

FOOTNOTES

1 In English, a list of BM's activities:
http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/profiles/burson/burson4.htm.
For information on Burson Marsteller's work during the dictatorship, see 'Why, What' by Susana Kaiser, Department of Media Studies/ Latin American Studies Program, University of San Francisco, 'Argentina's Dapper State-Terrorist' by Marta Gurvich, *The Consortium Magazine*, 19/08/1998. In Spanish, for a large list of academic and historic sources on Argentina's dictatorship and BM see:
http://www.hum.gu.se/ibero/publikationer/anales3.4/pdf_artiklar/ fuster.pdf

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A CRISIS OF PRESENTATION

Sarah Cook looks at the current state of new media art curation in the UK and beyond

As one of the editors of CRUMB**1** part of my job is to discuss the practicalities of staging media art exhibitions, from their technical requirements to their theoretical underpinnings. Three questions often float to the surface:

1) Why is there no significant and dedicated space for new media art in London?

2) Don't you think we really need a historical exhibition of new media art (not Cybernetic Serendipity Version 2.0, but something else)? Because a) institutional curators don't know enough about where new media art has come from and hence don't understand it or b) it's been 10 years since we all got online and now everyone (Arts Council England, The Banff Centre's New Media Institute, ARS Electronica, even the International Festival of Computer Arts in Maribor) is putting out their anniversary book, and there are other and longer histories that need telling.

3) There is so much exciting new media art activity going on, why don't the institutional art organisations or museums / funding systems / mass media / art journalism / insert your field of interest here / pay more attention or get it? (Or, in more embittered terms, why does one festival get so much money to show their mostly commercial work while other more exciting new media projects get ignored?)

Without painting with too broad a brushstroke these all seem like the wrong questions, even when they come not just from artists but also from curators and funders inside the art system. They are valid questions (and they even have half-answers 1: I don't know, maybe because of 2a; 2: Maybe but that's going to be hard without dealing with 1 first; 3: Perhaps because we don't have 2b sorted yet), but they seem wrong for several reasons. Firstly, it's not productive to be negative about how new media art is being supported, exhibited, funded, and critiqued (as my colleague Beryl

Graham says, accentuate the positive, remind people that there are some great works of art out there!). Secondly, the questions focus on the continued perceived need for a specific separate space for the presentation of new media art, and is that really what we want or what the field needs?

In August 2004, CRUMB shared a panel at ISEA with Steve Dietz whose paper**2** eloquently presented one possible way in which curators might move beyond these three questions (in a global, not UK-specific context). He reiterated what is often noted on the CRUMB mailing list, that 'computational, interactive, networked media, present specific challenges for the curator and presenting organisation', but that we recognise 'curating new media art is just like any other curating only different. Or … curating new media art has led to a richer understanding of curating other contemporary art.' Dietz, perhaps more than any other curator, is aware of the problems of curating media art when one considers its lack of spaces, historiography, or attention paid by the mainstream art world. Nevertheless, he called for us to adopt a position of confidence in light of new media art's success and concluded with the statement that new media has 'won' and that it would be inappropriate, not to mention lazy, to consider any work of contemporary art without taking new media into account. We should see ourselves as working in the field of 'art after new media', he said.

Dietz was not suggesting that new media specific exhibitions be abandoned (after all, he is directing the next ISEA in San Jose), any more than he was advocating that a renewed sense of cheerfulness would get around the crisis of presentation facing new media art (though, obviously, as Graham points out, it helps!). Rather, he was calling for more serious attention to be paid to the work. But herein lies the paradox: how do you remain specific about the medium as well as make a conscious effort to move out of the ghetto?

Which brings us back to the questions. As Josephine Berry Slater qualifies in her commissioning email for this text:

> It's arguable that the need for [dedicated new media] spaces is undermined by the fact that now the equipment needed for showing new media work is widely available… that a lot happens online in a chaotic, emergent way… [that] the whole networked, multiple, mutant, generative aspect of the genre is totally focused on obliterating centralist, hierarchical structures of representation in the first place.

This is all true. Another argument is that as much as some curators champion the media arts, there simply isn't a public for it. Without contextualisation and connection to a known art experience it's asking a lot for a general public to step into a darkened room – so say some of the curators on the CRUMB list. Add that to the fact that it can't be sustained economically on the operating budgets available to mainstream city or regional art galleries around the UK and there you have the beginnings of an answer to the question of why there isn't a space for showing new media art.

We need exhibitions that engage with the themes and symbolic forms of contemporary times (maybe we need something like MoMA's 1970 show Information)

And London? New media art production is flourishing in the regions, in part because of economies of scale, but its presentation is still limited and functions on an ad hoc basis, through festivals, one-off events, and in educationally supported environments. The brightest blip on the radar is FACT, an exciting place that has been well branded to exhibit media, most notably screen-based work. Up and comers Peterborough Digital Arts are doing a fine job of trying to expand notions of new media art from the cinematic to the networked. But frankly, I fear equally for the future of the media-specific venues such as FACT, PDA and Stills (witness the demise of the photo-based organisations across the UK in the early 1990s), as I do for the more mainstream visual-arts based organisations (Site Gallery, Spacex, the Reg Vardy Gallery or Cornerhouse, to name a handful), many of which have attempted to incorporate digital art into their contemporary art programmes but still have a hard time getting their share of market attention. It seems that audiences and funders prefer it to be kept separate, out of the galleries and in the auditorium, or as its own special time-based programme.

I worry that we wouldn't get anywhere by having a UK exhibition equivalent of important exhibitions such as BitStreams or 010101 five years too late. It's a fine line between scholarly and considered attention to medium and outright ghetto-creating formalism that might further alienate the public that [9]we need to sustain our programming. Witness Margot Lovejoy's revised book *Digital Currents*[3] – the more she questions the specifics of the medium of new media art, the more she questions what art is at all. This isn't necessarily going to get any easier (although talking about new media art taxonomies, identifying its historical precedents, and contextualising it within other forms of art practice will help). No, we don't need another new media specific art exhibition. We need exhibitions that engage with the themes and (to use Lev Manovich's term) symbolic forms of contemporary times (maybe we need something like MoMA's 1970 show Information). Some of the works in these imagined exhibitions could come from an untold history of media art, some from its untold future.

Sadly, I think new media remains marginalised within the wider visual arts context because we have trouble branding ourselves and marketing our programming to the wider public. This is as much to do with the audiences familiarity (or lack of) with technology – it being mistaken for a tool of interpretation, for instance – as it is to do with our own curatorial quandaries in demarcating the field of practice of new media art and contextualising it. Too often we tailor our projects to the size of the boxes dreamed up by funders. Whether we are presenting new media work within mixed media organisations or media-specific galleries themselves, the argument of how the work 'fits' the programme is the one that most often ends in a stalemate. We need to find ways through this, perhaps by acknowledging we work in the diverse field of 'art after new media', and perhaps simply by being more serious about the work and what it is trying to say, on the level of both form and content. Stop asking why there is nowhere to show it and instead work on what it needs to get seen and appreciated.
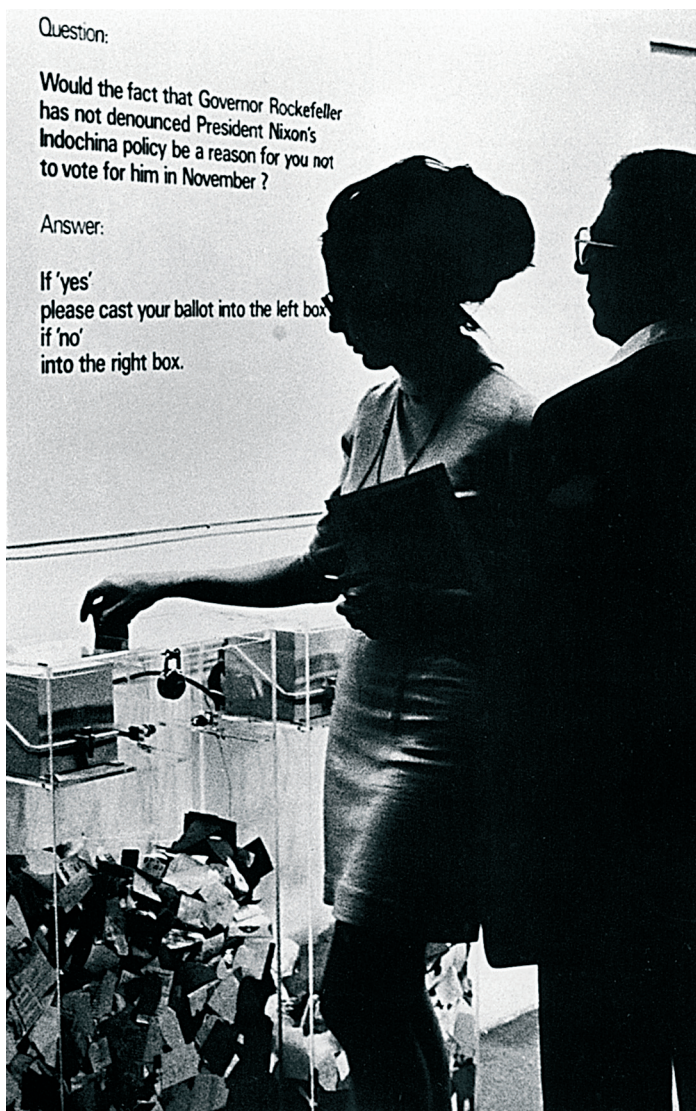
FOOTNOTES

1 CRUMB is an online organisation that facilitates professional development for curators engaged in new media art , see
http://www.crumbweb.org

2 Steve Dietz 'Art After New Media' (presentation at ISEA 2004) online at http://www.yproductions.com

3 Margot Lovejoy, *Digital Currents: Art in the Electronic Age*, London: Routledge, 2004.

Sarah Cook <sarah.e.cook@sunderland.ac.uk> has co-curated The Database Imaginary with Steve Dietz and Anthony Kiendl. The show opened at the Walter Phillips Gallery at the Banff Centre in November 2004 (and touring)

Left page ▷ Installation view from the net_condition exhibition, ZKM Karlsruhe, 1999
Above ▷ Hans Haacke, *MoMA Poll*, installed at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, for the duration of the Information exhibition, 1970

DISOBBEDIENTI CIAO

Hydrarchist analyses the death of the Italian extra-parliamentary political network, Disobbedienti (Disobedients), and reports on the rise of social precarity as a focus of political action in Italy

No formal announcement certified the end of the Disobedients (Disobbedienti) in Italy but the once dominant extraparliamentary network's demise seems scarcely in dispute. What originated as the 'White Overalls' (WO) alliance between groups in the Veneto, Rome and Milan in 1998, encompassing satellite groups in other cities, is now in full decomposition as its constitutent elements abandon the logo and reassume identities related to their everyday territorial reality. The consequences are manifested both in a reshuffling of the relationships between the movements and the political parties, and a plurality of campaigns as the focus of struggle. But first some background and explanation.

The widespread riots and fierce police repression that accompanied the G8 in Genoa dealt a mortal blow to the model of controlled conflict and hybridisation with other political forces that had constituted the WO project since 1998. A language of heightened confrontation was adopted prior to the G8, but the scale of state reprisals found them unprepared. Afterwards there was a failure to assess what had really happened, as each group attempted to distance itself from responsibility. But repression can also produce unity and trans-regional ties were galvanised between some of the fractious inheritors of Autonomia

The Disobedients were perceived as threatening to hegemonise and erode the autonomy of other groups

Operaia (where a strong Rome – Padua axis can be traced to the late '60s), the youth section of Rifondazione Communista (RC – an offshoot of the old Communist Party and still a major force on the reformist left) and the Greens around a platform of 'social disobedience'. Thus occurred an apparently seamless transition from White Overalls to Disobedients, presented as a laboratory for experimentation with new political forms rather than a proposition for any type of unitary organisation. Nonetheless the new network suffered numerous defections due to exhaustion, unhappiness with the way in which Genoa had been managed, and from a

sense that the open and experimental spirit which fuelled the WO had now disappeared. From this point onwards the Disobedients would be perceived as a force threatening to hegemonise and erode the autonomy of other groups. Their national nature, media-presence and involvement with political parties made them easy to cast as imperialist and overbearing.

Apart from a shared hostility to the suffocating and disciplinary pressures of the Communist Party there have always been radical differences in the autonomist left as to the attitude to assume towards elections. From 1976 some 'extraparliamentary' groups ran candidates on the list of Democrazia Proletaria (absorbed by RC in 1992). Participation was justified as a means to construct counter-power and extend the dynamic of conflictuality to these institutions. Others assumed an abstentionist position, rejected mediation and advocated social autonomy – the daily unfolding of material conflict in perpetual antagonism to politics, understood as an institutionalised management of social conflict.

Relations with the parties vary according to local factors, which in Italy can never be underestimated. In the Veneto (Padua, Venice) acute hostility towards the Communist Party tradition combined with the evisceration of concentrations of labour in the factories – the Veneto's restructured economic form based on small-scale networked production has made it a textbook example of post-fordism – and the importance of environmentalism have made the Greens the post-autonomists' political vehicle of choice. Being a 'salon' party with neither tradition or a consolidated grassroots, the Greens are less resistant to new ideas, more malleable to internal reconfiguration. The relationship has allowed the translation of the autonomists' strong territorial presence into an increased political visibility and thus provided a greater margin for action. There are concrete benefits as well: the stability of occupied spaces; the ability to create structures with which its militants can survive materially; and legitimation through a role in local government.

Meanwhile in Rome the chaotic urgency of the metropolis produces self-organised reappropriation for the resolution of basic needs, especially housing. RC remains an important force in the city and contains significant pro-movement elements. Here the Disobedients have reformed around ACTION (Agency for Social Rights), driven by activists from the social centre Corto Circuito, which has won accomodation for more than a thousand people through occupations and earned considerable

respect. Since 1997 they have also elected city and district councillors as independents on the list of RC, a relationship which extends their capacity to negotiate over housing and provides protection from otherwise certain police prosecution. In both Rome and the Veneto work with migrants for housing and papers has been central in recent years – and this extends to libertarians and activists of all stripes – and has been an area where intervention at an institutional level is both useful and inevitable.

FRACTURE

Tensions over the relationship with the political parties came to a head in the Disobedients during the European elections in June. Whilst the Veneto section supported the candidacy of the Greens' Bettin, the Romans ran a popular candidate on the list of RC, Nunzio D'Erme, famous for having dumped several bags of manure in front of Berlusconi's Roman residence. Polling better than expected, he was their fifth highest vote-winner nationally. RC's share of the vote gave them five seats to distribute but D'Erme was passed over in favour of Niki Vendola, from the South where the RC are currently enjoying considerable growth. Given that a candidate from the

Some type of relationship with the political system remains unavoidable, even if unformalised or unwitting

North-East was given a seat with a far smaller number of votes, this was understandably viewed as betrayal, and evidence of a cynicism towards the movements to which it had professed an openness since the mid-'90s. This crisis polarised existing divisions within the Disobedients and political bloodletting on a local level lead to a reversion to local identities and a retreat from hybridisation. RC are now openly in cahoots with the government-in-waiting of Romano Prodi, whose Grand Democratic Alliance will challenge and probably defeat Berlusconi at the next election. Consequently the radical left needs to reposition itself with respect to the future

power structure, both to get what they need and retain a clear oppositional profile.

Nonetheless some type of relationship with the political system remains unavoidable, even if unformalised or unwitting. How one conceives the purpose of representation will fashion the terms on which it occurs. One vision explicitly legitimises local politics as a space to establish a counterweight to the deterritorialising tendency of globalised production, and a stage for practical demonstrations of counter-government. Here parallels are made with Zapatista autonomous communities, which, transposed to Italy, has meant involvement at a municipal level and the election of councillors. Elsewhere Antonio Negri recently set out criteria for the relationship with party politics in general, insisting on the absolute primacy of the social movement over political parties, whose legitimation resides solely in their capacity to serve, resource and open up political space for extra-political activity.[1] Accordingly, party alliances are justified provided that the relationship is not one of subalternity (whereby parties exploit social movements so as to rebuild their diminishing base) but 'navigational' authority, where party direction derives from demands expressed externally. Handily enough this both functions as a justification for the past as well as a programme for the future, and an argument for keeping RC at arms length.

In the meantime the rapid rise to prominence of social precarity as a political flash-point has seen an influx of former Disobedients (now rebranded as 'Invisibles' and 'Global') into the organisation of the Mayday parade in Milan.[2] A derivative network named PreCog – precarious and cognitive workers – has taken shape in the last year, popularising the cult of San Precario, mythopoetical patron saint of dispossessed but combative subjects, with the intention of rejuvenating the popular imagination of a fight for new social rights. As a network PreCog contains many sensibilities external to the former Disobedients including a 'Neurogreen' tendency (environmentalist and libertarian with a focus on imposing pressure at local and European level) which sees in the Green Party a vehicle for more flexible political opposition and a global environmentalist sensibility proper to the problems of advanced capitalism. Meanwhile the social autonomy perspective within PreCog and the the 'National Network for a Guaranteed Income', which continues to prioritise the diffuse conflictuality of the 'precariat' and its ability to configure the social balance of forces, is also in a process of growth and

700 participants filled their trolleys with goods, and blocked the cash registers chanting 'everything costs too much!

recomposition.**3** In spite of these heterogeneous approaches the outline of a shared trajectory emerged around the question of income, encompassing the national demonstration for a guaranteed income on 6 November 2004 and next year's Mayday Parades.

THE PRECARIAT STRIKES BACK!

The simmering tension between parties and movements came to a head during the November demonstration. Under the playful acronym GAP – Grand Alliance of the Precarious, a parody of Prodi's Grand Democratic Alliance – workplace committees from Alitalia to care-workers, grassroots trade unions, and social centres of every hue converged for direct actions of reappropriation to protest the increasing cost of living and demand access to wealth and a street parade through the city centre. 'Autoreduction' is an Italian term for imposing a discount 'from below' and it was planned to perform one in a suburban supermarket. Having neutralised police attention through cunning use of the subway system, the protestors arrived eventually in Pietralata, immortalised in Pasolini's films *Theorem* and *Accatone*, where a shopping centre owned by Berlusconi is handily located by the train station. Once inside 700 participants filled their trolleys with goods, and blocked the cash registers chanting 'everything costs too much!' Negotiation began with

management for a discount of 70 percent for everyone in the store, but in the meantime many people simply walked out with their trolleys and began distributing goods to families and pensioners, drinking wine and sharing sweets. This gesture was initially met with incredulity, but soon the party was in full swing. Meanwhile the electronics and clothing departments upstairs were by now in the grip of frenzy: computers, phones, DVD players and flat-screen monitors made their way out the door. At this point many 'ordinary shoppers' had succumbed to repressed desire and started to help themselves. Faced with a plainly uncontrollable situation the small number of police present were powerless. Later that day it had been planned to distribute copied DVDs inside the Feltrinelli book and entertainment chain as a symbolic rejection of copyright laws that limit access to culture and knowledge. Echoes of the morning however were too strong; as the demonstration passed by 200 people entered, filled their arms with books and charged back out into the street into the street parade of 25,000 people: workers committees, migrants, grassroots trade unions, house occupants and students, and a hundred other shades of precarity.

Predictably the media and political class have embarked on a hysterical condemnation of these actions, and have attempted to impute responsibility to the Disobedients, who as recounted above scarcely exist. Arrests and a 'zero-tolerance' policy have been promised. Notwithstanding the brouhaha, commentators have had to acknowledge both a widespread sympathy for what happened and the emergence of the precariat as a problem henceforth at the centre rather than the margins of society.**4** Individual MPs from both the Greens and RC have even expressed support, but the parties have officially distanced themselves from the acts, widening the schism between movement and orthodox forms of representation. RC's current fixation with consensus and terror at any taint of illegality that could be depicted as being violent makes constructive cooperation nigh impossible. Here no violence was

involved and the action was performed without any attempt to conceal participants' identities, a fact for which participants will pay a heavy legal price.

Amidst all this however, GAP has maintained a tortured silence, torn between the need to respond whilst under the public eye and the distrust of collective utterance and representation which remain unresolved. Journalists have filled this void by nominating former Disobedients as the voice of the precarious. This unhelpful personalisation derives from their use of 'spokespeople' – in fact leaders – that monopolised media coverage of the 'no-global' period. Such distorted representations allow the action to be pigeonholed as belonging to pre-fabricated media constructions – 'autonomists', 'Disobedients', 'inheritors of '77' – cast as alien to people's everyday experience of contradiction with their living conditions, and so inhibiting any broader social identification with the practice.**5**

A renewed realism as to the acute difficulties faced in everyday life underlies the emphasis on precarity. Spiralling rents, an increased cost of living, and poor social/labour mobility – not to mention the apocalyptic turmoil worldwide – are generating a pervasive sense of uncertainty about the future. In the absence of a substantial social welfare buffer, this focus enables a narration of needs and desires in the first-person and facilitates a rupture with discourses of the 'no-global' period which often lapsed into a jaded third-worldism, where the 'serious' problems were often exoticised or abstracted as somebody else's, somewhere else.

Social movements in Italy function best when external factors oblige cooperation and marginalise intra-movement rivalry, yet an inability to coldly appraise the efficiency of discarded strategies threatens to nullify the benefits of experience. The Gordian knots of representation, relations with the institutions, and internal and network democracy are not going away. With a centre-left government on the horizon, and the fertile ground for reactionary demagogy that promises, the challenge will be to maintain abrasive contestation, autonomous from the party system, without being relegated to the margins, where the only dividend is unceasing police attention. ⚑

FOOTNOTES

1 Antonio Negri, 'Contro il pensiero molle dell'organizzazione', *Posse*, Nuovoi Animali Politici, Manifesto Libri, April 2004
2 http://www.globalproject.info and http://www.euromayday.org
3 See http://www.incontrotempo.info
4 For a good introduction to the politics and cartography of precarity, see *Green Pepper*'s issue devoted to the theme. http://www.greenpep-permagazine.org and of course this issue of *Mute*, pp. 87-105
5 Hierarchical political action remains prevalent in Italy, a fact often missed

Hydrarchist is a researcher and contrarian

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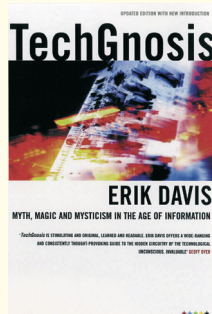
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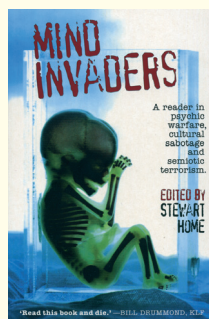
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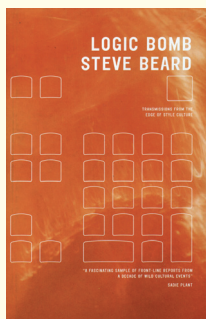
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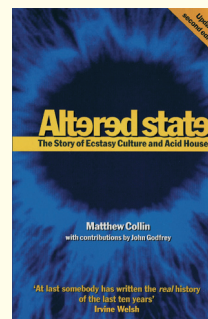
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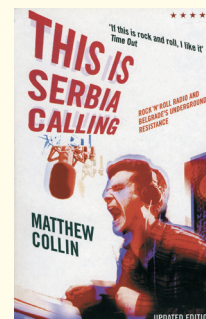
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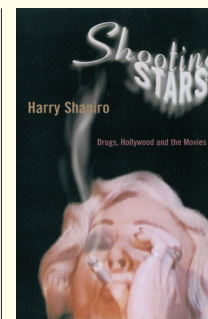
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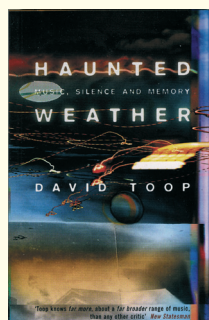
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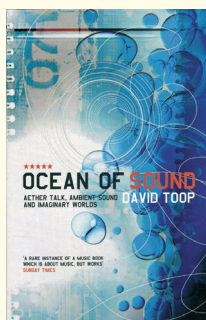
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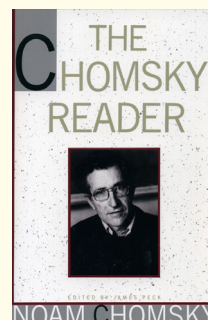
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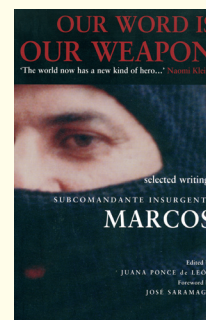
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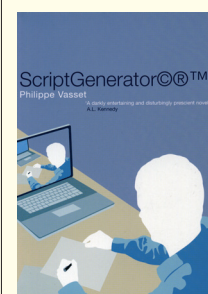
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Trends I
Alberto Martín

4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Trends II
Alberto Martín

Collecting in Mexico I
Víctor Zamudio-Taylor

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Politics of the Image I
Alberto Martín

Collecting in Mexico II
Víctor Zamudio-Taylor

**Contemporary Art in Mexico:
Defining the Emergent**   Pablo Helguera

SATURDAY 12

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Art in the Garden of Diverging Paths
Ángel Kalenberg

Coming Communities IV
Peter Weibel

Curating for Today's Museums and Art Spaces I
Enrique Juncosa

Starting Young: How Do You Get a Museum Position
Peter Doroshenko

**Are Private Collectors the Best Curators and
Museum Directors?**   Martin Schwander

4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Possible Post-Biological Art
Ángel Kalenberg

Coming Communities V
Peter Weibel

Curating for Today's Museums and Art Spaces II
Enrique Juncosa

Independent Curating Outside the Museum
Peter Doroshenko

Biennials I
Adriano Pedrosa and Hans Ulrich Obrist

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**An Aesthetic Slant on Numeric Arts: Poetics
and Perspectives** Ángel Kalenberg

Coming Communities VI
Peter Weibel

Asian Maps: Curating and Criticism
Menere Gras

**The Learning Curve: A Dialogue Between Young and
Seasoned Collectors** Amy Goldrich

Biennials II
Adriano Pedrosa and Hans Ulrich Obrist

SUNDAY 13

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Miami: New Collecting and Its Influences
Silvia Karman Cubiñá

Curating for Today's Museums and Art Spaces III
Enrique Juncosa

Spaces for Culture / The Spaces
Arie Graafland and Key Portilla-Kawamura

Painting Only I
Brian Müller

4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Curating for Today's Museums and Art Spaces IV
Enrique Juncosa

Spaces for Culture / The Culture
Arie Graafland and Key Portilla-Kawamura

Painting Only II
Brian Müller

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

The Collector as Patron
Silvia Karman Cubiñá

THURSDAY 10

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Magazines not. Atypical and Experimental Editorial
Projects I**   Ricardo Antón

Politics of the Image II
Alberto Martín

Private Collections, Public Spaces
Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo

Non Objetualisms in Mexico 1963-1983
Pablo Helguera

**International Post-Graduate Programmes in Art
and Critical Studies**   Peter Doroshenko

4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

**Magazines not. Atypical and Experimental Editorial
Projects II**   Ricardo Antón

Art and Technology
Alberto Martín

Young Collectors
Mimi Dusselier

**Mexican Art of the Eighties on Both Sides of the Rio Bravo:
Neo-Mexicanism or Neo- Commercialism** Pablo Helguera

**International Post-Graduate Programmes in Art and
Critical Studies II** Peter Doroshenko

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

The Charismatic Ideology of the Art, a Sexist Logic
Xabier Arakistain

The Image by Its Authors
Alberto Martín

Large European Collectors
Mimi Dusselier

Mexico City in the Art of the Nineties
Pablo Helguera

Educational Tools for Curating
Peter Doroshenko

FRIDAY 11

11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**From the Unimaginable Museum to the Virtual Museum
Stopping Over at the Imaginary Museum**   Ángel Kalenberg

Coming Communities I
Peter Weibel

**Politics of Equality Between Men and Women in the Art
World: Designing Strategies I**   Xabier Arakistain

Back to the Museum I
Alberto Martín

Experimental Communities I
Carlos Basualdo and Reinaldo Laddaga

What's Next After Art School? I
Peter Doroshenko

4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

When Illusory Optic Art Makes Way for Tactile Haptic Art
Ángel Kalenberg

Coming Communities II
Peter Weibel

**Politics of Equality Between Men and Women in the Art
World: Designing Strategies II**   Xabier Arakistain

Back to the Museum II // Conservation
Alberto Martín

Experimental Communities II
Carlos Basualdo y Reinaldo Laddaga

What's Next After Art School? II
Peter Doroshenko

6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

**And the Ship Sails On: Visual Spaces Afloat in Virtual
Reality** Ángel Kalenberg

Coming Communities III
Peter Weibel

Mobility and Metropolis
Arie Graafland

Collecting
Alberto Martín

**Now What Do We Do? Collecting (Previously)
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PEAK OIL AND NATIONAL SECURITY: A CRITIQUE OF ENERGY ALTERNATIVES

The notion that global oil production is about to reach its peak before entering irreversible decline – the 'Peak Oil' hypothesis – is cited by some significant anti-Bush groups as a major driver for US military imperialism in the Middle East.

But is the world's supply of oil really about to run out? And is the anti-Bush campaigners' call for US energy independence as the solution to national and global energy problems as progressive as it might seem?

George Caffentzis and the Midnight Notes collective have offered a reading of the two Gulf Wars as being about more than just oil, stressing the role of ongoing US military campaigns in enforcing the profit-driven imperatives of neoliberal globalisation at the expense of an increasingly immiserated – and unruly – global proletariat.

Here, Caffentzis gives a detailed analysis of contemporary energy politics and argues that a politically alternative project of national energy independence that does not challenge the neoliberal order is not alternative enough
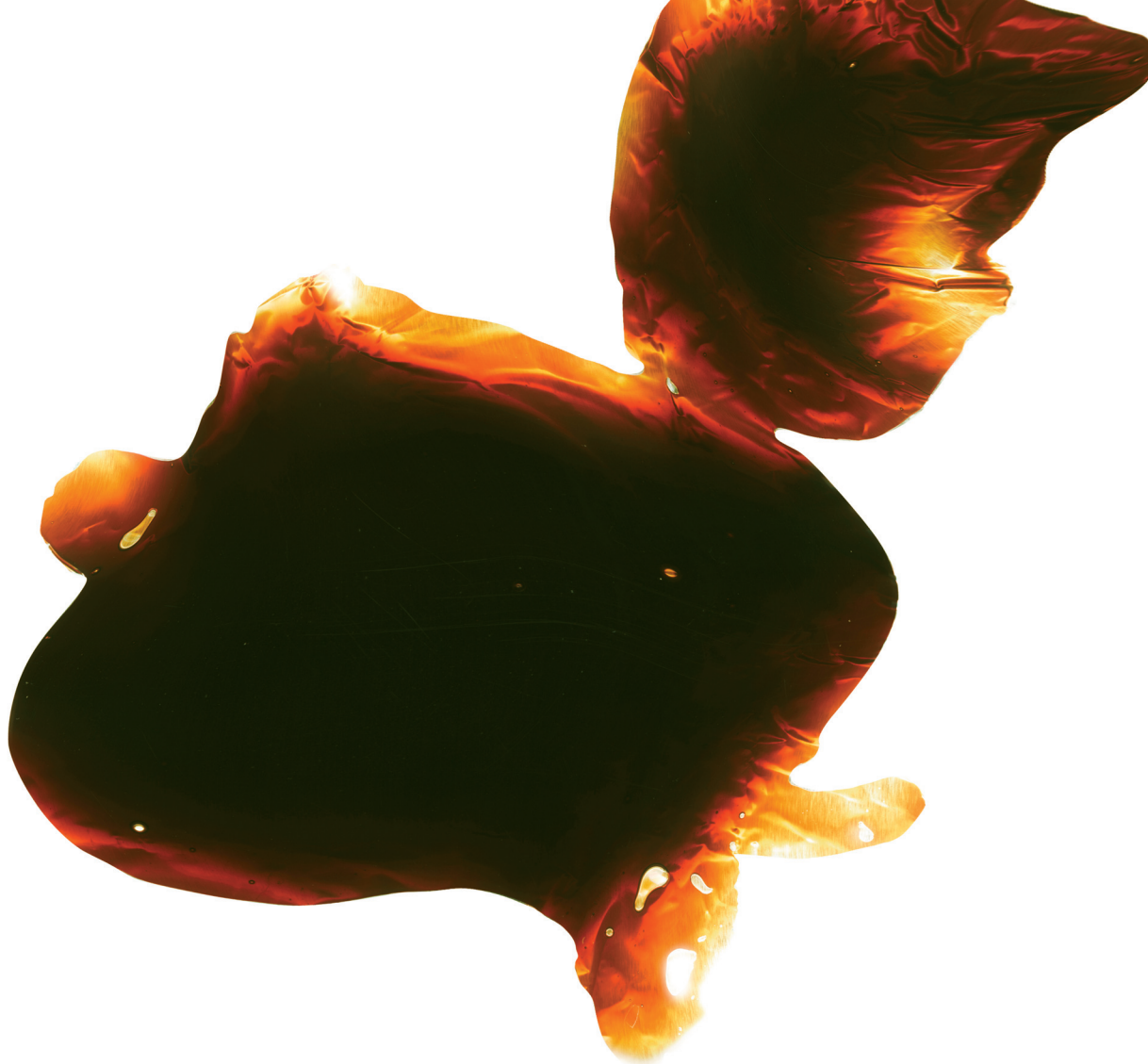
The discussion of energy politics in the US is now dominated by two competing paradigms. One is promoted by the Bush Administration and its corporate allies and the other by a wide assortment of liberal and left-wing NGOs and analysts (and occasionally by the corporate supporters of the 'Gore-wing' of the Democratic Party which includes, from time to time, John Kerry). The Bush paradigm is all too familiar: the 'real' energy crisis has nothing to do with the natural limits on energy resources, but is due to the constraints on energy production imposed by government regulation and the OPEC cartel. Once energy production is liberalised and the corrupt, dictatorial and terrorist-friendly OPEC cartel is dissolved by US-backed coups (Venezuela) or invasions (Iraq), according to the Bush folk, the free market can finally impose realistic prices on the energy commodities (which ought to be about half of the present ones), and stimulate the production of adequate supplies and a new round of spectacular growth of profits and wages.

This Presidentially-approved paradigm is receiving decisive practical criticism from millions of pro-Chavez demonstrators and voters in the streets of Caracas and from

thousands of resistance fighters in Falluja and Najaf. I will leave its fate in their hands.

In this article I examine the other, more sympathetic energy paradigm in the field. Its key components are: (a) the claim that the time when oil production permanently outpaces discovery of 'new' oil is nearing (often called 'the Peak Oil hypothesis'); (b) a view of the United States as being a powerful nation state whose government is moved by 'national security' imperatives in its energy politics. This paradigm is politically problematic for those opposed to the Bush Administration's imperialist energy policy, not because its component parts are completely false, but because these parts come together to form a misleading and disarming totality.

In order to make good on my criticism, let me review the paradigm's component parts.

PEAK OIL

Up until early modern times, miners, natural philosophers and other 'experts' believed that gold, silver and other minerals (like coal) were vegetable-like in that when mined they would literally grow back like a snipped rose bush. This insight in the case of coal and its

Oil consumption is growing, old oil fields are drying up, and new fields – objectively rare – are expensive to find and exploit. A price hike of dramatic proportions looms

other hydrocarbon cousins in gaseous and liquid form was not wrong in principle (they are the residue of ancient organisms), but it was mistaken as a practical maxim, for the time it would take normal geological processes to transform organic matter into coal, natural gas and petroleum is in the order of millions of years. Consequently, these fuels are, for all intents and purposes, finite, non-renewable energy resources.

This finitude forms the theoretical basis of modern geology. But it has often haunted capitalists extracting profits from the production of the major energy-

producing hydrocarbons (e.g., in the late 19th century there was a fear that coal supplies would soon run out), since the extent of this finitude was difficult to gauge. Is the exhaustion of coal, oil and natural gas near (a couple of decades) or far off (a couple of centuries)? The energy industry in the past tended to put the actual total exhaustion of coal, natural gas and oil reserves as far into the future as plausibly possible. But the industry's deferral of its death has recently been abandoned. (This was, perhaps, signaled by British Petroleum's retagging of its acronym as 'Beyond Petroleum'). For it is increasingly recognised that the decisive question posed by the finitude of, for example, oil is not the *static* one: how much time there is from the present to the pumping of the last drop of oil out of the last extant field on the planet. The important question is *dynamic*: when will oil production *permanently* outpace new finds, *begin* to deplete the world's reserves and to *tendentially* decline? This inflection point, of course, will occur much earlier than the complete depletion of oil, gas and coal. It is often called 'peak oil', since it is the point when production definitively outpaces the replacement of exhausted fields by newly discovered ones. Once this 'peak oil' point is reached and passed, geology and economics dictate a new era of expensive oil.

Oil companies are now desperately trying to position themselves to be able to stake out and possess the remaining oil areas on the planet. According to the widely recognised reasoning, if the companies do not make their claims now, they will be left out of the price boom in the first half of the 21st century caused by a decline in production and an increase in demand. This consensus is based on the work of M. King Hubbert in the 1950s who accurately predicted that US non-Alaskan oil production would peak around 1969 (the actual peak was in 1972). Extrapolating Hubbert's work on the US to the whole planet, geologists like Colin Campbell, Jean H. Laherrere and Craig Bond Hatfield have noted that the number and size of new oil discoveries have been falling since the 1960s and are rapidly heading to zero. They also note that the larger fields are usually found first, while there are diminishing returns on new exploratory wells recently.

Since oil consumption is growing at approximately two percent per year, while the old oil fields are drying up and new fields are expensive to find and exploit as well as being objectively rare, a price hike of dramatic proportions looms.

It follows that the owners of large quantities of 'old' oil still in the ground (mostly the governments of Middle East OPEC nations) are becoming notionally richer by each coming year even if they do not extract any oil during that year and that all the profit to be made out of the production of 'new' oil now lies in the hitherto neglected geographical 'margins' of the planet. Both invite scenarios licensing imperialist interventions. On the one side, the Middle East's governments' nationalised 'banks of "old" oil' are becoming even more desirable objects of control and possession as the local 'peak oil' points are met and passed outside the region. Thus the US government's sudden interest in invading Iraq and Iran and occupying them – as its troops are already stationed in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain – is immediately understandable. On the other side, it is exactly in the drive to the margins to find 'new' oil that all the horrors of the primitive period of the oil industry are returning. Indigenous people must be driven from their lands; previously uncontaminated waters and lands must be polluted; cultures, peoples and ecologies must be exterminated. But these peoples – from the Chiapans to the U'wa to the Ogonis to the West Papuans – are resisting their own extinction by stalling the oil industry's self-proclaimed final advance through threatening to commit collective suicide (the U'wa in Columbia) or through armed confrontations (the Ijaws on the oil platforms in the Niger Delta).

THE US AS A NATION STATE AND NATIONAL ENERGY SECURITY

The second basis of this anti-Bush paradigm is simple: the US is a nation state with recognised territorial borders and its government is presumably primarily interested in satisfying its constitutional injunction: 'form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty'. The state and citizenry are presumably put into danger when vitally necessary goods are imported from outside its territory, especially from states that are either ideologically or economically hostile to it. National security would therefore be increased by an import substitution policy that would produce these necessary goods at 'home'. In so doing, of course, the need for engaging in foreign military adventures diminishes.

This argument (a sort of pacific mercantilism) holds good for energy in general and oil in particular. There is hardly any natural stuff more vital for social and capitalist reproduction in the US than oil. But beginning in the early 1970s oil production in the 'lower 48' has fallen to the point that more than 50 percent of the oil burned in the US is now imported. Since oil reserves are increasingly concentrated in OPEC nations, especially in the Middle East, and these

Even if the US was completely self-sufficient in energy its government would still be instigating 'oil wars'
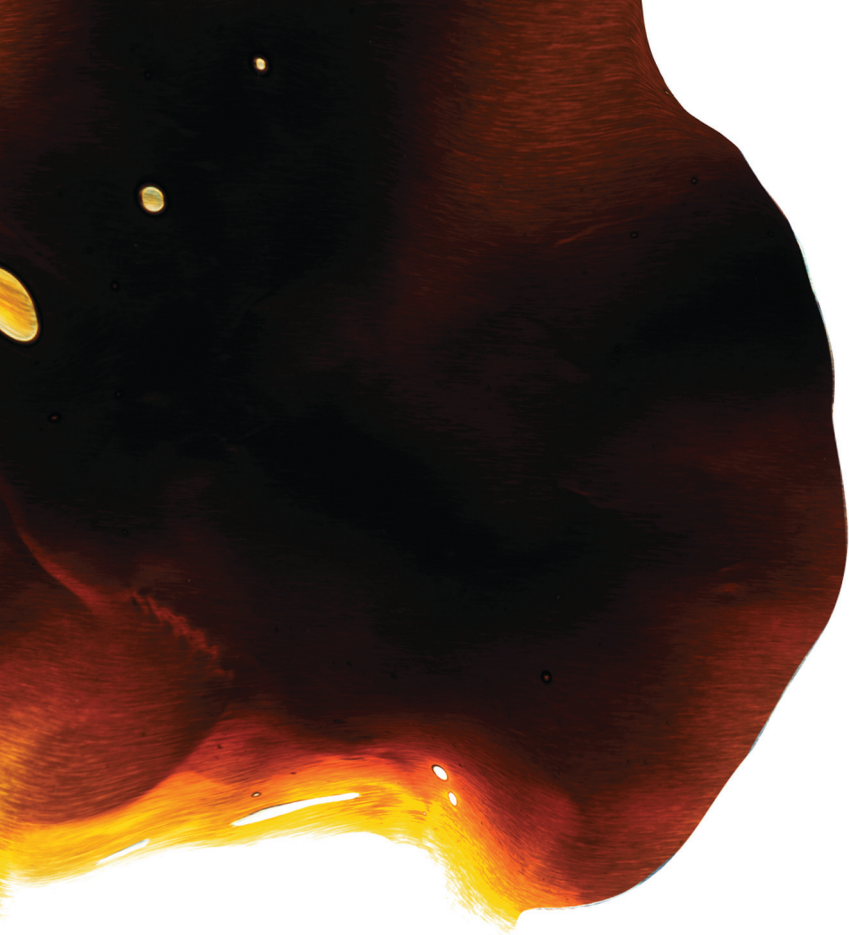
nations are becoming hostile to the US, the US faces a national energy security crisis.

Given these principles and facts, the supporters of this paradigm argue, the solution to national insecurity created by energy dependency is a strategy of import substitution, i.e., the US government should invest in an effort to derive most of the nation's energy required for socio-economic reproduction from domestic sources. Such a result would eliminate the need for invading and occupying Iraq (and other belligerent OPEC countries) to directly control the oil fields there.

The paradigm's supporters emphasise the urgency of implementing such an import strategy with the approach of 'Peak Oil'. As the actual hydrocarbon 'stuff' in the planet's subsoil decreases, there is even more temptation for energy-importing countries (like China) to aggressively (and desperately) insure themselves a continuous supply. If the US continues on its path of increasing energy dependency, it too will be competing with other nuclear-armed states for the final pools of subterranean petroleum with delirious consequences.

CRITIQUE OF THE PEAK OIL/NATIONAL SECURITY PARADIGM

This anti-Bush paradigm, though correctly appealing to anti-imperialist fervour and ecological anxieties, is problematic since it

There is some truth in the Bush Administration's claim that the present war on Iraq is not about oil per se

poses the question as a matter of 'oil dependency' and not of the inevitable consequences of the present system of commodity production. It does not recognise that: oil is a commodity (not a thing); the oil industry is devoted to making money profits (and not producing oil); the US government is essentially involved in guaranteeing the functioning of the world market (and not in the energy 'security' of its citizens); and energy politics involves classes in conflict (and not only competing corporations and conflicting nation states). In brief, it leaves out the central players of contemporary life: capitalists and workers. Somehow, when it comes to writing the history of petroleum, capitalism, working class, and class conflict are frequently forgotten in a way that never happens with oil's earthy hydrocarbon cousin, coal. Once we put capitalism and working class conflict

into the oil story, the plausibility of the Peak Oil/National Security paradigm lessens. Let me breakdown my points of criticism:

(a) oil is a commodity

Oil in a capitalist society is not produced to satisfy human needs and desires (although as a commodity it must satisfy some desire, real or fancied). It is produced to make profit and to increase control over and accumulate human labour (which requires the creation of a universe of misery)! Even if oil was the elixir of life, as long as it could not make a profit on sale, it could just as well be sewer water as far as capitalism is concerned (or perhaps it would be even less valued, since sewer water can be sold to fertilize fields!)

In other words, oil must be a commodity to have a value, but oil is not just like any other commodity. It creates even more mysteries and metaphysics than its average cousins. First, it is a *basic* commodity, since it is involved directly or indirectly in the production of most other commodities. Its price changes affect the prices of almost all other commodities and hence wages and profits throughout the world. Also, its production process has a *high organic composition*, i.e., it involves large amounts of machines and equipment and relatively little direct labour. Finally, it has a *rent* component in its cost. All of these elements together make of oil a special commodity from the point of view of

political economy and they undermine the Peak Oil/National Security paradigm.

Basic commodity. Surely, the price of oil can influence the rest of the capitalist system in the way interest rates can. Oil prices ultimately have a power much more general and diffused than it immediately appears simply because oil is involved in the production of most other commodities. The many economic models since 1973 that have correlated world and regional recessions with oil price hikes empirically express this connection. Consequently, those who control the nationalised oil companies of the OPEC nations are crucial to the functioning of contemporary capitalist production not only because of the importance of oil for actual production of plastics and transport of steel, but also because of the larger economic consequences of any change in oil prices they charge. When government and corporate officials in NY, Washington and London look at the composition of the OPEC leaders and see only Islamic terrorists and nationalist revolutionaries this clearly poses not only a political and military threat, it is most immediately an economic one for them.

Transferred value. Most commodities do not sell at their values, otherwise highly demanded commodities like oil would not be produced, since their almost labour-less production would not generate enough surplus value directly. Consequently, some value from branches of production which require less investment in machinery and plant (e.g., textiles) must be transferred through market competition into the branches like the oil industry which require much more investment in technology. This means that oil is a commodity that is the object of the collective interest of capitalists around the planet. Any attempt to run such an industry that would be detrimental to the general capitalist interest will face opposition from a vast assembly of individual capitalists around the world. (As Kissenger said in the early 1970s: 'Oil is too important to leave it to the Arabs.') Thus oil companies are closely monitored (and regulated) by capitalists and their governments domestically and internationally. It is not only the US oil companies that are vitally interested in the fate of the oil reserves of Iraq, there are behind them many other kinds of corporations in the US, Europe and Japan whose profits will depend upon that fate as well.

Indeed, there is such a collective (almost communal) capitalist concern for industries that (a) produce commodities with high levels of machinery and little direct labour and that (b) are important to the production of commodities, they can easily be the object of political and military action by a capitalist class domestically and internationally. Sometimes this action can be legislative. For example, Rockefeller's oil

operations were the initial target of the 'anti-trust' movement in the late 19th and early 20th century US. But sometimes this action can be violent and prompt wars (as can be seen from the British attack on the Ottoman Iraq in WWI to the 2003 US/UK invasion of Iraq.)

Rent. Rent is one of the categories of political economy that is clearly relevant to the oil industry. There is a rent that goes to the owners of the oil fields due to the fact that not all underground oil is the same. Some is 'sweet' (i.e., it has a low sulfur content), some is not; some is deep, some is not; some is on land, some is not; some requires a lot of technology to find, some does not. Clearly, if the price of oil is roughly the same throughout the world, then the owner of the territory where the oil has positive characteristics can charge rent (and expect to be paid it). Indeed, there is probably some 'Absolute Rent' in the rental costs of oil that is paid simply as tribute to the regime of private property even when a company is producing in the worst oil areas. All this rental value comes from the transferred value from the rest of the capitalist system. Again, there is a collective capitalist interest in its part of the cost of oil.

Indeed, there has been a capitalist critique of 'rent-seeking' throughout the history of political economy. Rent is presumably the epitome of unproductive income. This critique still goes on today in the text books and among the ideologues of both Keynesianism and neoliberalism. However, for all the critique of the rentier, rent still is a decisive form of income in a capitalist society, as any New Yorker will attest to! But the productivist ideology that has its roots in John Locke's defense of English colonialism in the late 17th century is always waiting on the horizon to be brought in to justify attacks on the rights of the rentier. If the rentier, through his/her right of exclusion, disrupts the productive development of a profitable industry, then there is a right of the 'more productive' to lay claim to the right of exclusion. Therefore, war is always on the wings of all rental claims.

Since oil is a 'peculiar' commodity in all these dimensions and is crucial to the functioning of the world capitalist production, the considerations appropriate to understanding its role in world economics and politics are not merely technical or scientific. US capitalists and the US government are vitally involved in the fate of the world oil industry independently of whether corporations based in the US import oil or not.

(b) The US is not a nation state any more, if it ever was

The primary function of the

It is impossible to read the lineaments of history from the limits and constraints of nature, especially not in a capitalist society where 'nature' is often playing surrogate for the commands of a ruling class

contemporary US government as far as energy policy is concerned is not defined in the Constitution's famous preamble. Indeed, *even if the US economy was completely self-sufficient in energy production and no longer dependent on imports from OPEC countries, the US government would still be instigating 'oil wars'* for at least two reasons. First, the US government would still need to guarantee the profits of the major energy corporations that are involved in 'foreign' production and often need US military assistance (cf. from the Iranian coup in 1954 to the Iraq invasion of 2003). Second, the US government (in both its Democratic and Republican embodiments) is 'responsible' for the survival of the neoliberalism/globalisation project as a whole. For profit making is now (and has always been) dependent on the world market and today this market's rules are determined by the WTO, the World Bank and IMF, institutions that are committed to a neoliberal doctrine.

The main problem with neoliberal/globalisation is that for it to 'work' the system must be global and the participating nations and corporations must follow the 'rules of trade' (including trade in services, patents and copyrights) even when participation goes against their immediate self-interest. In a time of crisis, however, there is a great temptation for many participants to drop out of or bend the rules of the game, especially if they perceive themselves to be chronic losers. What force is going to keep the recalcitrants (both old – those who refused to be part of the game – and new – those who dropped out) from proliferating? Up until the 1997 'Asian Financial Crisis' most of the heavy work of control was done by the IMF and World Bank through the power of money. Since then it is becoming clear that there are countries that will not be controlled by structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and the fear of being exiled from the world credit market if they do not follow the instructions of the IMF and the World Bank.

The most illustrious recalcitrants are the Bush-baptised 'axis of evil' nations – Baathist Iraq (one of the last of the national socialist states), Iran (one of the last fundamentalist states after the demise of the Taliban) and North Korea (one of the last of the communist states) – but there are many other Islamic, national socialist and communist governments that have not transformed their economies into neoliberal form. This list will undoubtedly grow unless there is a check, in the form of a world police officer that will increase the costs of an exit.

The neoliberal order needs the equivalent of the role Britain played for the liberal capitalist system of the 19th century in order to function properly. Bill Clinton and his colleagues believed that the UN could eventually be used by the US government as such a force. The Bush Administration disagrees and concludes that the US will have to act in its own name to enforce the rules of the neoliberal order (even though many of its adherents are unwilling to do so) and that action must at times be military. In the end, it is only with the construction of a terrifying US Leviathan that the crisis of neoliberalism will be overcome and the regime of free trade and total commodification will finally be established for its Millennium.

The invasion of Iraq is a crucial step in this construction process. It is seen by Bush as a sacrifice of US human and capital resources for the greater capitalist good (hence, perhaps, the continual evocation of 'God' in the administration's rhetoric). There is some truth in the Bush Administration's claim that the present war on Iraq (and future wars on the remaining problematic OPEC countries, if the more 'extreme' elements of the Administration have their way) is not about oil per se. It is about imposing a uniformly neoliberal structure on countries that, because of their ability to receive transferred value through their oil sales, have been able to evade the rules of the global market. Indeed, oil is the main internationally traded commodity that is not regulated by WTO rules to this day.

The Bush Administration's project of policing the neoliberal order might have been possible, if there promised to be but a few recalcitrants to and migrants from the neoliberal order. However, this is not likely. For neoliberalism does not seem to be able to deliver on the 'sustained growth' that raises all ships even in its halcyon days in the late 1980s. On the contrary, experience shows that it does not even raise 20 percent of the 'ships' it had claimed to do in its inception. This means that many millions in the Third World who aspired to membership in the local ruling class and the many billions who simply wanted an increased wage have been devastated by the course of neoliberal globalisation and have become its implacable enemies in the 1990s and early 21st century.

Consequently, there will be wars fought by US troops aplenty in the years to come, if the US continues to play the British Empire of 21st century neoliberalism. For what started out in the 19th century as a tragedy, will be repeated, not as farce, but as catastrophe in the 21st. At the same time, it is not possible for the US government to 'retreat' from its role, without jeopardising the neoliberal/globalisation project itself. Thus the supporters of the Peak Oil/National Security paradigm are offering up a questionable connection between energy

The hidden assumption of Peak Oil ideologists is that increased energy prices (for corporations) inevitably require a reduction of the wage rate instead of a reduction in the profit rate. Peak Oil politics assumes that the working class will finance the transition from cheap to expensive oil come what may

import substitution and the path of imperialism. As logicians would say, energy dependence might be a sufficient condition of imperialist oil politics, but it is not a necessary one.

(c) Peak Oil?

Are we actually witnessing the oil industry's 'final advance' because the moment of 'Peak Oil' is nigh? We should be as sceptical of the early 21st century Hubbertian version of 'the end of oil' as we were of the Club of Rome's 'limits to growth' scenarios of the late 1960s, for oil is inevitably surrounded by an ideological aura. It is impossible to read the lineaments of history from the limits and constraints of nature, especially not in a capitalist society where 'nature' is often playing surrogate for the commands of a ruling class (cf. the long, continually revived career of 'Social Darwinism'). The problem with the debate concerning the hypothesis is simply that although the geological reasoning Hubbert used is compelling for predicting oil use, the class consequences of such reasoning are far less compelling.

For the 'Peak Oil' hypothesis is now becoming an early 21st century justification for an attack on pensions, wages and workers' guarantees in the so-called advanced capitalist countries. Presumably, the increased cost of finding new fields and their increased rent in an era of Peak Oil will force an increase in the transferred value into the oil industry that would require an increase in the mass of exploited labour. The permanently increased energy costs presaged by the 'Peak Oil' hypothesis are now a convenient way for capitalists to invoke the need for 'austerity' (for their workers) long before the actual exhaustion of oil, natural gas and coal is on the horizon. Thus this hypothesis is an even more pernicious tool in class struggle than the energy limitation ideology of the 1970s. But the apparently logical connection between the 'end of cheap oil' and reduced wages and working class expectations is simply a mirage. The hidden assumption of Peak Oil ideologists is that increased energy prices (for corporations) inevitably require a reduction of the wage rate instead of a reduction in the profit rate. In other words, Peak Oil politics assumes that the working class will finance the transition from cheap to expensive oil come what may. Given the present configuration of class forces in the US, this assumption is perhaps a good bet, but it is a far from necessary outcome.

CONCLUSION

Given our critique of the Peak Oil/National Security paradigm, one can understand why the Bush Administration's paradigm is appealing to many in the US working class. First, it has a much more plausible account of the US's government's general role in the world economy and its specific role in controlling the average price of oil. No one seriously believes that the US capitalist class is going to abandon its 'global reach' or its profit making just for the sake of providing a reliable, domestically produced energy supply to US workers. Second, it offers to members of the US working class an understandable role in the future division of labour, i.e., as well-paid mercenaries and managers of the world market in energy. The horrible deaths of the four 'contractors' in Falluja in April of this year are increasingly to be seen as 'work accidents' that go with the territory, and not as exceptional circumstances. Third, it seems to imply that the US's presumed military dominance will be applied in the service of the working class' need for oil energy.

Thus, the key oil issue in contemporary class politics in the US is not the one addressed by the Peak Oil/National Security paradigm, *viz.*, US corporations and workers are economically dependent on an imported commodity that is increasingly becoming more 'expensive' and that the political project of our era is to have a US economy self-sufficient in energy. The problem is that a significant minority of US workers see their only future in a neoliberal/globalised world with its main recalcitrants – the OPEC countries – policed by a military recruited from the US working class. One cannot explode this enclosing vision of the future by offering a logically and politically alternative project of national energy independence that does not challenge the neoliberal order.   🏃

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SAFE institution
Fooling the present f*cking the future

Climate Justice direct action group London Rising Tide visits the Science Museum's new exhibition 'Energy – fuelling the future', nearly drowns in doublespeak but recovers enough to see that the principal sponsor (BP) has only one principle: maximise profit

Our explorations have whipped up a blizzard of stop throwing money at extortionate wars for oil change 'has become the most important challenge ongoing commitment to expand its fossil fuel schoolchildren and their teachers who visit the American Express and ExxonMobil are part of the 'sponsorship'? And what if we save the questions, like: If big museums are a good thing, should we hassle the government to and spend it on museums instead? If the Science Museum (SM) says that climate that human ingenuity has to solve', how can it take money from BP, which has an production by at least 3.5 percent per year? How can we best reach the 320,000 SM every year and let them know that sponsors like BP, GlaxoSmithKline, BNFL, problem? What happens to (the soul of) an event or institution when it accepts planet from climate chaos but forget to get rid of capitalism at the same time?

The £2m, 5-year exhibition is aimed surprisingly small, with various mostly helios logos. There is absolutely no associated with oil industry wherever exhibition to help create content that at 7-14 year olds, and has Vodafone and BASF screen-based interactive games, and contains reference to 'the curse of oil', ie. the social it operates. Oh, and 'BP energy experts is accurate and relevant.' as secondary sponsors. It's two not-so subliminal BP and ecological destruction acted as consultants to the

Sprinkled throughout the exhibition and its website are short phrases – sometimes just a word or two – that reveal a deep seam of business-as-usual ideology. Here are a few of them: 'Do we have all the energy supplies we need?' How big a distance is there between our needs and wants? 'future energy supplies must deliver enough to power all our lives without unnecessary damage to the planet.' Who sits in judgement as to what damage is necessary? 'Crude oil is processed to make oil for burning in power stations, as well as useful oil products such as petrol, diesel and plastics.' Do you mean useful stuff like the plastic my service station apple was packaged in, or maybe the diesel that powers the Hummers that are currently patrolling Iraqi oilfields?

This is one way the exhibitors and sponsors smuggle the status quo into an exhibition which on the surface has plenty of technological and scientific information about renewable energies to be happy with. It constructs a false ceiling for an apparently fair & balanced debate. This is science, remember, so there's no place for anything as debased as a social or economic context, or reference to the insanity that is economic growth.

Celeste Bright, Head of Development at the SM and top person when it comes to corporate sponsorship, gave us some bland responses before saying 'As I am sure you will appreciate our relationship with BP is protected by contract and as such I am not in a position to answer any further questions on it.'

Up and down the Exhibition Road: from 19th century trade fair to 21st century ABC1 - attracting sponsorship opportunity

The museums standing on Exhibition Road are there thanks to profits from the empire-promoting trade fair that was the Great Exhibition of 1851. Over 200 years later, has anything really changed? There's the Royal Geographical Society (sponsored by Shell and Land Rover), then there's the Natural History Museum (its old ecology exhibit, ironically, sponsored by BP, still a major NHM supporter), containing the Earth Galleries (sponsored by mining giant Rio Tinto). Nearby is the Victoria and Albert Museum (past exhibition sponsors including Motorola & TotalFinaElf), and then of course we have the Science Museum.

INFO

With the relatively recent blanket corporate sponsorship of public events, we are entering a new and supercharged neoliberal era where the public and the private are blurring into a grey murk. The pragmatists in the museums say 'this situation was triggered by tough government cuts – it's bite the bullet time: you either take corporate cash, or you shut galleries.' And who are the keenest corporations camping out at the front of the queue? Well, the more you have to hide, the more cash you set aside for sponsorship, so that means the least loved of the blue chippers: Big Oil, Big Pharma, banks and the like… Clearly, any real solution to this situation is going to be impossible without deep systemic change.

Sponsorship has now taken its place happily alongside many other aspects of British life that have been funda- mentally altered with next to no debate or action. Take a bow CCTV, advertising everywhere, innumerable pieces of repressive legislation, PFI and the priva- tisation of education and other essential services. The question is, how should we take action against something as pervasive, amorphous and poisonous to the human spirit as the commodification of art, of knowledge, of public space, of giving a damn about our collective future and the ecological crisis we're all facing?

LRT's targeted application of pressure is a combination of strategy and the fact that BP's arrogance and the blithe insouciance of the cultural establishment makes us angry. BP would be in big trouble without the Science Museum (as well as the Barbican, British Museum, Natural History Museum, Royal Opera House, National Portrait Gallery [NPG], Tate Britain and National Gallery) bending over backwards to take its money and sandblast its public image. For example, the Tate has 'ethical guidelines' for its 'commercial relationships'. These are a rejection of arms, to- bacco or alcohol companies, even though it's plain to see that the oil industry is responsible for more death and destitution than tobacco and alcohol combined. After all, neither sells a product which threatens the long-term future of the human species!

The good news is that less than 15 years ago, the National Portrait Award was sponsored by a tobacco company, until the NPG decided that its reputation was being damaged by such an association. Whenever we visit a BP-sponsored institution without comment or action, we are giving BP our tacit approval. By targeting its corporate sponsorship, it's possible to blockade BP's extraction of our consent. Corporate sponsorship of any kind robs art of any integrity, but removing oil from the picture would mean the industry had one less place to hide, and would allow the public gaze to settle more conclusively and damagingly on its true activities. BP et al are not part of the solution, and as such don't deserve the oxygen of public relations that it currently purchases at a knockdown price from the SM and other cultural institutions across London.

It's clear that we can't rely on 'Energy' or the rest of the Science Museum to set the parameters for a debate on the way we live and ways to minimise our impact on each other and the planet. We'll have to do that ourselves. We'd certainly be deluded if we thought our kids could get a grounding there on anything beyond the science of climatic change. LRT hopes to produce some web and paper-based resources, as well as to plan school visits of some kind. We have to allow teachers and children to hear dissenting viewpoints and the voices of the dispossessed before it's too late. What is at stake as well as the long-term future of the planet is the ability of future generations to question and think for themselves. Please let us know if you think you could help out with that, in any way possible.

On September 21st 2004, it gave an uninvited presentation at a reception for teachers at the Energy exhibition as part of its ongoing campaign to make sure teachers and pupils hear a strong critique of BPs sponsorship of the Science Museum.
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see also www.risingtide.org.uk and www.dissent.org.uk

(Un)Regenerate Art

ART, REGENERATION AND LOCATIVE POLITICS

Art's official role in the scenarios of urban development used to be a limited one. In soulless new towns and redeveloped cities, abstract sculptures were deployed as spiritual furniture for functionalist spaces. Purged of 'content', public art simply imparted visual relief or continued the tedium by other means.

As post-war redevelopment and renewal gave way to 'regeneration', the (re)makers of deindustrialised towns and cities realised their mistake. They started to talk openly of heritage, tradition, local identity, etc – all the things they had previously sought to concrete over. Public art was more than a visual prop, it could narrate, memorialise and celebrate the spirit of the industrial past. Assimilating the concern with history and local identity which community art projects of the '70s and '80s had already been elaborating against the erasures and displacements of modernisation, government and developers found willing partners in charitable trusts dedicated to the collaborative production of public art. A tokenistic reference to local history became a standard component in large scale redevelopment projects. Communities would be hunted down and consulted as to their preferred form of self-objectification. Your obituary here. Ephemeral, site-specific, participatory art projects flourished alongside polymorphous sculptural tributes to the local proletariat's no longer threatening progenitors. Simultaneously functioning as reifications of the past and totems of renewal, selective remembering invoked new rounds of investment and service industries.

Today, a new generation of artists are actively engaging with this unappetising postmodern 'tradition'. Seeking to interrogate, critique or complicate the familiar rituals of public and community art, artists play the roles of urban ethnographers, activists, social historians and even social workers. Social engagement and psychogeographic immersion in the minutiae of the local grows so deep, so richly detailed, that some lose sight of the bigger processes in which artistic interventions take place. As social housing is sold off, services cut down, rents raised and actually existing communities displaced, art can seem like the worst kind of beautification, the smoke screen for acts of not so creative destruction.

With the ever growing emphasis on the regenerative effect of 'creative' activity, art's most profound impact on the city is now seen by government, in an ironically modernist turn, as a process, not an end in itself. Art is not about making static *things*, abstract sculptures etc; through gentrification artists' power to revalorise devalued space by their physical presence in an area becomes their key contribution to 'inner city renaissance'.

Whether or not artists explicitly confront all this in their work, art is now clearly an essential component in the rebranding and social reengineering of cities, right up to the economic stimulus provided by international mega-musems like Guggenheim Bilbao or Tate Modern. Fostering 'cultural tourism', which might once have sounded like an insult, is now a regeneration priority. Dwarfed by the imperative of economic 'rebirth', art and artists subsist in the interstices of real estate speculation and redevelopment. Can art produced out of such an unholy conjunction critically engage with it?

The following articles look at some artists, (new) art forms and projects tackling this question in different ways. We hope they suggest the extent to which familiar notions of critical practice are no longer adequate, while opening up a new, more creatively destructive attitude to the regeneration-art symbiosis on the part of the regeneration industry's favourite people. ⌐

THE SHAPE OF LOCATIVE MEDIA

As the discourse around locative media art gets into gear, Simon Pope sets some new co-ordinates, and salvages some old ones, to navigate this emergent genre

**It feels like the end of an era with ten
years of new media production having**
just been catalogued by the Arts Council
(of) England, (cf. its recent publication,
*New Media Art: Practice and Context in the
UK 1994 – 2004*), to coincide with its
reorganisation. There seems to have been a
search for the next 'new media'. If all runs
to form, I'd say that those whose work
matches the strategy of key institutions will
be the ones to have first dibs on their
support. And so we get, without much
mental contortion, to the subject of
locative media. As a field defined outside of
the arts sector, the idea of location-specific
services has been receiving the attention of
mobile phone manufacturers and network
providers for a while. I have some
anecdotal evidence that the industry has
been pouring pre-dot.com era sums of cash
into, literally, anything that moves. So
applications that enable phones that know
where they are in relation to local services
have been winners under present conditions.
My suspicion is that the overspill of the R&D
money and press coverage that these
innovations inspire finds its way towards
the arts sector pretty smartish. And so I've

accepted the invitation to write this piece
to try to find out what these location based
services are or might be, as they are
defined in the arts sector.

I understand that locative media is
multiple; it's available to us in many
versions, depending on the way that we
operate on it, according to the uses we
need it to be put to. In my case, for the
purposes of this text, I need locative media
to conform to my very particular and current
interests. As such, it'll be fashioned
according to the following ideas:

1. Some thoughts on so called 'spatialising
practices'

2. A consideration of the mobile agent

3. Some thoughts on ambulant and
sedentary knowledge

4. The idea of the Knowable Community,
culled from Raymond Williams, and locative
media as a fictional form

5. Uses of the map in locative media,
Psychogeographic and Conceptual art practice.

This is meant to offer some kind of
analysis, but the intimated objectivity of
such an exercise is difficult given my
relationship with the people involved in this
project in its most general form. Rather,
this is as much intended as a slight critique
and contribution to the project at a stage
when the field appears to be opening to
wider critical appraisal.

1. It's been my concern for a while to
try to get an understanding of the variously
theorised orthodoxies of space and place.
There's a strong chance that you too may
have read some of the canonical texts
concerned with the relationship between
spaces-that-have-meaning-for-us and the
abstract systems that describe them as
'geometric space'. For a very long time, the
terms 'space' and 'place' have been
described, in academic disciplines and
elsewhere, as being in tension with each
other. While the former is lived, the latter
exists before, during, after and in spite of
living. There has been some attempt to
relax this tension by humanising these
descriptions of space, to make them softer,
less hierarchical, more *relative*. So, for

Our technologies appear to construct and perceive only a succession of stable points

example, to describe the relationship between things, rather than their absolute position. Yet this still could be considered as just another way of arranging things in space, with no attempt to understand the objects in themselves – how they perceive being spatialised for example. There are critics of this 'softening' of course, and my particular favourite is Michael R Curry, especially as his papers are numerous and readily available online.**1**

In my determined, but laggard, reading of Michel de Certeau, I can find ample theoretical justification for the role of 'everyday practices' as a means to resist such spatialising practices.**2** Whether they frustrate or resist the structure that is imposed is not important here. It is the possibility that meaning can be produced at a tactical level, even when a strategic position is denied, that is key. In the case of an imposed structure of spaces – a mathematical description of all possible spaces – it appears that locative media operates at this level of resistance. It starts to take shape as a tactical media: the *[murmur]* project, for example, has annotated sites in several Canadian cities
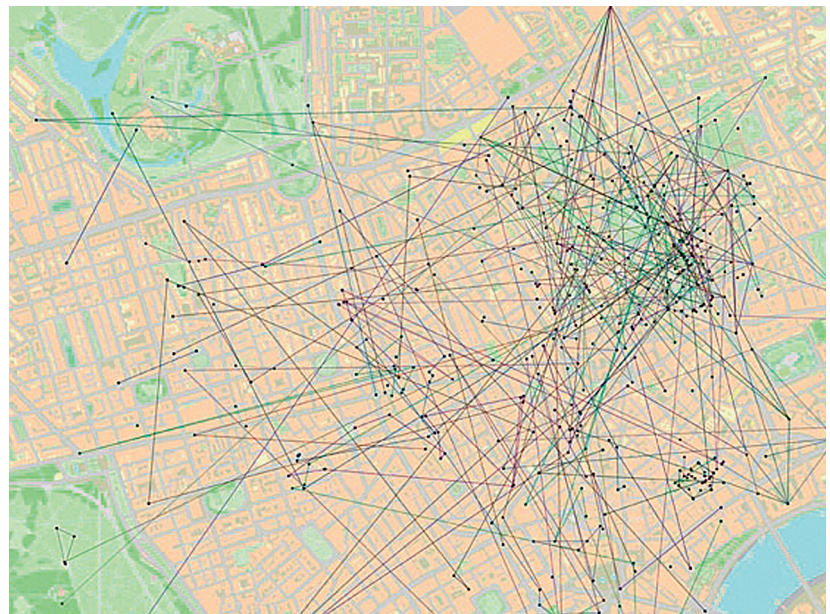
Above ▷ *The Degree Confluence Project*, **11°N 107°E, 20.6 km (12.8 miles) ENE of Bien Hoa, Dong Nai, Vietnam, 22 January 2003**
Below ▷ **A map of annotated locations and threads connecting them, created during Proboscis's** *Urban Tapestries* **project, June 2004**

Free wireless projects bring the rural promise of convivial relations to an urban setting

often overlooked in officially sanctioned histories. Adopting the convention of the 'commemorative plaque', spoken word recordings are delivered to mobile phones to provide a commentary on specific locations which are described and located within an established representation of physical space – these are known locations within the scope of street maps.

The Degree Confluence Project is perhaps a good example of a more benign habitation of a conventional structure, displaying less unease or displeasure with the overarching structure than in the case of *[murmur]*: its stated aim is 'to visit each

of the latitude and longitude integer degree intersections in the world, and to take pictures at each location.' The results are available from their website as the project attempts to map the world; there is a sense in which this project cannot rest until it is complete, it is impelled to collect data from all possible points defined by the structure. I'm reminded of Augé's 'proliferation of spaces'**3** and wonder at the compulsion for locative media projects to acknowledge or even invent these spaces.

Some of the projects that we might recognise as being within the scope of locative media have an altogether different relationship to structure: the RDF project appears key to the field and exemplified by works such as The Locative Packets workshop. This gives a good indication of the ambition of this project, being a thorough and sustained attempt to define an ontology – a worldview – that can adequately describe spatial relationships, as well as enabling agents to inhabit and annotate the space of these relationships. While this project has some of the characteristics of tactical media – appearing to operate within a structure not of its own making – it is now equally strategic in that its influence is felt at an institutional level, with the very idea of 'locative media' influential on strategy for arts funders, technologists and research councils alike.

2.   For the past year or so I've been making a study of walking as an art practice and, in particular, walking and meeting in the work of André Cadere, Sophie Calle, Vito Acconci, (the very earliest work of) Richard

Long and Yoko Ono among others. So, as well as bringing this knowledge into proximity with locative media, in an attempt to become the good academic that I'll never be, I'd also like to bring walking towards locative media as a methodology: as a way of finding out about the world and, in particular, what happens when a mobile agent operates on these technologies.

My first attempt at this was made in Bloomsbury, London late in 2003 when I joined in the trial of the initial prototype of Proboscis's Urban Tapestries. This was the first time I'd volunteered to use a tangible location-based service such as this, and it soon struck me that, while the technologies are supposedly mobile, PDAs with wireless cards and regular cell phones show an awkwardness when between the points that define their operational space; they have no problem in being portable, but prefer the moment when they can be stationary and in a precise, stable relation to the nearest mast or access point.

The tension between the technology's demands and those of its user as mobile agent tends to produce an equal awkwardness in us as we use these services. Our technologies appear to construct and perceive only a succession of stable points: locations at which can be found the annotations provided by our location based services. They are a constant reminder of the imperative to think of our movement as a sequence of discrete 'moments' at points in space. It seems that locative media operates on our understanding of movement as did photography. We are back to Muybridge and

the capture of successive moments in time and space, yet, what is not captured is the smearing between one moment and the next. While at the Lisson gallery's recent exhibition of the early works of Dan Graham I spent some time with *Past Future Split Attention*. This piece from 1972 states its premise as being, 'Two people who know each other are in the same space. While one person predicts continuously the other person's behaviour, the other person recounts (by memory) the other's past behaviour.' The performance is recorded on video tape which is understood as being, 'a continuum (unlike film, which is discontinuous/ an analytic re-construction) …'

This suggests a recognition that video technology holds within itself the means to think this blurring of moments and points in space. Its interlaced image already introduces this possibility of understanding 'the moment' as being at least constructed from past and present. It takes Graham's intervention to add 'the future' into this compound; far from being discrete chunks of time or points in space, it might be that they are smeared together somehow, so that there's no longer a clearly defined location to specify. It makes me think about where this form of intervention, by an artist or otherwise, is within the locative media project.

3.   Here, I want to propose that there might be different – sedentary and ambulant – forms of knowledge at play both in the works discussed here as locative media and in the Dan Graham piece. Where sedentary knowledge demands a static and stable position for all knowledge, an ambulant knowledge supposes a mobility and a being-between. Certain information systems such as collections in libraries and university departments promote these static forms. They are built to promote knowledge in its consolidated, sedentary form. The operation on, and movement between, static knowledge in all its forms is another matter. Opposed to this is the presumption that knowledge and understanding are in motion and could be, (to lift from the usual suspects D&G), an ambulant knowledge that enables an understanding of being in between stable points: between countries, disciplines, spaces, job descriptions. It enables a know-how, rather than a know-what (a paraphrase if ever I've heard one…).

4.   It still holds true that the relationships between people in the city are thought of as being opaque, duplicitous and corrupt, whereas those in the countryside are deemed to be direct, transparent and healthy. The countryside is a place of earthy common sense and natural order, in contrast to the city's effete intellectualism and political skulduggery. I recently found, and

then lost, a copy of a pamphlet by Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City in the Modern Novel*4 – a transcription of a presentation given as an introduction to his weightier publication of 1973.5 In it, he asks us to consider how the form of the novel has changed over time, and how it has been used to promote the notion of the countryside as sole site of true, direct human relationships. The contrast between the rural idyll – an escape to the countryside or to an EU accession state – and city life and the social relations that typify it, is still a dominant force when thinking about the ways that we'd like to live. With many location specific projects being trialled within an urban setting, it raises questions as to whether locative media now works as a fictional form. It might be that it is the most recent way of fictionalising our most complex urban social relations, a way of promoting those relationships that are usually considered as contrasting with those found only in a rural setting. In many ways the promise of the free wireless projects – to establish a social network on top of a technical one – brings the promise of convivial relations to an urban setting. It could be said to problematise the simple opposition between city and country. The novelty of these projects seem to be in the way they extend the human community to include an array of agents, arranged in space which includes antennae, rooftops, trees, buildings, masts and the like. Williams also recognises something similar in Dickens's novels, where buildings, their atmospheres, ambiences and so on, are given the attention formerly thought only worthy of the main, human protagonists. With the technologies of locative media, we are made precisely aware of the scale of built things and their relationship to each other. It's the built environment that now appears as our preferred 'knowable community'.

5.   In his essay 'Mappings: Situationists and/or Conceptualists',6 Peter Wollen considers the relationship between the use made of the map by both the SI and Conceptual artists. Despite being contemporaries, each party used the map in very different ways: where Debord et al described human 'passions' in relation to urban planning, On Kawara and Douglas Heubler, for example, adopted the map as a device which could banish any emotional response to urban space, implying 'a kind of scientificity' in their work, through an explicit alignment with scientific methodology. There is an equal appeal to a 'scientificity' in locative media projects, to some extent this must be a necessity in any 'new media' practice of course. But nonetheless it raises questions as to how the use of maps, new technology and a language

driven towards precision might work to make these practices distinct from others.

It should come as no surprise that there are also echoes of the psychogeographic project in our generally defined field of locative media. Indeed, it has become something of an orthodoxy, with the requisite dissenters and historical revisionists. Its methods are readily available, the dérive, for example, is described in enough detail and in enough places for it to be an off the shelf solution, so it would be more surprising to find it absent from the field. Yet, for all the availability of the SI's work, the locative media work advanced under the banner of psychogeography, by Socialfiction.org for example, doesn't appear to align itself particularly with the original project. There's a wilful skimming of the surface of psychogeography, taking it to mean an unconstrained movement in the streets, and apparently less of an alignment with the wider project of anti-urbanism. This can leave an impression of a practice whose relation to 'the city' is closer to the disinterestedness of Conceptualism than the supposed engagement of the SI.

Of interest here is what lies beneath Wollen's initial readings: he notes that the SI in particular were embedded within a city that was undergoing massive regeneration of its housing stock. Their devices for mapping the interactions and perceptions of human desires onto Paris, for example, were driven not by chance, as were the preceding scorned Surrealist interventions, but rather as a direct and conscious operation on the city. Theirs was a practice that provided them with techniques through which they might understand the process of change that was happening to them, around them and, no doubt, because of them. By contrast, On Kawara and Douglas Heubler were, much less concerned with their rootedness in one particular locale and pre-empt today's preference for itinerant artists, spending short periods of time in residencies or performing fleetingly on the circuit of international art fairs. The map,

for Conceptual artists, seems more useful as a simple, generic method for recording the spatial aspects of a sculptural practice on an expanded scale; and there are echoes of this in several projects that have fallen under the locative media banner.[7]

This leaves me wondering how those developing locative media understand themselves to be implicated in the spaces that they construct, record and annotate; and I wonder if we will come to learn of the effects of artists, so concerned with locality, on the state of house prices, interest and exchange rates, job markets, tech stocks and so on.

LINKS

[murmur] http://murmurtoronto.ca/about.php

Degree Confluence Project http://confluence.org/index.php

Joe Walsh's work on RDF:

http://locative.net/workshop/index.cgi?Locative_Packets

The Locative Packets workshop:

http://locative.net/workshop/index.cgi?Locative_Packets

Urban Tapestries: http://urbantapestries.net

Introduction to Socialfiction.org's *Algorithmic Psychogeography*:

http://www.socialfiction.org/psychogeography/newbies.html

FOOTNOTES

1 For example: Michael R. Curry, 'Discursive Displacement and the Seminal Ambiguity of Space and Place', in *The Handbook of New Media*, eds. Leah Lievrouw and Sonia Livingstone, London: Sage Publications, 2002

2 Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1884

3 Marc Augé, *Non-Places: an Introduction to the Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London & New York: Verso, 1995

4 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City in the Modern Novel*, pamphlet from a public lecture, Swansea University Press

5 Raymond Williams *The Country and the City*, first published by Chatto & Windus,1973

6 Peter Wollen in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, eds Michael Newman & Jon Bird, Reaktion Books, 2000

7 For instance, Pete Gomez's *Location, Location, Location*, 2000

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MYSTERIES OF THE CREATIVE CLASS OR, I HAVE SEEN THE ENEMY AND THEY IS US

Artists and other 'creative' professionals are increasingly willing pawns in the State-backed gentrification games of developers and corporations. But can those that wish to challenge the underlying brutalities of 'culture-led regeneration' turn their creative powers against it? **Gregory Sholette** on New York artists' collective REPOhistory and their fight to re-write the story of urban renewal in Manhattan

Image ▷ **REPOhistory, 'Lower Manhattan Sign Project', Stephen Duncomb**, *Leisler's Rebellion*, **1992**

A painting of a smartly clad, long necked and sophisticated trio of young white people conversing over a glass of wine fills a full page of the *Sunday New York Times*. Done in a 1930s Art Deco style, the advertisement is captioned 'An Oasis In Times Square.' This, the copy explains, is a place where the traveller, weary from business, can discover tranquility amidst energy and 'A new level of self-indulgence.' It was the year 1999 when, with retrograde panache, the Hong Leong Group launched its flagship hotel in New York, the Millennium Premier. Even then I sensed the arrival of something new, a shift in tactics in the decade-old 'upclassing' of the city. I also knew something troubling about the hotel's recent past that made my hunch even more compelling.

A veteran of anti-gentrification activism on the city's Lower East Side some 20 years earlier, I still recall the clumsy call for 'pioneers' to brave the city's harsh urban frontiers. But by the late 1990s this type of gambit had largely played itself out, at least in Manhattan. Already most of the island was well on its way to full blown gentrification and what was left of the poor and working class largely scattered by force or rising rents in the wake of reverse white flight that began in the 1980s. However, this late '90s wave of gentry wanted nothing to do with leaking pipes or chasing away crack-heads from street corners, and under no circumstances would they wear overalls. Yet the hotel's curiously retro illustration also avoided references to the fevered, techno-giddiness of those blissful, pre-crash '90s. Instead, the unknown artist lovingly invoked the modernist conceit of the machine age

some 60 years prior. Nor was it camp, for the irony was too far adrift from any rhetorical moorings to signal 'spoof'. Instead, like an arcane plot out of a Philip K Dick novel, the very visage of the city I knew was being transmuted from lead to gold. The more I looked, the more I saw. Quaint Cafés replaced actual coffee shops. Futuristic bars and art galleries took over food processing and light industrial shops. An ersatz cosmopolitanism was everywhere and the Millennium was a part of this larger whole that involved wiping clean not merely the physical traces of the past, but its memories. What filled up the ensuing breach were artful surrogates and clever replicas of a city that no one had ever lived in but that nevertheless looked strangely familiar. Certainly it is easier to see this in retrospect, but the Millennium campaign signaled the start of an entirely new era in the administration of free market urban renewal. More abstract, more inspired, more creative. The question I wanted to answer most, then and now, is whose minds the hotel chain's marketers hoped to, well, gentrify, and what ghosts they sought to keep at bay?

It was the artists' collective known as REPOhistory that provided the key to unlocking this mystery, but its startling solution, like Poe's purloined letter, turns out to have been right in front of me all along.

So what if the occasional act of terror was, and remains indispensable to make it all seem real? Why dwell on conflict?

DEMOLITION IN HELL'S KITCHEN

Located on West 44th Street, the Millennium Premier Hotel stands in a once largely Irish and working class neighborhood formerly known as Hell's Kitchen but re-christened with the sanitary-sounding moniker 'Clinton' by real estate speculators in the 1980s. The Times Square from whose implied stresses it claims to offer an 'oasis' is no longer the porn playground of the fiscal crisis '70s. It has been rehabilitated: safe for families, safe for business, efficiently emptied of homeless people and sundry other uninvited. In May of 1998, however, a metal street sign appears outside the Millennium. The sign is flagged off of a lamppost, meters away from

the hotel's tastefully subdued, black marble façade. Mounted low enough for passersby to read, its text begins portentously:

What is now the Millennium Broadway Hotel used to be the site of 4 buildings including an SRO hotel that provided badly needed housing for poor New Yorkers...

Artist and architect William Menking designed the plaque to look like a busy montage of newspaper clippings. The story of the Hotel's less than tranquil past continues in bold type:

In 1984, New York City passed a moratorium on the alteration of hotels for the poor. Hours before the moratorium was to go into effect, developer Harry Macklowe had the 4 buildings demolished without obtaining demolition permits, and without turning off water and gas lines into the buildings. NYC officials declared, 'It is only a matter of sheer luck that there was no gas explosion.' Attempts to bring criminal charges against Macklowe for these actions were not successful. Macklowe built a luxury hotel on the site, then lost it to the current owners. The demolition of hotels for the poor during the 1970's and 1980's added to the city's growing homeless population. While streets of the 'new' Times Square seem paved with gold – for many they have literally become a home.

Like the materialisation of an army of Dickensian apparitions, the Millennium/Macklowe sign was one of 20 temporary historical markers specifically sited around New York that made up the public art project 'Civil Disturbances: Battles for Justice in New York City'. Sponsored by New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) and produced by the art and activist group REPOhistory, its aim was to publicly landmark legal cases in which civil rights were extended to disenfranchised peoples. The content of the signs ranged from the famous Brown Vs the Board of Education desegregation case to the first woman firefighter sworn into service in NYC. Others however, pointed to occasions when the law had failed to protect as promised and Menking's sign was in this category. Initially, for a time the city tried to stop REPOhistory from installing 'Civil Disturbances'. After weeks of legal manoeuvres however, the signs went up from spring of 1998 to late winter of 1999. Nevertheless, right from the start several signs vanished after installation. Menking's was among them.

Responding to an inquiry the Millennium freely admitted having its staff confiscate the legally permitted artwork.

They even returned it to the group. However, along with the returned sign came a letter threatening legal action if any attempt was made to reinstall it. The grounds? REPOhistory was damaging hotel business. It seems the return of an inopportune past can prove a powerful trigger revealing hidden ideological tendencies in what appears otherwise to be a purely market driven process of privatisation and gentrification. After considerable debate that internally split REPOhistory roughly along lines of activists versus artists, Menking's sign was re-installed, but now at a greater distance from the hotel. And despite further threats the sign stayed in place, the project's permit ran its course, and neither side took legal action. It is five years on. Aside from this text and other scattered citations, Macklow's 'midnight demolition' is forgotten along with those he cruelly displaced. At the tranquil oasis in old Hell's Kitchen stylish guests still sip wine, discuss art, and continue to manufacture content for the information economy.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

All of this is familiar now. The 1990s affection for the 1920s and pre-crash 1930s, its weird merger of avant-garde aesthetics, high fashion, and post-Fordist management theory all dolled-up in a neo-modernist longing for limitless progress. So what if the occasional act of terror was, and remains indispensable to make it all seem real? Why dwell on conflict? If the creative class has supplanted the traditional labouring class in many places it has done so by greeting capital as potential equal, not as adversary. Winners are admired. Losers on the other hand are truly abject, lacking the aptitude to become exploiters themselves. Asserting a collective disarray, an enduring a-historicity, and a belief they have transcended labour/management antagonisms, creative workers think they can even avoid being exploited in the long run because their big, table-turning breakthrough is always just around the corner, always about to make that longed-for reservation at the swanky Millennium tower a reality.

Anyway, it's 2004, and billionaires abound. According to Forbes' recent survey they number a record 587. Still, it's difficult not to notice a connection between this fact and the new economy with its deregulated markets, rampant privatisation, decaying worker protection and widening gap between rich and poor. Nor are the super-rich all petroleum refiners and armament producers. Many belong to the so-called creative class. Among those joining the ten figure income bracket include the rags to riches writer of Harry Potter stories,

JK Rowling; Google creators Sergey Brin and Larry Page; and Gap clothing designer Michael Ying. So why am I still surprised when I walk down formerly forbidding streets to see such upscale consumption? Designer outlets, smart eateries, bars radiant with youthful crowds, and taxis shuttling celebrants to and fro. Block after block the scene resembles a single, unending cocktail party strung like carnival lights up and down the avenue. Between these cheerful stations other men and women, mostly in their forties and fifties, haunt the shadows gathering glass and metal recyclables from public waste bins. Certainly losers can't harm you. But what about ghosts?

I enter bar 'X'. Its ambiance probably not much different from bars in the Millennium New York, or Millennium Shanghai, or Millennium London. I shout for a dry, gin Martini over the mechanised music. (A cartoon thought-bubble appears, 'Am I the only person in here with a beard?' 'The only one over 40?') My mind returns to REPOhistory and its altruistic necromancy some six years earlier. 'If the enemy wins, not even the dead will be safe,' Walter Benjamin once declared. Not safe from whom? Perhaps it was the noise and the alcohol, but a surprising correlation asserts itself. REPOhistory was part of the creative class. While its objectives were different, REPOhistory, like RTmark, the Yes Men, and similar artistic agitators made use of available technologies and rhetorical forms to reach the same erudite consumer-citizens this swanky bar hoped to attract. The Millennium had been correct all along: *we were the competition*. With a little toning down of its righteous antagonism REPOhistory could have even taken its place amongst the web designers, dressmakers, MTV producers and other content providers of the new, immaterial economy. And come to think of it, right before the group folded it was increasingly being asked to travel outside to this or that city or town and install public markers about the quaint olden times; the local barber shop, the saloon, the red-light district and parade grounds. I had indeed found the enemy: it was me.

Like forgotten letters in some dimly lit archive, those not immediately part of the radical shift in the means of production remain out of sight, out of mind, fleeing from demolitions, downsizings and sometimes rummaging for cans. Not that this zone of dark matter was not always present and surrounding the upwardly mobile types such as the Millennium crowd. What is new, however, is the way this far larger realm of unrealised potential can gain access to most of the means of expression deployed by the burgeoning consciousness industry – that ubiquitous spectacle essential to the maintenance of global capitalism. By the
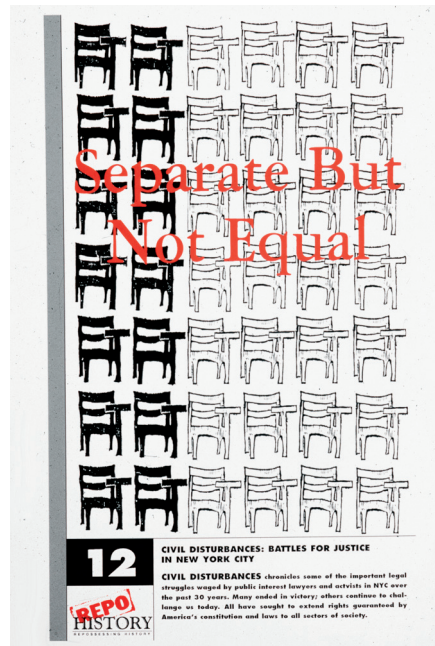
same token, the so called 'insiders' might, if circumstances permit, decide to cast their collective lot in with the losers and the ghosts. REPOhistory et al proves it can happen. Because even the new creative class with its 80-hour work week and multiple jobs has a fantasy, one half-remembered perhaps and a bit mad, yet still evident in times of stress and economic uncertainty. It goes like this: the bar tenders and the brass polishers and cooks, the laundresses and bell hops throw down their aprons and spatulas to join in mutinous celebration with artists, web designers and musicians. Raiding the wine cellar, they open up all 33 executive style conference rooms, set up a free health clinic in the lobby, transform the hotel into an autonomous broadcasting tower and party in a universe of creative dark matter.

I finish my drink and return home to wrap-up the essay I promised the fine, creative folks at *Mute*. 🏃

EXPLAINING URBANISM TO WILD ANIMALS

While nostalgia for the bygone industrial age is plundered by the regeneration industry, some contemporary artists, working amidst the city's post-industrial reinvention, are attempting more nuanced engagements with urban histories and collective memory. **Mark Crinson**, co-curator of the 2002 show Fabrications: New Art and Urban Memory, writes on Nathan Coley, Adam Chodzko, Nick Crowe, Ian Rawlinson and Sarah Carne

These works take the contested nature of memory itself as their subject, avoiding melancholia, the setting of utopian agendas, or the vicarious compilation of community memories

In 1846, intuiting that modernisation would entail transformations in the aesthetic, Baudelaire defined art as a technique of memorising artistic tradition in the face of loss. The artists who best triggered this 'mnemotechny of beauty',[1] or at least the subliminal artistic afterimages that Baudelaire wanted, were those who found some middle point between an excessive realism and an over-generalised idealism, creating 'deep avenues for the most adventurous imagination to wander down'.[2] As it transpired many modernist practices came to embody Baudelaire's fears; when not reflective of industrial technology or mimicking the forms of its commodities, art became assimilated to its associated myths of progress.[3]

Recently a mnemonic aspect has returned to many artistic practices, and one branch of this concerns the re-structuring of once-industrial cities. Where Rachel Whiteread and Richard Wentworth have addressed urban change through mute figures of loss or the gathering of topographical booty, other artists have avoided these fetishised traces. Instead of Whiteread's displacement of void by solid, of brick by concrete, they explore the map, the architect's model, the formalities of slide presentations, the performance of surveillance, and the re-evocation of film by video. They have not withdrawn from engagements with the politics of urban memory, rather the gallery has become a place of reappraisal with its own site-specificity. These works take the contested nature of memory itself as their subject, avoiding melancholia, the setting of utopian agendas, or the vicarious compilation of community memories. They engage

quizzically with the co-optation of memory to the advertising-speak of developers or to the *museé imaginaire* of the heritage lobby. They are reactions to a new wave of urban transformation aimed at finalising the projected post-industrial city on the very sites and in the very buildings of the old industrial city: the trumpeting of loft living, new urbanism, millennium squares, and public-private partnerships.

Take Nathan Coley's *I Don't Have Another Land* (2002), a site-specific work in the form of an architectural model; an object we might expect in the context of CUBE, a RIBA-sponsored gallery in Manchester.[4] Architectural models usually represent new proposals for buildings or record canonical structures. Sitting almost directly on the floor like a 1960s Minimalist sculpture, Coley's model is of the 1960s Marks & Spencer's building which was badly damaged and eventually pulled down as a result of the 1996 IRA bomb in Manchester. It is neither a new nor a distinctive building, in a strictly architectural sense, nor is it an instrument of design, of architectural development and the erasure of the past in the prospect of the future, as we might expect of the genre and as we might expect of CUBE. Instead it is a model of re-development or even anti- or ante-development. The architectural model's normal tense has changed from the future ('this will be') to the past ('this has been'), perhaps even the anterior future ('this has been', with a trace of 'this will be').[5] Its dark sheened surfaces on which the name Marks & Spencer is shadowed, the stark views through the model, and the words that board up some of its windows like a letting agency, lend it the rhetoric of loss. The words in the windows are from an Israeli folksong,

pointing, perhaps too portentously, to forced displacement and migration and their consequences in terms of terrorism. Yet the Marks & Spencer building will not be remembered for its architecture; it would most likely simply disappear from official records and only remain within the living memories of those who shopped there, particularly those who remember it as a local icon of '60s consumerism. Such memories gain a critical edge in this blackened hulk, emerging through their evocation in CUBE as a memorial to the anachronistic.

On the face of it Adam Chodzko's *Remixer* (2002) takes a very different approach to the question of memory-building and the memorial broached in Coley's work. Here Manchester's legendary nightclub of the 1980s, the Haçienda, and the site of the 1996 IRA bomb are linked by a line across the city. Both places could be seen to have had catalytic roles in the regeneration of Manchester and both have since become absorbed within developer-led regeneration.

Remixer takes the form of several fly-postered maps accompanied by a recording of A Certain Ratio's 'Flight' (1980), to some, the unacknowledged Manchester precursor to the dance music/club craze that was one catalyst for the city's urban renaissance. The song's arc of sound is remixed as if it were passing through the materials it might encounter on a direct flight one metre high through the intervening streets and buildings between the Haçienda and the bomb site: through walls, a car, the body of a street protester in 1991, and even through the flying fragments caused by the 1996 explosion. It also passes Albert Square, one of the city's principal commemorative spaces, with its statues and history of rallies and protests. In Chodzko's work these sites are not linked by a piece of psychogeography but by something more like a surveyor's cut across the city, an entirely imaginary vista conceivable only in terms of an inscription overlaid on a map and given mock accurate wave lengths depending upon the medium to be passed through. A vista is not just a view

cut across space but a succession of remembered or anticipated events. It therefore combines the idea of a piece of surveyor's or landscapist's rationalism that channels space and organises the view, and also the ordering of time as it is experienced by the individual or community, in this case disparate moments in Manchester's recent history. Chodzko undertakes a kind of

Those who exist on the margins, or who are most subject to planning, are also those who, because of their intimate awareness of shelter, property and security, have the closest relationship with the city

capricious urban planning in this work, fastidious in its execution but whimsical in its means, making a cross-section of the city that joins its 'weak' elements of memory, and slicing blithely through its steel and glass structures.

Another work by Chodzko, *The Gorgies' Centre* (2002), is in part also a mediation between two places. One of these is a gypsy site in Kent threatened with eviction because of its purchase by property developers. The other is Hulme in Manchester, where what the gypsies call 'gorgies', or house dwellers, live. Hulme is notorious for being twice demolished, redesigned and rebuilt since the war. The relocation of Hulme's residents has parallels with the impending relocation of the gypsies; both are subject to larger imperatives of land-use, planned environments, and the legalities of

ownership, tenancy and squatting. Chodzko mines these parallels by arranging to have boxes of official documents relating to one of Hulme's housing developments distributed to Jo and Bridie Jones, one of the gypsy families whom he had got to know. Chodzko's ethnography suggests the possibilities of solidarity between two normally distinct groups of people, implying that those who exist on the margins, or who are most subject to planning, are also those who, because of their intimate awareness of shelter, property and security, have the closest relationship with the city.

The work is made up of two sequences of slides shown simultaneously. The slides have been taken as part of a series of meetings, processes and other interactions that led to the creation of the actual Gorgies' Centre. Yet they avoid merely witnessing those processes and interactions. They juxtapose images and text, foreground their pictorial devices, and refuse to transform static elements into a narrative drive. They mark a distinction between the engagement in a group of actual events that have led to the transferral of an archive into the Jones's possession, and the way that these can be marked or recorded within the 'non-site' of the gallery. *The Gorgies' Centre* seeks to displace the official repository of public memory – the archive – so that displacement and transience, as the normally unrecorded aspects of urban policy, are foregrounded. It presents us with a point from outside the dominant culture in which the objects of memory, marked by the archive, can be estranged whilst simultaneously trying to avoid the 'ideological patronage' of the invoked other.**6** The work asks how we can come to terms, in a way that cannot be immediately recuperated, with the estranged or marginal circumstances of other people.

Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson's *Explaining Urbanism to Wild Animals* (2002) suggests an uncomfortable answer.**7** The installation consists of four large photographs grouped on three walls around

four DVD players: the images are of country scenes from an area between Manchester and Macclesfield, and each has a matching DVD. The photographs have the scale of sizeable landscape paintings and they represent the countryside head-on as a mass that fills the frame, facing the viewer directly with a bank of nettles, a woody pond, a hollowed-out tree, or a woodland opening. It is a curious, almost vertiginous experience that has similarities with the desire of Romantic landscape painters to create devices for the absorption of the viewer within the scene: 'you seek confirmation of your arrival, some motivative sign or plot that will explain why you are here... although you are placed before nothing that should command your attention, this void, pictured, seems already to imply your gaze.'**8** But the DVDs playing on the four screens puncture this seemingly engrossed experience of losing the self in nature's infinity. Now we see the two artists, tracking through the landscape with various pieces of audio equipment and setting them up in the woodland. Absurdly, they place a walkman inside the hollow tree

or they wade through the pond slowly swinging loudspeakers across the water as they go, like mock Beuysian shamans. The sound of construction sites emanates from the equipment, mingling with the birdsong and rustling leaves.

One way to understand *Explaining Urbanism to Wild Animals* is as an environmentalist's warning. The landscape polluted by the sounds of the city is a portent of what will come: the green belt will be eroded by the Government's desire to allow house-building within such formerly preserved sites; the Romantic's absorption within the miraculous minutiae, density and extensiveness of nature, will become mere reminiscence or fantasy. Yet by thinking about it in relation to Chodzko's *Gorgies' Centre*, another aspect of Crowe and Rawlinson's work is highlighted. Their earnest tracking through the Cheshire woods transforms the idea of mediating between two places into a mock ethnography in which they appear as missionaries setting out to 'explain' an alien faith or warn against an augured cataclysm. They search out marginal and threatened life forms with whom, if they

can ever be found, a conversation can never be staged. These life forms – the animals – are mute, presumably unaware of Government policy, unable to acknowledge the warning presented by the recordings or to do anything about it if they were. The displacement of the normal conditions of artistic production typical of ethnographic artistic practice, is here shown to be a quixotic venture without even allegorical power. Furthermore, the photographs need not necessarily describe the virgin forest; their framed and symmetrical structure, awaiting perhaps only a *Rückenfigur* to indicate our appropriate response of awe or enchantment, is by now so familiar it is either overpopulated with memories of previous encounters, or the hope of natural plenitude is turned sour by the evidence of litter and pollution. It is, then, possible to suspend the terms of the environmentalist thesis. Instead, the concrete jungle is the unrepresentable in these scenes; the noise of building construction is the threatening force of another nature that has no consoling memories attached to it.

Another recent concern is with the

double-coding of cities. Names announce this, but so too do certain urban forms. With its industrial eminence diminishing in the late nineteenth century, Manchester sought renewal by building a new ship canal and the world's first industrial park. Trafford Park became home to many large factories and warehouses served by docks and new railway lines, and also housed in its centre a small township built on a grid plan and further evoking American prototypes through its numbered street names. Sarah Carne's video projection *High Noon* (2002) ruminates on Trafford Park's peculiar and uncanny qualities, reworking the classic western *High Noon* (1954) as her source material. In Carne's video the film's script is spoken by office workers who read it completely straight, without play-acting. Occasionally the video cuts to an ominous view down the empty recession of Trafford Park's railway line, as if the expected train from *High Noon* might arrive. The scenario is, of course, absurd: the 'actors' are mostly stiff and disjointed and the text only holds together because the movie is so well known and its mythic resonances so engrained.

Carne's work shares something with the recent use of video as a kind of archaicising medium,[9] evoking the confessional protocols of the video diary. Although it has become familiar in contemporary television, this is an essentially archaic aesthetic form, similar in its effects to what Hal Foster has called 'the outmoded'.[10] Particularly relevant is the question that Foster raises about whether such forms have now become so recuperated within mainstream media that their juxtaposition with the Hollywood western stimulates merely a humorous frisson. The critical element here is the relation of the outmoded to what Foster (citing Benjamin) calls the 'wish symbols' of the past, which might be extended to include newly mythical types and scenarios. In Zinnemann's *High Noon* the wish symbol of the tight-knit, interdependent community of propinquity is ultimately and necessarily replaced by another wish symbol, that of the good but

flawed, brave yet reluctant man who transcends his weaknesses and those of his community through a kind of desperate integrity.

In the local context of post-industrial Trafford Park, with its management of amnesia that helps to co-opt and re-form the previous industrial and residential space, many of the exchanges in the original script of *High Noon* take on charged meaning: 'This is just a dirty little village in the middle of nowhere'; 'Now people up north are thinking of this town... sending money to build schools, factories and houses'; 'I've got no stake in this'. The static camera and the inactive recitation of the script seem to allow us to apply the film's messages to any period of Trafford Park's history, so that the coming of the baddie Miller could represent the Development Corporation, recession, even the original American firms that settled in the area. Essentially, though, this inaction (in which even the marshall is trapped) and the video's consequently open-ended allegorisation, is formally different from the inaction of the film's town's folk. It results from but also stands for a numbing of reflexes and a form of historical dislocation and oblivion that is part of the dubious achievement of the post-industrial city.

Carne's video causes mythic structures to cascade into the local politics of place, the non-synchronous confronting the progressive narrative of redevelopment. Recalling some of the contradictory relations that Trafford Park has had with America, the video also suggests collective memories of the American West – theme tunes, mythic structures, scraps of dialogue – now deeply inscribed in British popular culture. The very evocation of these memories acts as a way of resituating a highly mediated form of working class consciousness back into the de-industrialised and gentrified cityscape.

Earlier it was suggested that the relation of these artworks to urban memory is distinct from other contemporary forms of memory's co-optation by urbanism. This

latter use of memory has been identified as 'a cultural retrieval system, an aesthetic means of legitimising a political present that has long lost its legitimation'.[11] The crucial tack taken in these artworks, however, allowing them to avoid the instrumentalism of memory, is to treat acts of evocation, reminiscence or double-coding as technologies in themselves. By doing this they accept that their relation to the city is a delicately balanced one, largely channelled by these intermediary actions and practices. These are now the 'deep avenues' that viewers' imaginations wander down. And it is in relation to such technologies that these new works act as searching supplements and oblique commentaries. 🏃

FOOTNOTES

1 Charles Baudelaire, 'The Salon of 1846' in *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 77

2 Ibid, p. 64

3 Benjamin Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975,* Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2000, pp. 141-2

4 All of the works discussed here, apart from Crowe and Rawlinson's, were commissioned for the exhibition Fabrications: New Art and Urban Memory, held at CUBE, Manchester 11 September – 2 November 2002. See also Mark Crinson, Helen Hills and Natalie Rudd, *Fabrications: New Art and Urban Memory in Manchester*, Manchester: UMIM, 2002

5 See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage, 1993, pp. 76-77; 96; 99-100

6 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1996. p. 173

7 *Explaining Urbanism to Wild Animals* was exhibited at Tmesis Gallery, Manchester, 21 September to 1 November 2002

8 Joseph Leo Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape*, London: Reaktion, 1995, pp. 5-6

9 I am thinking of works like Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) and Stan Douglas's *Journey into Fear* (2001)

10 Hal Foster, *Design and Crime*, London and New York: Verso, 2002, pp. 138-9

11 Buchloh, 2000, p. 212

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BASIC INSTINCT

TRAUMA AND RETRENCHMENT 2000-4

Four years ago *Mute* published Anthony Davies and Simon Ford's influential article 'Culture Clubs' (*Mute*18), a piece which surveyed the landscape of partnerships and alliances between business, art and politics that was shaping the late '90s culture of convergence. Today, in the wake of the dotcom crash, September 11th, the 'War on Terror', and Enron, we have seen the (re)emergence of some less euphoric, more risk-averse tendencies. Here, Anthony Davies presents an audit of an era of retrenchment and explores the pre-history of some of the conservative trends shaping the present. If nothing else, this period of renewed 'core values' allows us to see more clearly the durability and depth of reactionary currents in every sector of life – capital's basic instincts laid bare

When the director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London, Philip Dodd, announced his resignation in July 2004 claiming that the UK had become 'curiously insular', the only surprise was that no one questioned his diagnosis. It was seemingly a given that Dodd, architect of one of Britain's most emblematic 'outward-looking' cultural nodes of the last decade, could call time on London's claim to be the world's most culturally exciting city. The 21st century, he announced, belonged to China.[1]

Partnerships, alliances, and networks and the interdependencies they created may have worked their magic during the 1990s, symbolising British culture's global connectedness, but contraction in the same landscape in the period 2000-2004 make the UK's particular brand of insularity far from curious. Since the heyday of the Creative Industries, Cool Britannia, the Third Way and New Economy, when the financially inspired 'surge to merge' blurred the boundaries between business and art (among others), a series of post-millennial crises have given way to risk-aversion, the reinstatement of boundaries and increasing retrenchment.

Four years ago, 'Culture Clubs' attempted to question the ways in which public and private were being reconfigured under the sway of the powerful new rhetoric of convergence. Where culture's zones of 'creativity' came, then, to be instrumentalised in the form of networking hubs and incubators for the power brokers of the new economy, in the intervening period their function has subtly altered to comply with the needs of a radically altered, introspective environment. Art now seeks to de-link itself from the broader Creative Industries and is infused with the imperative to set standards of quality, articulate vocabularies of expertise, and cater reliably to the diverse markets spanning both subsidised and 'commercial' art worlds. This shift, whose return to core values and competencies some have called paradigmatic, can be traced across other sectors too – albeit with important differentiations. The aim of this interim audit is to register some of the protectionist and conservative tropes that crystallised within activism, business, and art in the wake of the 1990s boom. The presentation of three adjacent narratives – demands for

clearer positioning in sections of the activist community, retrenchment and return to default settings in business, and a valorisation of specialist discourses and new markets in art – is intended to indicate points of confluence whilst maintaining the specific contours of each debate.

Nearly a decade after *Libération* published Baudrillard's critique of political complacency, the Anglo-American – and much of the European – left routinely turns to the ascendancy of US neo-conservatism and Colin Powell's 'fucking crazies' to explain the more conspicuously reactionary tendencies that have taken hold over the past few years. But the ubiquitous mediatisation, attractive simplicity and global resonance of stories associated with the 'Project for the New American Century' are such that the rise of other populist and New Right formations in EU/US politics are being obscured. In the early 1990s, when the 'Forty Intellectuals', including Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, and Paul Virilio, issued an appeal to vigilance regarding the threat to democracy from a burgeoning far right presence in the French mainstream media,[2] hitherto hidden concentrations of

FOOTNOTES

1 Nigel Reynolds, 'Swipe at Britain as arts chief quits', *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 July 2004
2 On July 13th 1993 'A Call to Vigilance' was made by the Forty Intellectuals in *Le Monde Diplomatique*:
http://www.anti-rev.org/textes/Appel/index.html. The Call warns of the danger of inadvertently legitimising extreme right positions. A year later it was republished as an advert with an additional 1,500 signatures. This debate is covered in more detail in 'The French New Right: New Right – New Left – New Paradigm?' *TELOS*, Winter 1993 – Spring 1994, Numbers 98 and 99. See the right-wing Thirdway.org website for further information, e.g. on similarities to the 'No Platform' policy in the UK
3 Eric Krebbers, 'Together with the New Right against globalisation?', October 1998,
http://www.savanne.ch/right-left-materials/with-new-right.html
4 Eric Krebbers, 'Together with the New Right against globalisation?', ibid

Since the heyday of the Creative Industries, Cool Britannia, the Third Way and New Economy, when the financially inspired 'surge to merge' blurred the boundaries between business and art (among others), a series of post-millennial crises have given way to risk-aversion, the reinstatement of boundaries and increasing retrenchment

power were arguably made visible by dramatic structural changes in capitalism (the fallout from the first Gulf War, the 'cost' of German reunification, successive European exchange rate crises, Western industrial restructuring, the collapse of consumer confidence, etc.). The period 2000-4 has seen a comparable economic 'readjustment' which promises, again, to help yield an understanding of some of the more deeply embedded political undercurrents which may have been overshadowed during the boom.

A NEW SYTHESIS?

In the late 1990s, as the narrative of convergence hit its peak, two members of Dutch anti-fascist organisation De Fabel van de Illegaal highlighted some of the risks associated with networked forms of organisation in a series of texts directed at the fledgling protest movement.[3] Developing debates already underway in Germany, where left-right cooperation and anti-semitism were being discussed by anti-nationalist and 'Anti-German' commentators (see Tadzio Müller's article, page 26), activists Eric Krebbers and Merijn Schoenmaker argued that the terms in which anti-globalisation struggles had – at least initially – been framed may have dovetailed with agendas associated with the right. The weak spots, they contended, lay in the fixation on the most visible edifice of global capitalism (agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organisation and World Bank plus, of course,

the Transnational Corporations), and its instruments (trade agreements like the Multilateral Agreement on Investment), at the expense of constitutive issues like racism, sexism, and homophobia which had been constructed as secondary. The absence of clear declarations had, according to this emergent critique, inadvertently created the conditions for left/right coalitions and opened up pathways for the right at the very heart of the campaigns against corporate led globalisation. As early as 1998, this had led De Fabel to amend their terminology and positioning, taking on a pro-globalisation position: 'Left wing activists should not protest against a globalisation of solidarity or a global exchange of cultures and ideas. And certainly not against progress. The real struggle is about the direction in which we are going to progress and most important: who is going to decide about that.'[4] De Fabel van de Illegaal departed from the campaigns against the MAI and WTO in June 1999.

Later in 2000, an author writing under the name of 'Mark S' further highlighted some of the risks associated with alliances and networked forms of organisation. In 'The Progressive Left's Dirty Little Secret: Public Citizen, IFG and the Far Right', he raises a series of question marks over the alliances, funding and strategic planning behind the now mythical Seattle protests of November 1999. By drawing attention to the manner in which singularly focused opposition to transnational corporations helped forge an alliance between left and right which

5 Public Citizen is a US based consumer advocacy NGO 'Protecting Health, Safety and Democracy'. It was founded by consumer rights activist Ralph Nader in 1971, although the organisation no longer has an operational relationship with him. See http://www.citizen.org. The IFG is an alliance of 60 leading activists, scholars, economists, researchers and writers representing over 60 organisations in 25 countries, and was formed in response to economic globalisation. See http://www.ifg.org. Mark S's criticism of these organisations rests either on their negotiating tactics (Nader, for example, was prepared to share platforms with Buchanan to oppose 'insti-

tutions of world government' and promote comparable positions on trade; discussions were also had with far right 'union buster' and Buchanan campaign financier, Roger Milliken), or on issues of funding (several campaigning efforts of the IFG have, for example, been sponsored by *The Ecologist* editor Teddy Goldsmith, whose name became associated with the European Far Right after attending meetings of GRECE)

6 Mark S, 'The Progressive Left's Dirty Little Secret: Public Citizen, IFG and the Far Right' 2000. In a March 1999 email to the PGA list-serve, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch field director Mike Dolan did just this, stating that

'the populist movement against the WTO transcends party politics', and that '(w)hatever else you say about Pat Buchanan, he will be the only candidate in the 2000 presidential sweep-stakes who will passionately and uncondition-ally defend the legitimate expectations of working families in the global economy.' http://www.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/debenoist/alain4.html

7 Mark S, ibid

8 Susan George, in an email to De Fabel, cited in ibid

9 Rafal Pankowski, 'Far Right hijacks anti-capitalist group', *Searchlight* 2002. Pankowski's claims were met head on by Remigiusz Okraska, a

co-founder of ATTAC Poland, who made a series of counter accusations in 'At the service of Neo-liberals'. See http://www.de.indymedia.org/2002/07/26175.shtml

10 Jaroslaw Tomasiewicz, founder of Przelom Nardowy (National Breakthrough) and more recently involved in the Association for Support of Ethnic Cultures. An extraordinary response to Rafal Pankowski's accusation of can be found at: http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/minelres/archive/0 4031999-16:16:53-13723.html

Polish ATTAC wasn't necessarily hijacked or infiltrated by the right – in a significant sense it was a product of the right

Right ▷ **Anti-WTO street theatre and posters, taken during Seattle demonstrations, 1999. Photos: BrightSpirit at http://www.peakpeak.com/~jking/current/current_4.html**

sidelined the latter's racism, sexism and nationalism in favour of the ultimately vague target of globalisation, he argues organisations like Public Citizen and the International Forum on Globalisation (IFG) stretched 'the movement's' mood of alliance-oriented pragmatism to breaking point, and created dangerous precedents for far right influence over 'progressive' discourse and activism.**5** Through malleable strategic objectives like the 'transcendence of partisan party politics' or the desired defeat of the 'fast-track' authority of the WTO and IMF, justifications were made for getting into bed with the racist conservative, business nationalist right of Pat Buchanan et al.**6** Mark S concludes that, by dint of Public Citizen's funding saturating 'virtually every layer of activism in Seattle', the tactical decisions of this consumer advocacy NGO came to influence those of the protest as a whole: 'We were all working with this coalition and we will

all feel the effects of a world with expanded far-right influence and power.'

Far right infiltration of 'progressive' movements is neither a novel phenomenon nor one restricted to the US: the international anti-Gulf War and Ecology movements have long provided a foil for anti-immigrant, anti-semitic and even fascist sentiment.**7** After this particular scare however some organisations made clear moves to address the problem. The PGA for example amended its manifesto to explicitly reject alliances with the right. Not so other leading lights of the anti-globalisation movement: the IFG's Susan George instead reasserted the ultimate effectivity and hence value of the alliance model by stating, 'the anti-NAFTA and anti-WTO forces defeated fast track authority ... only with the help of the far right. It was still a good thing to defeat fast-track.'**8**

In December 2001, and back in a European context, representatives from the anti-fascist Never Again Association, editors of the national trade union weekly *Nowy Tygodnik Popularny* and 'left-wing intellectual' review *Lewa Noga* raised concerns regarding an alleged right wing infiltration of the Polish branch of the anti-globalisation group ATTAC. In a text published in the UK anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* in July 2002, Rafal Pankowski built a compelling case – not only against Polish ATTAC but also the manner in which sections of the left had generally been wrong-footed by a quiet reconfiguration of the right.**9** In this case, by moving into some of the blurred 'professional' and social interstices of Polish political culture of the 1990s to expose one of the organisation's founders as a reformed fascist.**10** Pankowski's assertion of a right-wing hijack is perhaps best illustrated by a statement attributed to ATTAC Poland, which opens the article: 'The concepts of the fatherland, the state, the nation, and first of all patriotism, are under threat. ... We declare that defending the economic and political sovereignty of Poland is a necessary

11 Rafal Pankowski, ibid

12 Nicholas Hildyard, former editor of *The Ecologist*, states in his essay 'Blood and Culture: Ethnic Conflict and the Authoritarian Right', that 'the slogan "Neither Left nor Right but In Front" was first used by anarchist groups in the 1970s to signal an opposition both to the overtly statist policies of the then Left and to the elitist policies of the Right. In its modern variant, it is a slogan that calls not for opposition but for an alliance – an alliance that is possible only by setting aside key political differences.' Mark S for his part cites researcher Janet Biehl's work '"Ecology" and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultra-right', not only to track the transformation of

fascist discourses into ecological and anarchist ones during the 1970s and 80s, but also to name the provenance of the same phrase, which she claims was coined by Herbert Gruel, a participant in the formation of the German Greens and later founder of the fascist-ecology group the Ecological Democratic Party (ODP)

13 Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier, 'The French New Right in the Year 2000', *The Alain de Benoist Collection*, http://www.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/debenoist/alain9.html

14 Roger Griffin, 'Between metapolitics and apoliteia: the New Right's strategy for conserving the fascist vision in the interregnum', *Modern and Contemporary France*, vol. 8, no. 2, Feb. 2000

condition for membership in our Association. ... ATTAC is a Polish association, which seeks first of all to defend Polish interests, the sovereignty of decisions of the Polish society, Polish culture and tradition as well as Polish property.'[11]

Significantly, there is a difference between the pragmatic and publicly acknowledged 'we are neither left nor right, we are in front'[12] alliances manifest on the streets of Seattle, and the crypto convergence of left/right agendas at Poland's ATTAC. Whereas the former demonstrate the strategic opportunities and dilemmas forged by new networked forms of organisation, the latter can be linked to the reformulation of the European New Right and its hibernation in the left's 'laboratories of thought' over the last thirty years or so. Pankowski's alarmist calls, valuable though they are, fall somewhat wide of the mark: Polish ATTAC wasn't necessarily hijacked or infiltrated by the right – in a significant sense it was a product of the right.

Between 2000 and 2002 the European political landscape was rocked by a series of victories and gains made by the mainstream populist right in local and national elections: Jörg Haider's Freedom party (FPÖ) in Austria; Jean Marie Le Pen's National Front in France; Pim Fortuyn's List Fortuyn in Holland; the People's Party in Denmark; the Progress Party in Norway; Vlaams Blok in Belgium and the Northern League in Italy. Where many attributed the electoral success of this populist movement to the resurgence of nationalism triggered by globalisation, migration and economic insecurity, others looked to an 'intellectual' current which had been quietly hibernating in mainstream political culture since the late 1960s. According to two of its most prominent exponents, Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier, the European New Right (ENR) is not a political movement, but 'a think-tank and school of thought' which, since its formation in 1968, has attempted to formulate a metapolitical perspective:

In a world where closed entities have given way to interconnected networks with increasingly fuzzy reference points, metapolitical action attempts, beyond political divisions and through a new synthesis, to renew a transversal mode of thought and, ultimately, to study all areas of knowledge in order to propose a coherent worldview.[13]

Its critics have claimed that the ENR's force lies in having transformed the discourse and focus of 1960s fascism by rebranding it as a critique of the 'system' that was attractive to anti-fascists, whilst simultaneously transmitting a fascist message to the initiated.[14]

As the narrative of globalisation intensified during the 1990s, anxieties associated with networked forms of organisation were identified and acted upon in activist communities. Clearer political positioning and a definition of basic ideological orientations emerged as a response to the left-right coalitions and 'transversals' being constructed to serve right-wing interests. It would take the
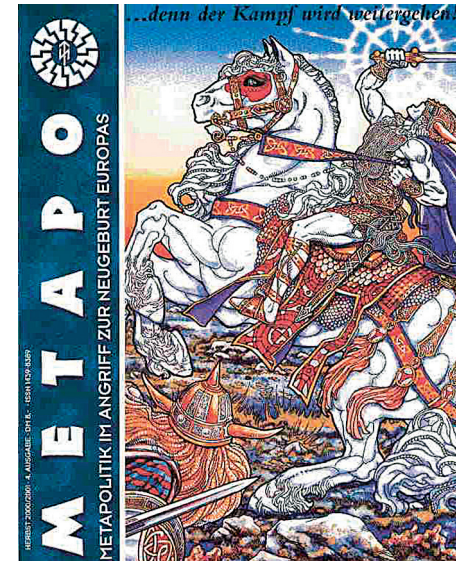
combined impact of the dotcom collapse, September 11 and Enron to trigger a similar crisis of limits in the world of business.

BACK TO BASICS

In late 2001, as some sections of the US business community were busy preparing for bankruptcy filings and state investigations into corporate misconduct, others were looking for the hope of survival in the global downturn. For the first time in a decade, terms like 'interdependence risk', 'network discontinuities' and 'back-to-basics' started to temper the chorus of innovation, risk, expectation and hope – the irrational exuberance which had accompanied the boom economy of the 1990s.

In an article published in *Strategy and Business* magazine in January 2002, Ralph W. Schrader and Mike McConnell (respectively CEO and Vice President of management and technology consultants Booz Allen Hamilton) issued a set of warnings linked to the many perceived threats to corporate America post September 11. Schrader and McConnell argued that most companies bound to the globalisation of communications, finance,

15 Ralph W Schrader and Mike McConnell, 'Post-9/11 CEO Agenda', *Strategy and Business* (Security and Strategy Special Report), issue 26, first quarter, 2002

16 Jean Eaglesham, 'The Case Against Anderson', *Financial Times*, 8 April, 2002

17 Private email correspondence with Randall Rothenberg, Summer 2003

18 Brett C Smith (Senior research Associate at The Office for the Study of Automotive Transportation), http://www.autofieldguide.com/columns/smith/1201ob.html

19 Brett C Smith, ibid.

20 Brad Stone, 'Back to Basics', *Newsweek*, August 4, 2003

21 Neil Buckley, 'Eyes on the Fries: will new products, restaurant refits and a marketing overhaul sustain the Golden Arches', *Financial Times*, August 29, 2003

22 Business Cycle Dating Committee, National Bureau of Economic Research, November 26, 2001 http://www.nber.com/cycles/november2001/

23 Jeffrey E Sohl, 'The US Angel and Venture Capital Market: Recent Trends and Developments', *Journal of Private Equity*, Vol.6, No. 2, 2003, pp. 7-17

24 Jeffrey E Garten (Dean of the Yale School of Management), From New Economy to Siege Economy', *Strategy and Business*, ibid.

25 *The Economist*, July 12 2003

trade, and corporate activity – as well as their supporting infrastructures – had made themselves susceptible to 'interdependence risk'. This is 'the potential for ostensibly small events – a trader improperly covering derivatives trades, a rogue computer hacker, a fire in a suppliers' factory – to spiral rapidly into a company-threatening crisis.'[15] Ironically, those very same risks and discontinuities, those unanticipated events that can suddenly transform an industry, did indeed prove to be catastrophic for many companies. The threat however was not exposure to remote risks intensified by global connectedness; rather, it was the potential for alliances, partnerships and networks to distort growth, and CEOs' enthusiastic abuse of this situation in exaggerated profit projections, insider deals and massaged accounts. In late 2001 the labyrinthine networks and illegal partnerships orbiting Enron and WorldCom were just coming to light: for a moment, interdependence risk threatened to engulf the system.

In the case of Arthur Anderson, its interdependence with Enron triggered the rapid disintegration of the entire brand – not just the company in the US but the mutli-disciplinary partnerships ('MDPs') that had underpinned its global operations. Up until this point, Anderson had challenged traditional business models by offering tax, legal and a host of professional services under one roof and was by far the largest proponent of MDPs among the 'Big Five' accountancy firms (now the Big Four). Exposure to Enron was catastrophic for the company and a major setback for MDPs in general. As Alan Hodgart, European director of Hildebrandt International Consultants, has argued 'Once the integrity of the brand is questioned, everything disappears ... everyone looks for an escape route.'[16] Seen within this context, those debates which focused on the many perceived holes and vulnerabilities in the system as well as their 'remedy' – securing the networks, protecting data and what *Strategy and Business* editor Randall Rothenberg called 'boundarylessness

2002
McDONALD'S CORPORATION
Summary Annual Report
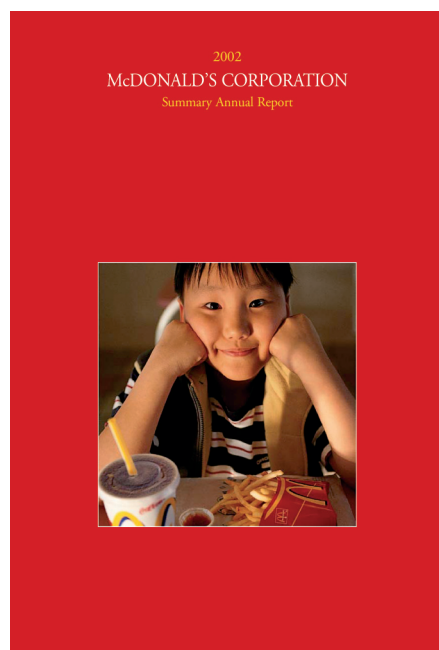
Schrader and McConnell argued that companies bound to globalisation had made themselves susceptible to 'interdependence risk'

within borders' – must seem prescient. In certain quarters of the corporate community they have indisputably contributed to the belief that finding a secure balance between a company's 'boundarylessness' (its ability to engage new people, ideas, concepts, suppliers, etc.) and its 'borders' (forms of protection against the unanticipated) have become key to survival.[17] But, as partnerships and alliances became increasingly associated with risk and the

economy continued on its downward course throughout 2002/3, some CEOs started to question the viability of such a model of growth altogether.

When Bill Ford took over the ailing Ford Motors from Jacques Nasser in late 2001, he immediately reversed what had become a disastrous programme of diversification (into areas like e-commerce, parts recycling etc.), shed ancillary businesses, and implemented a general turnaround plan that he termed 'Back to Basics' (not to be confused with the last Conservative government's moral and cultural variant of the mid 1990s). From that point on, the company would concentrate on what it knew best – its core business, the production of cars. This was not simply a case of redefining the core business in times of turbulence, but an attempt to roll back the company to a pre-Jacques Nasser golden age – a fundamental rejection of the dotcom inspired 'consumer products company' in favour of what can best be described as a company practicing 'total manufacturing' (i.e. a shift back into design, engineer and build). This was broadly welcomed by industry analysts fed up with what automotive industry expert Brett C Smith dubbed, 'the blatant hoax [dot com] played on the country by a bunch of twenty year olds!'[18] The chorus of approval was epitomised by his subsequent claim that 'October 30th (2001) is the day that signalled the end of the sea change from a management style that captured the fancy of many industrial leaders. In its place the back-to-basics approach was reinstated.'[19]

From its reinstatement on 30th October 2001, Back to Basics continued to gather pace and was lauded as a major corporate trend, with a number of companies – including Gap, Procter and Gamble, Levis, Nike and Reebok, with their 'Fashion Backwards' trends – following suit. *Newsweek*'s grand proclamation in August 2003 that 'common sense is back in vogue'[20] found a highpoint of articulation in the 'Eyes on the Fries' strategy of the now

The story so far...

$7.3 bil phony accounting — WorldCom — Invoke 5th Amendment — Market manipulation strategies — $ billions $ — Texas — $200 mil — CSFB

Bernie Ebbers CEO — $400 mil loan — $1.5 mil pension for life

California electricity crisis — Ricochet, Get Shorty, Fat Boy, Load Shift, Death Star — document shredding — On board of directors and audit committee — Opposed reform legislation — $80 mil — Lehman Bros.

Associates — Wendy Gramm — Sen. Phil Gramm — Ph.D. Economics — $80 mil — Bear Stearns

Jeff Skilling — Andy Fastow — Ken Lay — 144 senior Enron execs — $80 mil — UBS

Peregrine Systems — Delisted — Restate 3 yrs of financial results — Martha Stewart Omnimedia — Auditor til April 2002 — Auditor til May 2002 — Arthur Andersen — Auditor — Enron — Round-trip trades — $100's of millions — $744 mil — Congressional investigations — Names of deals — $32 mil severance

Guilty — wire fraud — Disguise loans as trades — Mahonia — Yosemite Delta — Channel Isles — Cayman Isles — $80 mil

Michael Milken — Wrote preface to his cookbook — On board of directors — Resigned — NYSE — 3 British bankers — Nigerian barges — Invested in Enron's LJM partnerships — Merrill Lynch — J.P.Morgan — Citigroup — $400 mil — Salomon Smith Barney

daughter — Dr. John Mendelsohn — On BoD — Offshore company — Established — Schuyler Tilney director — Fired — Thomas Davis Vice Chair. — 5 firms $8 mil — Discarded e-mails — Jack Grubman analyst — $15 mil

Martha Stewart CEO — Phone call Dec 27 — Peter Bacanovic broker — Invoke 5th — Suspended Fired — Resigned — $200 mil — Deutsche Bank — NASD investigation

K-Mart — Phone call Dec 27 — FDA rejects drug — Douglas Faneuil assistant — David Komansky CEO — $80 mil — Goldman Sachs — Abby Cohen

Martha's friend — Alert issued Dec 27 re: "speculation" of FDA rejection — Eric Hecht biotech analyst — Henry Blodget Internet analyst — Other Internet analysts — fines — $110 mil — Morgan Stanley — Mary Meeker

Sold Dec 27 — Learned Dec 26 — Announced Dec 28 — Sam Waksal CEO — Eliot Spitzer NYAG — $125 mil

Sold Dec 28 before FDA announce — ImClone — Tried selling Dec 27 — $10 mil worth sold Dec 27 — Invoke 5th Amendment — Buy & Accumulate ratings — INSP $114 → 37¢, ICGE $200 → 24¢, TFSM $69 → 9¢, ATHM chap11 — Dot-Com Fiasco

Chapter 11 — Golf course — Jack Waksal father — Aliza Waksal daughter — Elana Waksal daughter — Husband — 223 times — Congressional Investigation — Civil lawsuit — Privately skeptical

Auditor — The Rigases — Off-the-books borrowing — Adelphia — Resigned — Power Industry: Mirant, Dynegy, Reliant, Duke Energy, CMS Energy — Dad — Grandad — $10 mil bail — Merck — Overstate $12.4 bil revenues / 3 yrs

3 Arrested — 23,000 sq ft mansion — Chairman Harvey Pitt — Lawyer for — Ivan Boesky — Arrested — $10 mil bail — Renoir — Insiders — $500 mil — AOL Time Warner — Qwest — Improperly account for $1.6 bil sales / 3 yrs

document shredding — Global Crossing — Gary Winnick CEO — S.E.C. investigations — Dennis Kozlowski CEO — evaded sales tax — Monet — TYCO — Computer Assoc. — Rite Aid — Lucent — Bristol-Myers — Cigna

Haliburton — PurchasePro — Xerox — Overstate $6.4 bil revenues / 5 yrs — $10 million fine

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deceased CEO of McDonalds, James Cantalupo.**21** After taking control of the company in early 2003, Cantalupo immediately reversed the headlong rush to build new outlets, arguing that diversification was the fundamental reason that McDonalds had gone off the rails. They had taken their eyes off the fries and neglected core competencies and quality in favour of unrealistic growth targets and diversification. At an annual 10-15 per cent, these had translated into opening two thousand restaurants per year, as well as investing in partnerships and other ventures to meet the expectations of Wall Street. After shedding partnerships, adding customers to existing stores versus adding stores, and revising the growth forecast to a more modest 3-5 percent, McDonalds' share price leapt back from its eight year low in March 2003.

As sections of the business community became increasingly disentangled – in some cases willingly, in others forcibly – from the complex networked landscape of the late 1990s, for many the project of convergence came to an abrupt halt. According to the Business Cycle Dating Committee the US economy officially went into recession in March 2001 and the dot com bubble burst a year earlier in March 2000.**22** Up until this point, many financial analysts were sticking to their guns – arguing that the new economy was recession proof, that the boom-bust business cycle was a thing of the past, a feature of the 'old' economy. In this light a report from the *Journal of Private Equity* makes stark reading: in 1997, there was one Silicon Valley public initial offering per week, which produced nearly 65 millionaires per day. By 2001, Silicon Valley was suffering 4,000 job losses per month, and 85 bankruptcies per day.**23** For the business community, this trauma was further compounded by September 11 and the violently paranoid geopolitics of the US' 'War On Terror', whose security clampdown led some analysts to the extraordinary conclusion that this 'new crisis presents issues never before faced: a halt to the headlong, liberating globalisation of the last two decades.'**24** The Back to Basics, Fashion Backwards, New Common Sense and Eyes on the Fries strategies clearly indicate a tendency towards retrenchment in the face of economic and political uncertainty, but the broader contours of a climate where, as *The Economist* had it, 'revolutions are distinctly out of favour' has been much less clear.**25**

A REAL PARADIGM SHIFT

In late 2001, as the Securities and Exchange Commission started to unravel the bogus networks at energy giant Enron, arts research agency AEA Consulting questioned the viability of unregulated corporate sponsorship of the arts. Using the Venice Biennale with its 'anachronistic but much revered national paradigm' as an example, its researcher Joe Hill noted that members of the Biennale's global village weren't guaranteed equal representation if some were able to outspend others thanks to strategic partnership deals with business. '[L]ike America's political action committees', he suggested, 'corporate sponsorship may require regulation if increasing numbers of smaller countries are to remain visible.'**26** For many companies however, market realities were already beginning to overshadow the finer points of Hill's verdict.

26 Joe Hill, Reflections on the Venice Biennale, *The Platform*, Volume 2 Number 2, AEA Consulting,

http://aeaconsulting.com/site/platformv2i2d.html

27 Ernst and Young report, 'UK Venture Capital halves in 2002', London 13th February 2003:

http://www.ey.com/global/Content.nsf/UK/Media
_-_03_02_13_DC_-
_UK_Venture_Capital_halves_in_2002

and: 'UK Venture Capital investment drops again in 2003', London 12 February 2004:

http://www.ey.com/global/Content.nsf/UK/Media
_-_04_02_12_DC_-_VC_investment_drops

28 According to the employment statistics provided by the Department for Culture Media and Sport, jobs in advertising and design & designer fashion actually went up 7 percent during the same period!

29 Colin Tweedy, 'Putting art into business', Oct 2004, *ePolitix.com* at:

http://www.epolitix.com/EN/TopicalComment/2004
10/3f5ab58b-4e6d-4dc7-a1dd-51aa96f24853.htm.

Colin Tweedy is chief executive of Arts & Business and chairman of CEREC, the European Committee for Business, Arts and Culture

30 Arts and Business survey. The levels of sponsorship decline vary from sector to sector,

but in the visual arts in the UK, business sponsorship collapsed from a peak of £10.3m in 2000/01 to £6.4m in 2001/02. The statistics also point towards a movement of business funding from visual arts, museums and galleries into community type initiatives (Corporate Social responsibility),

http://www.aandb.org.uk/asp/uploads/uploaded-
files/1/618/ab%20reports%20on%20business%2
0support%20of%20the%20arts.pdf

31 Juliette Garside, 'Scottish arts suffer as big business pulls plug on cash', *Sunday Herald*, 21 April 2002

In the UK, the dot com implosion and subsequent readjustment of 2000/01 continued to rip through Europe's leading Venture Capital Market.[27] By 2002 it had fallen to only 20 percent of its 2000 high (from Euro 7.2bn in 2000 to Euro 1.5bn in 2002) with obvious repercussions for the fledgling Creative Industries whose entrepreneurial habitats had been spurred on by the ideology and loose capital associated with the new economy, as well as being actively supported by a devoted New Labour government.[28] The desire to create 'a society in the UK where the arts are more effectively integrated with business than almost anywhere else in the world'[29] meant, of course, that the arts had become subject not only to business values but, critically, even more closely 'integrated' into the vagaries of business trends and economic cycles. Total business investment in the arts in the UK fell from a peak of £134,627,059 in 1999/00 to £99,336,151 in 2001/02[30] and, despite Arts & Business chief executive Colin Tweedy's claim that spending on Millennium projects accounted for much of this drop, it was nonetheless indicative of a profound crisis. The 2001 Venice Biennale had narrowly missed a cull. But shortly after Bloomberg, the British Council and their guests partied to the tune of £250,000 at Venice's art bash of the year, the traumas of a deepening recession and September 11 led to Bloomberg cancelling their annual Christmas party in London; elsewhere, Scotland's *Sunday Herald* reported that Andersen Consulting's exposure to Enron had resulted in their withdrawal from the 2002 Glasgow Art Fair, leaving the organisers with no time to find a replacement sponsor.[31] It was only a matter of time before those organisations and individuals who had looked outwards to private capital during a boom economy would need to find escape routes during a deepening recession – looking inwards at core competencies and micro-economies was a safe option.

Against this backdrop of contraction, a latent crisis surfaced in the art press on the role of criticism and the 'withering away' of various categories, gold standards and specialist discourses in contemporary art in the 1990s. On the occasion of its 100th edition *October* magazine published a special edition devoted to obsolescence, which included a since much cited round-table on 'The Present Conditions of Art Criticism'.[32] The original discussion took place in New York City on December 14, 2001 and brought together the magazines' editors and a carefully selected band of US academics, museum curators, art critics, and artists.[33] The *October* landscape is one in

Together with the implicit affirmation of the primacy of the art object, gallery and market, many of these narratives were well matched to institutional and media agendas in desperate need of new, stable and conservative ciphers of cultural value

which the serious art critic is characterised as an independent actor – a 'third voice' – outmanoeuvred by the neoliberal-pop-libertarian-aesthetics of writers like Dave Hickey on the one hand and curators' organisational access to the instruments of the culture industry on the other. Here, art criticism's crisis partly finds its cause in the ascendency of 'belletristic' art writing; the role of the popular press is described as defining artists' careers and creating new markets/constituencies during the 1990s – notably in the UK.

The 'dismantling of competence through the market' has, according to participant Benjamin Buchloh, voided the judgement of the critic and with it his/her independent mediation role between institutions, the markets and 'various segments of the public sphere of avant garde culture'. It is at such a moment that he says 'the critic has no place in our cultural structure'. In keeping with this diagnosis, the group's anxieties settle on the spectre of populism, the corrupting influence of lifestyle media and market-acquiescence and, somewhat predictably, draw them towards the kind of affirmative, self-valorising standards capable of reasserting criticism's disciplinary role.

In the UK meanwhile, after a decade of false starts, an assault on the interdisciplinary and intersectoral proliferations of the 1990s started to gain currency in reactionary registers such as the New Gentleness and New Formalism. Common to the presentation of all these 'post-yBa' and 'post-Sensation' idioms was a clear sense of periodisation and place which, contrary to claims made for the art being 'uncluttered by the relics of history',[34] in fact anchored it to history – through a doggedly narrow account of the 1990s British (or rather London/Glasgow) cultural scene.[35] Together with the implicit affirmation of the primacy of the art object, gallery and market, many of these narratives were well matched to institutional and media agendas in desperate need of new, stable and conservative ciphers of cultural value. Although careful not to lump together the diverse artistic positions in one 'movement', most interpretations followed a similar pattern of describing the new art's turn inwards – to a set of psychosocial, material or art-historical default values. In most cases, the primary explanatory architecture welded together a supposed backlash against the 'aggressive' identity politics and theoretical cul-de-sacs of the late 1980s and early 1990s with a sense of disdain for the celebrity-fixated,

32 *October* 100, 'Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism, Spring MIT, 2002, pp200-228

33 *October* 100, ibid. The Round Table included October founding editor Rosalind E. Krauss, fellow editors Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Hal Foster and George Baker, art historians David Joselit, James Meyer and Helen Molesworth, artists John Miller and Andrea Fraser, and critic and MOMA curator Robert Storr

34 JJ Charlesworth, 'Not Neo But New', *Art Monthly*, no. 259, September 2002

35 Martin Maloney, the artist/curator who can be credited with developing the vocabulary associated with the New Gentleness, emphasised the 'romantic' and 'softer' nature of new art. See also Alex Farquharson's catalogue essay for 'Real Hearts Protest/Neurotic Souls Survive', Beck's Futures, 2002. Recent usage of New Gentleness can be found in Fiachra Gibbons, 'After the shocks and the hype, the gentle art of painting is ready to make a comeback', *The Guardian*, January 2, 2003. For New Formalism, see JJ Charlesworth, 'Not Neo But New', ibid.

36 *Variant* has critically engaged these positions with, first, Nick Evans' trenchant dismantling of New Formalism and its necessarily occluded 'Others' in 'Tired of the Soup de Jour?', *Variant* 16, Winter 2002, then Grant Kester's short essay on the neo-conservative cultural tendencies of writers like Dave Hickey in 'The world he has lost: Dave Hickey's beauty treatment', *Variant* 18, Autumn 2003

37 Iwona Blazwick, Catalogue introduction to 'Early One Morning – New British Sculpture in the 21st Century', Whitechapel Gallery, 2002

38 Claire Cozens, 'Standard recruits seven to boost arts coverage', *The Guardian*, March 21, 2002

populist venality of the yBa to argue for a move into – for example – more intimate, sincere, and authentic forms of production.**36** The cumulative investment in formalism prompted Iwona Blazwick (the then recently appointed director if the Whitechapel Gallery in London) to announce on the occasion of the Early One Morning exhibition that a 'a real paradigm shift in contemporary art' had occurred.**37**

With its concomitant returns to painting, sculpture and objecthood, the 'paradigm shift' hit mainstream visibility and institutional accord with a host of 'back to basics' exhibitions throughout 2002-2003. At a glance, these included the survey of contemporary British sculptors who 'were re-engaging with the formal and conceptual business of making things' in Early One Morning (Whitechapel Gallery, August 2002); the 'art [that] seems to be rematerialising' in Object Sculpture (Henry Moore Institute, June – September 2002); the lifting of '90s amnesia and 'forgetfulness about earlier forms of modern art' in Beck's Futures (ICA, March – May 2002) and the 'honest colourful experience' of Days Like These (Tate Britain, February – May 2003). This ran parallel to a shift of focus in sections of the UK mainstream media and specialist art press – including Andrew Renton's column in London's *Evening Standard*, with its regular and sustained polemic on the demise of yBa and the ascendance of self-referentiality and the 'artist's touch'. For a while at least, this high circulation daily newspaper wound down its love affair with the popular exploits of Tracey, Damien and co. in a bid to move its arts coverage 'upmarket'.**38** The storyline moved from hello 'Heroes of Humdrum', Rachel Whiteread and Eva Hesse (Dec 3, 2002), to 'Bye-bye YBAs' (Dec 31, 2002) and 'Escape from Brit Art' (Feb 4, 2003). This remains The Art Story in the UK media, with a July 2004 article in *The Financial Times' How to Spend It* magazine reiterating that 'It's probably a reaction against the harsh realities presented by Brit Art but a lot of young artists are getting

back to the physical and emotional process of painting.'**39**

As these tendencies crystallised throughout 2002/03, a radically reformed and newly appointed Arts Council England (ACE) entered the equation. In addition to its remit to improve social cohesion, cultural diversity and generally utilise what the state perceives as the 'transformative' power of the arts, the new organisation put the individual artist at the centre of its policy making with an implicit remit to develop markets for sales and commissions of contemporary art. Between the lines, the first ACE manifesto 'Ambitions for the Arts' (February 2003) offers a glimpse into a fundamental funding realignment towards, and 'productive intervention' in, the existing market for contemporary art. As this market has remained relatively opaque to policy makers, a research brief went into circulation in early 2002 to tackle the deficit of understanding. Two of the most significant expected outputs of the report, which – after a half-year embargo – has just been released by ACE and consultancy

Morris Hargreaves McIntyre under the title 'Taste Buds', were to

suggest ways in which artists may be encouraged to become more entrepreneurial, without compromising their practice' and to 'recommend strategic initiatives to develop the marketplace and enhance the purchase and commissioning of, and engagement in, the innovative end of contemporary art practice.**40**

This clearly indicates a turn inwards – in this case to intra-sectoral core strengths - – and offers up what might be called the 'New Art Consumer' (NAC) as the paramount engine of art's sustainability. NACs' relevance to the last three years of contraction lies in their capacity to shift the operational logic from corporatisation to marketisation, from 'immaterial' knowledge and services to a re-materialisation of the art object and consumer base. Where corporatisation – as part and parcel of a model of convergence – implied increased integration with the business community and compliance with its administrative and managerial infrastructures, marketisation relies on models of divergence and individuation. Under the jurisdiction of the State, the burden of provision, valorisation and autonomy is moved onto a carefully modelled, differentiated social system in which the relationship between individual artists and educated consumers moves to the centre ground.

To gauge the ideological tenets of the commissioning and consulting agencies exploring this framework, you need look no further than the pronouncements of Andrew Wheatley, ubiquitous art consultant, co-director of London's Cabinet Gallery, and advisor on 'Taste Buds'. With a track record drafting policy for government agencies, assessing National Lottery applications and engaging in a range of other arts 'monitoring' and 'mentoring' activities, Wheatley can be classed as an authority on artists' negotiation of British state-market

39 Jane Hughes, 'Could Sacha Clean Up', how to spend it magazine No. 124, *Financial Times*, July 2004

40 'Developing the Markets for Sales and Commissions of Contemporary Art', Research brief, Arts Council England, 2002

41 See Education through Art, http://www.eta-art.co.uk/about/index.html

42 Peter Seddon and Andrew Wheatley, 'Angelic Markets', in Peter Seddon, <civilwar@rochdale.uk>: *Essays, Diaries, Conversations*, The Centre for Contemporary Visual Arts, University of Brighton, 2003

43 'Taste Buds: How to Cultivate the Art Market' 14, October 2004. The executive summary and Art Eco System Model can be found at: http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/information/publication_detail.php?browse=recent&id=416

44 The Habitat 'Crash Course in Contemporary Art', October 2003 can be found online at: http://www.artshole.co.uk/exhibitions/7thOctober/crash%20course%20in%20cont%20art.htm 'Art School' at the Bloomberg Space, 26 January – 6 March 2004 'Crash Course – Unravelling Collecting Contemporary Art' with Louise Hayward, Director, Store Gallery, and Alicia Miller, Head of Education at the Whitechapel Gallery, July 2004

Image below ⊳ Art Ecosystem model, from 'Taste Buds', a report on developing the market for contemporary visual art, written by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre and published by Arts Council England, 2004

The Art Eco-System Model

1. Artists attract recognition of peers
2. Exhibition curated by artists or freelance curator
2a. Representation in a small publicly funded gallery
3. Activity attracts critical attention
4. Attracts attention of dealer
5. Attracts private collectors
6. Dealers build artists' reputation through sales including international art fairs
7. Dealer builds critical endorsement through exhibitions/sales in small publicly funded/regional independent galleries
8. Purchase or exhibition in major public gallery
9. Legitimisation adds value and status to collector and profit to dealer and artist
10. Collector lends to public gallery
11. Collectors' discernment is endorsed - invited onto Boards of Galleries
12. Collectors bequest collection to galleries

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infrastructures. In 2002, whilst working on a mentoring scheme for arts development organisation ETA,**41** he participated in a conversation with his charge, artist Peter Seddon, which illustrates both his personal investment in the everyday 'realism' of the market and the normative function of his statements upon it. In 'Angelic Markets', he claims assuredly that although this should not to be confused with a 'straightforwardly Thatcherite, Friedmanite, right wing, libertarian etc.' position, markets are 'inescapable and always [have] been in the modern world'.**42** The art market, Wheatley opines, is closely intertwined with the

history of modernism and artists have always had a symbiotic relationship with the gallery/dealer system – though symbiosis in this case means that 'sometimes you have to sup with so-called devils to ensure that important work is seen'. The only difficulties this situation throws up are linked to understanding the complex interplay between specialists that result in legitimation, consensus and subscription – the 'quite special way' in which the art market manipulates and generates its own demand. As this 'rarified niche market' is driven by complex social and professional interrelations between artists, critics, curators, dealers,

collectors and academics, it behaves quite unlike a mass market of reproduced goods. With the magic ingredients of subscription being so difficult to monitor, never mind manufacture 'Taste Buds' may have difficulties producing the structural maps necessary for ACE to effectively intervene, entice and educate NACs.**43**

Ever ahead of the game, by late 2003 retail company Habitat was already leading by example – enrolling in its 'Crash course in Contemporary Art', soon to be followed by the Whitechapel Gallery's 'Critics Classes' and Bloomberg's 'Art School'.**44** To celebrate Habitat's support of the first Frieze Art Fair,

45 The Habitat Crash Course was serviced by Jennifer Higgie (*Frieze* Reviews Editor), Matthew Collings (art critic), Anthony Spira (curator), Edmund Hubbard (art consultant) and Mark Darbyshire (framing expert)

46 Ben Lewis, 'The Price of Art', *Prospect*, October 2004, see also: Francis Sheenan, 'The secret art of buying', *The Herald*, Glasgow, Scotland, October 22 2004. Elaine Cronin, 'Selling art for the solution', *Circa Art Magazine*, Friday 15 October 2004, and Sophie Leris, 'The fine art of buying', The *Evening Standard's ES* supplement, March 2004

47 Emiko Terazono, 'Time to turn the taps back on', *Financial Times*, 16 September 2003

48 Philip Dodd in conversation with Jonathan Freedland, 'The Long View', BBC Radio 4, Tuesday 28th September 2004. Having travelled the world promoting Swinging London as the living, breathing embodiment of the Third Way, Dodd is now the favoured talking head on its heir apparent, Buzzing Beijing, a place that is currently 'navigating a way that's neither State socialism nor American capitalism….a Third Way that makes Blair's Third Way look like a joke'

the company brought together a range of experts to provide 'insider tips [that] will inspire Londoners who love their homes to adorn them with exciting and unique works of art to complement their home and lifestyle.'45 As with Bloomberg's later 'Art School' in January 2004, the event took place in-house and had a clear performative function: companies were cast in the role of educational service providers, offering a kind of 'relational consumption' (Habitat customers could observe, pass by and listen in to NAC sessions at their Kings Road store; registered 'students' enjoyed portfolio sessions and private tutoring at Bloomberg's London headquarters). In addition to being an alternative to capital and real estate, NACs are enticed into the art market on the pretext that they are buying into a piece of contemporary culture. As Ben Lewis further qualifies in the 'The Price of Art', this can be accompanied by any one or all of the following: a 'new sense of writing history', 'becoming purified by the act of collecting art', and becoming part of the process of validation.46 Consequently, it is no surprise that turf wars have opened up between curators, critics, artists and administrators regarding their respective rights, responsibilities and roles within the art ecosystem. It is tempting to read the various modes of retrenchment as indicative of a more general realignment between business, cultural organisations and the state as they jostle for the lucrative mediation rights to what is essentially a new and untapped constituency.

TIME TO TURN THE TAPS BACK ON?

Since late 2003, a renewed confidence in the business community combined with symbolic 'closure' on its multiple trauma has led some in the financial press to suggest it might be 'Time to turn the taps back on'.47 Together with the publication of the Final Report of the 9/11 Commission and criminal indictments of Worldcom and Enron CEOs (as well as the trials of 600 or so other

corporate criminals), the US state and its regulatory bodies clearly want to be seen to be putting their own house in order before November's elections and a perennially delayed upturn in the business cycle. In the meantime, whilst the unprecedented financial coverage and speculation on the growth of the Chinese economy may well indicate that, economically, the 21st century belongs to China, it also helped take some of the strain off faltering Western economies and facilitated the transferral and reanimation of dubious economic models like the Third Way.48 But is global capital's favourite new theatre of operations any more than the physical and symbolic instantiation of 'boundarylessness within borders', the latest space of deferral for problems unleashed by global interdependencies?

Some of the key 'dangers' associated with globalisation's porous boundaries were noted in sections of the anti-capitalist community as early as the 1997, though it required the multiple trauma of 2000-1 to bring home interdependence risk to the

business community. As the Forty Intellectuals, De Fabel and Enron have shown (albeit in distinctly contrasting ways), networked forms of organisation, alliances and partnerships are particularly prone to abuse, infiltration and corruption. But what happens when they go into remission? What happens when contemporary art, for example, de-links itself from the broader Creative Industries and retreats into core competencies? Recent structural changes in corporate capitalism – its turn inwards, reassessment and temporary withdrawal from the 'networked society' – have revealed the extent to which myriad reactionary, conservative and far right tendencies remain latent in the laboratories of thought – ready to re-emerge, hybridise and claim the cultural agenda. ⚐

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A wind of change is blowing through the curation and discussion of African contemporary art. With touring shows such as Africa Remix (coming to the Haywood Gallery in February 2005) and the new Luanda Triennial (commencing 2006), the heated debates of the '80s and '90s are starting to bear fruit: African art is less and less the art world's token Other, and increasingly taken on its own terms. **Simon Njami, curator of Africa Remix and co-founder and editor of *Revue Noire*, sketches the curatorial and discursive terrain**

ANOTHER GAZE

The field of contemporary African art gradually transformed itself into a vast, economic and theoretical battlefield

In the past 15 years, contemporary African art has found its audience – a public. It is now usual to come across African artists taking part in international biennial exhibitions or being shown in European, American and Japanese galleries. This development was confirmed by the nomination of the Nigerian Okwui Enwezor as director of the last Documenta in Kassel. African art has become a constituent part of the international contemporary art discourse. The theoretical basis has been supplied by publications such as *Revue Noire*, followed by *Atlantica*, *NKA* and *Coartnews*. They form a pool of information from which all sides draw raw material for a debate that finds its roots in the 1980s. An important role was also played by a series of group exhibitions, which contributed to the increasing recognition of African art. Yet, in the global village that has been forced upon us by the new world economic order as inevitable and necessary, the role of Africa and its artists still needs to be defined. One of the paradoxes that has accompanied the evolution of this discourse is that it has been forged, to a great extent, outside of the African continent. The rare events staged on African soil are the Bamako and the Dakar biennials, the chaotic biennial in Cairo and the ephemeral biennial of Johannesburg. Questions concerning the recognition of African art production therefore remain: what gets included, according to what criteria and what strategies?

Defining time, the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote: 'At the heart of time, there is a gaze.' The statement was directed to various cultural dynamics that make us understand the world according to contrasting vantage points determined by the precise points on the planet from which we view it. Such an understanding of time is both philosophical and poetic, and far from being universal. The question this idea raises with regards to Africa resides in the definition of its contemporaneity. David Elliott took this up in his introductory article to the 2000 edition of the Dakar biennial catalogue:

Has Africa ever been a "modern" entity, other than as part of colonisation? Can we for example envisage an Africa that skips its "modern" period and lands straight in its independence? This would *ipso facto* make it "postmodern" and avoid a sense of delay and "third-worldliness" that attach themselves to the way the world views numerous post-colonial cultures. Excepting if the concept of the modern does not always have the same meaning and depends on the time and the place. Does modernism always have to relate to our Western concepts?

The question that is being raised here is that of the inadequacy of our references. Postmodernism and its analyses point us to a monolithic view of the world, excluding everything that does not seem to fit in to

its model of accepted discourse. Let me relate the discussion that I entered some years ago, opposing the views of Alfons Hug (then curator of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt exhibitions in Berlin). Christos Johamides put on an exhibition at the Walter Gropius Bau in 1996 called Die Epoche der Modernen (Epochs of the Modern). Hug responded with Der Anderen Modernen (The Other Moderns), mounted in the same year. Hug intended to register the absence of non-European artists in the Gropius Bau show – a quite honourable intention. He tried to produce a polemic about the inclusion of non-European production into the international art world. The means to support his thesis however do not hold water. The modernists, such as those presented by Johamides, formed a part of a very specific moment in Western art. Only a very few non-European artists could share that moment. Since the history of art has been the unique point of reference we must not forget that it refers to styles and schools resulting from the internal upheavals within the system that produces them. Africa cannot offer such a history – the schools that emerged in the 1930s and '40 were mostly established by European emigrants. We must agree with a statement that Robert Atkins offers in his handbook of Modern Art,[1] namely that 'modern art is taken as being restricted to Europe and North America (including

We have finally been able to admit Art History has not been assigned any universal mission

Top, bottom, and right ▷ **Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art, curated by Suzan Vogel, Center for African Art, New York, 1991-92.**
Left middle ▷ **Wesner Philidor (Haiti), *Ceremonial Chalk Drawings*, at Les Magiciens de la Terre, Paris, 1989**

Mexico), as the phenomenon of internationalisation was far from reaching today's dimensions.'

If the last 15 years prepared the ground for integration rather confusingly, what path are we now to follow in this stuttering century, and what will be the situation of the continent and its artists? Every attempt to answer this question must first return to the landmark events that influenced our understanding of African art within and outside of the continent. The simplest way to achieve this must be an overview of various exhibitions and an attempt to reintegrate them into the context from which they emerged. Every exhibition triggered off a debate and made a position felt. Looking at those years one would have thought that, in the last part of the 20th century, the Manichean temptation of radicalism could have been avoided. But truths clashed and came face to face amidst a cacophony that is blatantly oblivious to history and its lessons. Thus the field of contemporary African art gradually transformed itself into a vast, economic and theoretical battlefield, one that forced the various actors into defending sometimes restrictively narrow definitions.

The discussion was even more passionate since when it comes to African art there is a tendency to reduce it almost completely to the conditions of its making; every attempt to understand the shifting truth as an illusion of reality projects a certain definition of Africa and Africans. Art historians, gradually replacing the ethnologists in this field, have tried to reach a definition of African specificity, while placing the continent on the wider map of international art. Such deliberations necessarily throw up the complex question of the parameters of such a definition. What do we have in mind, or rather, should we have in mind, as we tackle the problem of contemporary African art? All the while, the territory appears virgin to the uninitiated, so much so that everybody claims his or her own truth. Here as elsewhere, there is only subjective truth; the gaze must reach a certain level of freedom in order to be able to express itself in new ways and send exoticisms back to the cellars they should never have left. We have finally been able to admit Art History has not been assigned any universal mission. It was this very 'discovery' that enriched the debate at the end of the last century.

The '80s were harbingers of what the '90s were to confirm: the definition of the world is no longer the exclusive prerogative of the rich countries. First theories of globalisation sprang up – not dissimilar to the theories of universalism of the 18th century. The need to initiate a discussion on contemporary art in Africa became ever

more evident. Ethnographic contextualisation has gradually been replaced by decontextualisation; one misunderstanding expected to chase away the other. The flaw in the idea of a global village, as imagined by some, is its inability to avoid repeating the old instincts of appropriation. To claim that we are all alike after having stated that we were different is not, in my opinion, the right thing to do; it merely inverts the conditions it apparently seeks to transcend. How on earth is it honestly possible to sustain the illusion of one, indivisible humanity? African art should be analysed for what it is and not for what some would like it to be.

Even though Suzan Vogel's 1991 exhibition Africa Explores the 20th Century, at the Center for African Art in New York, opened two years after Les Magiciens de la Terre, it marked the swan song of the ethnological era, representing as it did the core of the praxis that was then en vogue within the ethnographic milieu. The title indicates that its aim was to show a century of African art, but according to which criteria? Suzan Vogel solved the problem by avoiding making any choices. She renounced taking the risks that she was perhaps unable to take. The exhibition therefore portrayed Africa as a complex and overcrowded continent. Africa Explores was not so much an art exhibition as an ethnological representation of context at the expense of aesthetics. Just as colonial exhibitions had done in the past, it set out

its stall, showing everything it possibly could. It was up to the audience to make its own selection. A true cabinet of curiosities. The overblown ambition of showing a whole century of art of such a vast continent could have no other result; the selection

African art should be analysed for what it is and not for what some would like it to be

and the theme were ill defined, and the chosen items could only be assembled in the same place via the ethnological approach. It made one fact clear: what used to be classified as African Art had not yet found an adequate translation to the contemporary museum.

Vogel, like Pierre Gaudibert in his 1991 book Art Africain Contemporain, attempted to establish, if not a hierarchy, then at least a way of distinguishing between various African art forms. She did so using an empirical vocabulary, the limitations of which she was the first to

acknowledge. However, two years previously, the discourse had taken a turn in another direction which, while not new, nonetheless caused waves that are still being felt today. Even though Jean-Hubert Martin's 1989 exhibition Les Magiciens de la Terre at the Centre Georges Pompidou was not solely dedicated to Africa, it brought the debate into the public arena. There were other exhibitions about Africa in the '80s, above all the ones curated by David Elliott (one on Makonde sculpture and another on South Africa), but Martin was taking things in a new direction, lifting African art out of a curatorial ghetto and decontextualising it within an exhibition of international art.

His impossible challenge was to unite magicians and people in a single space/time. By including Africa in this important international exhibition, he set out to prove the interdependence between the dark continent and the rest of world. The aim of Magiciens, an exhibition with a mystically beautiful title, was to show the most astounding creations of the planet. As Martin himself says: 'The general use of magic has the connotation of the living and incomprehensible influence of art.'[2] And then, addressing non-European production:

The main question that is raised is why it is that certain objects, that have a very defined meaning within their original context, acquire an interpretation and evaluation according to the new meaning that we find in them? If we were able to

Left ▷ Sarkis (Turkey), *Caylak Sokak*, at the exhibition Les Magiciens de la Terre, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989

Left ▷ The artist Samuel Fosso talking about his work *Tati's Autoportraits* (1997), at the exhibition Africa Remix

comprehend the root of the misunderstanding, then we could see that the consequences are breathtaking; the object is possessed of another life to which we attach a meaning that it didn't have before. Such slippage, such deflection should elicit deeper thought instead of negative reaction.

From the early '90s, we could then discern two directions in the analysis of contemporary African productions: the 'internationalists', supported by *Revue Noire*, who rejected every form of triumphal exoticism and Africanism as embodied, for example, in the collection of the German Hans Bogadzke; and the 'authentic', the heritage of Les Magiciens de la Terre, most prominently represented by the collection of John Pigozzi. Les Magiciens gave rise to other exhibitions such as Africa Hoy**3** or Neue Kunst aus Afrika**4** and to a smaller extent Africa Africa.**5**

These shows promoted the view that art could be anything as long it came from *different* countries and set up a kind of a political correctness based, once again, on ideas of Otherness. Meanwhile the 'internationalists' were trying to address African art using the same criteria applied to any other art practice, no matter where it came from. In spite of these radically diverging positions, African art had both sides to thank for having become a real topic of theoretical discourse, celebrated by numerous exhibitions and an ever increasing presence of African artists at big international events. The inauguration of the Dakar Biennial, dedicated to African creativity, came at just the right time; the Senegalese capital now looks poised to take the leading role in contemporary African art curation. And yet, curators both in Africa and Europe are keenly aware of the dangers of categorisation. The exhibition Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa (Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1995) decided on a historical approach, to do with the seven points on the continent. The exhibition Suites Africaines (Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris, 1997) did away with the barriers between various aesthetic forms, uniting film, art, literature, music and dance under the same roof, in an attempt at an interdisciplinary approach. Two other

exhibitions, Otro Pais (Las Palmas, Barcelona, 1994) and Die Andere Reise, (Kunsthalle, Krems, 1995) integrated artists from the Caribbean Diaspora and Africa into a creative historical community. These exhibitions, not all mentioned here, have one thing in common: they aimed to avoid the trap of preconceived ideas and superficial representations. The results did not always meet expectations. It is to be hoped, however, that the recognition so denied to Africa and its artists will now be given to them

The lesson we've learned from the past 15 years and that will serve as our guiding thread, is that we must look at every contemporary African artist according to his or her own inspiration, regardless of any other context. Here, the context is understood as personal experience and shifts it away from any form of territoriality. Established methodologies are perhaps no longer suitable to solve the need for such sensitivities. We should resist any form of exoticism when selecting artists, otherwise the obligatory inclusion of a couple of Africans used to prove that the market has become truly global is in danger of becoming yet another curatorial trend. It is necessary to understand that it is no longer thinkable to accept the dictatorship of the market that not only sets up the prices, but also influences fashions in art and its inspiration. We must return to the artist, talk about the artist, analyse the work with all the tools at our disposal – none should be left out. There is today a dire need for transdisciplinarity. If during the '80s discussions of contemporary African art were limited to a happy few, working almost exclusively in Europe (namely Paris and, to a lesser extent, London) and to a handful of ethnologists and anthropologists, the '90s opened the way to a more idiosyncratic set of approaches. Its origins were no longer the primary criterion for the appreciation of a non-Western art work. The gaze became sharper. Contemporary art and museum curators joined with specialists. Using their position in the global culture game, they forced the discussion to tackle the work directly without necessarily focussing on origins. There were various approaches – stemming either from a Third World philosophy or from the Manichean debate

opposing the centre (the West) and the periphery – which multiplied the theories and created conflicts without which no proper and constructive discussion is viable. It is however high time to stop limiting this discussion to the forcible rapprochement between so-called international art and African art, pretending to ignore the real differences between them. Whatever the good intentions promoted by the defenders of the Global Village, the village will only be inhabitable if it accepts the Other as part of itself and if it stops casting Him as a distorted mirror image of its own aspirations.

The emerging curatorial approach, which substitutes a nuanced, individualised treatment of contemporary African art for an overwhelmingly territorial one, was/is the modest contribution of Africa Remix.**6** It is also the aim of the newest initiative on the African continent, the Luanda Triennial in Angola. Scheduled to take place in spring 2006, it will attempt to bring the inscription of African art in the contemporary world to another level, while also trying to define its originality. The triennial will also attempt, on the one hand, to address the context in which all big international art events are constructed and, on the other hand, to offer new routes for reflection. Those routes could enable Africans to speak for themselves and to stop being the spectators of their own history, written, as it has been from the colonial times, by others. 🏃

FOOTNOTES

1 Robert Atkins, *ArtSpoke: A Guide to Modern Ideas, Movements and Buzzwords, 1848-1944*, Abbeville Press, 1993

2 Jean-Hubert Martin, Introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition Les Magiciens de la Terre, Paris, 1989

3 Atlantic Center of Modern Art, Las Palmas, Gran Canary Islands, 1991, curated by André Magnin

4 Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 1996, curated by Alfons Hug

5 Tobu Museum, Tokyo, 1998, curated by Toshio Shimizu

6 Curated by Simon Njami: Dusseldorf, London, Paris, Tokyo, 2004-2006

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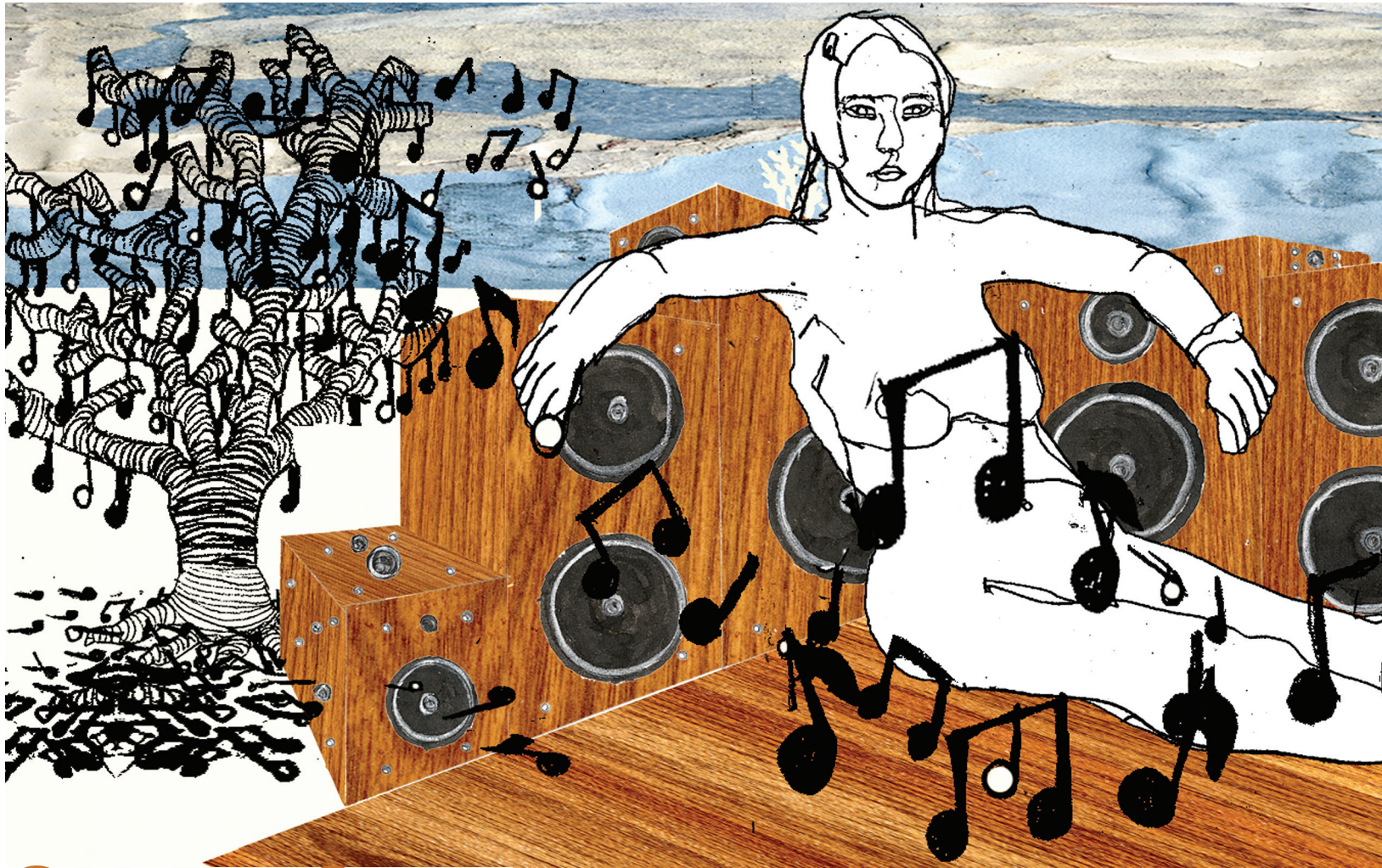
OH I LOVE FREEDOM! BUT WHAT IS IT?

At industry pop's polar opposite, improvisers are involved in a musical praxis which resists formulated goals, ready-made forms and final outcomes. Here, Mattin extrapolates the politics from the tactics of improvisation

Just as, in a game, the victory of one of the players is not (with respect to the game) an originary state to be restored, but only the stake that doesn't pre-exist the game but results from it, so pure violence – which is the name that Benjamin gives to human action which neither founds nor conserves law – is not an originary figure of human action that at a certain moment is seized and inscribed in the juridical order (just as for speaking man there is no pre-linguistic reality which, at a certain moment, would fall into language).

Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*

Once we understand that we are embedded in contradictory social relations, we can also see that the contradictions themselves run deeper than the law that pretends to organise them.

De Selby

Improvisation as pure praxis. You cannot be outside of the game, but you don't have to be subject to the rules in order to play the instrument. Sometimes, when the musicians use instruments in unanticipated ways, you can create moments of convergence, communication. Exploring the material aspect of the instrument without conceptual restrictions can do this. If the musician is able to develop a personal approach to music making, this does not happen in isolation, but collectively, among other musicians and listeners. Improvised music generates meaning from the residue that marketed music tries to exclude, not in order to be recycled for future use but *momentarily* to destroy the hierarchies of value that structure the physical act of making music.

When sounds are *thrown* in improvisation, this can call into question our temporal and spatial understanding of sound and its place in reality. The inner rules that we bring to the performance as listeners become redundant if musicians present a different way of playing. This moment, in which you realise that you had a 'limiter' on music, shakes other notions and brings fragility to your understanding.

Often the inner rules or parameters that enclose music are the same ones that contain other forces. If we understand politics in terms of potential social relations, we can see a politics in the exploratory element of improvisation.

So it appears that the common notions are practical Ideas, in relation with our power; unlike their order of exposition, which only concern ideas, their order of formation concern affects, showing how the mind "can order its affects and connect them together." The common notions are an Art, the art of ethics itself: organising good encounters, composing actual relations, forming powers, experimenting.

Deleuze, *Practical Philosophy*

For Deleuze, the powers of a common notion are developed as it is put into practice. Within a common notion, subjectivities are formed; their 'nature' is developed by the common notion's future use. A common notion can only be a rule if it becomes a style: as, for instance, when one musician's traits or gestures infect another's. Unless you are able to bastardise

this style it will become another template in which rules can be applied. In that case its political potential vanishes.

UNCONSTITUTED PRAXIS

Making products (or decisive endings) makes parameters easy to identify, allowing you to appropriate the work of art (I've got it! I understand it!) Today 'praxis' is generally understood as the making of a specific work. It implies having an end, a deadline, a limit to your potentiality. Improvisation, on the other hand, brings back the act of making as the main focus of artistic praxis. In fact the common meaning of praxis has changed over the millennia. For the ancient Greeks, notes Agamben in *The Man Without Content*, the sense of praxis was different from that of pro-duction. Pro-duction has its limits outside itself; praxis is self-contained and reaches its limits within action. Therefore it is not pro-ductive, and it can bring itself into presence.

In improvisation, thought and action are brought together in an unconstituted praxis. By this I mean a praxis which is not finally constituted, not complete, yet has no end outside itself. Its effect depends on interaction: the participation of others, by

The gestures are never left alone because even the silence has a meaning; there is no such thing as neutrality in improvisation. Meaning is constantly produced and never isolated from its context

listening and/or making sound.

In improvisation the gestures made require a response in order for the dialogue to continue. But as the other players cannot anticipate a concrete response, it is the gestures that continuously interrupt and initiate the conversation. Unlike, say, John Cage's pieces, where the conceptual instructions determine the limits of the artificially separated 'chance', improvisation fully exposes each gesture to all others, forcing the singular 'concepts' to coexist. The gestures are never left alone because even the silence has a meaning; there is no such thing as neutrality in improvisation. Meaning is constantly produced and never isolated from its context.

Politics is the exhibition of a mediality: it is the act of making a means visible as such. Politics is the sphere neither of an end in itself nor of means subordinated to

an end; rather, it is the sphere of a pure mediality without end intended as the field of a human thought.

Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End*

From the point of view of the ideology (long obsolete in capitalist thinking) that identifies value (economic, cultural, spiritual...) with the tangible, clearly defined product, improvisation is useless, because nothing in it functions outside its context. Improvisation functions only in terms of the moment in which musicians are struggling to find common notions. This struggle is itself the aim. It is in trying to find a language within spectacle, in which musicians can for that time stop reproducing ready-made forms. In making an argot within the brutality and coldness of capitalist production, points of reference start to disappear. The awareness that we are embedded within this system remains: it would be ridiculous to think that we are not determined by it, but also ridiculous to think, by default, that everything we do must contribute to its efficient functioning.

Argot
The age in which we are living, in fact, is also the age in which, for the first time, it becomes possible for humans to experience their own linguistic essence – to experience, that is, not some language content or some true proposition, but the fact itself of speaking. The experience in question here does not have any objective content and cannot be formulated as a proposition referring to a state of things or to a historical situation. ... this experience must be constructed as an experiment concerning the matter itself of thought ...

Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End*

If we are conscious of how these systems are able to cut off or actually introduce our objects of desire, we may be able to find ways to produce moments of

resistance. It would be difficult to aim for a perfect (i.e. finished) situation in which you think everything would be fantastic (what happens once you achieve it? You stop?). The situation emerges out of a practice: it is a modus operandi that you should be aiming at. Once the eyes of capital know what you are looking for, you are easy to deal with.

The concept of argot may be useful as an analogy here, although music and language work in different registers. Argot, not being a proper language, is difficult to institutionalise. Argot has the aspect of appropriating a language and making it personal (sometimes it is used in secret trading or other obscure business). In argot, ready made meaning is twisted to serve the purpose that the particular user wants to give it at a specific moment.

This music is produced by the combination of the exploration of the instrument against its intended purpose and a 'personal' way of responding, produced collectively among musicians and hearers. Therefore the musical language that is created serves only the communicability of that moment. It cannot be exported elsewhere. You can take ideas but you will also have to contextualise, in the sense that each element of the music is there to be activated by the consumer (who, in the process, becomes a producer). Decision-making is more prominent in the *consumption* of this music than is the case in other genres where stages of the process are more clearly defined, i.e. composing, performing, getting recognition, etc. Improvised music scorns aesthetic experience's divisions of labour in order to crack packaged meanings: infiltrating, deforming and extending enclosed vocabularies of praxis. ✦

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Exploring Precariousness

LESSONS FROM THE PIETARIAT

Sometimes it's hard to tell self-congratulation from self-abasement.
Not a Proper Job, a tempting directory for artists, was launched in London in October at a party advertised as follows:

If you live a creative lifestyle, you are by definition a member of the 'Not a Proper Job' club. So come join us and celebrate not having a Proper Job. Birds of a feather should flock together!

As Marina Vishmidt observes below in her article 'Precarious Straits' p.93, the 'relative autonomy' of 'creative' lifestyles 'is underwritten by extreme dependence': that of other, 'uncreative' casual workers, of everyone else still employed in the old-fashioned, inflexible way, and of the unwittingly wretched 'creatives' themselves. So any celebration of artworkers' quasi-freedom is always also cheerleading for all three kinds of servitude. While no more could be expected from a neo-boosterist campaign backed by Greater London Enterprise, the EU and the ESF, it's strange to find a similar logic at work in a lot of critical discourse on 'precariousness'. In the latest *Green Pepper*, Alex Foti of Chainworkers declares that 'the precariat is to postindustrialism as the proletariat was to industrialism'. This suggests that the messianic historical mission of creative and technical 'brainworkers' somehow enobles and redeems the everyday misery of the hyperexpoloited 'chainworkers' with whom, in the term 'precariat', they are uncomfortably conflated. 'How', asks Angela Mitropoulos below in her article 'Precari-us?' p.88,

does the fast-food "chainworker", who is compelled to be affective, compliant and routinised, not assume such a role of relation to a software programming

"brainworker", whose habitual forms of exploitation oblige opinion, innovation and self-management? How is it possible for the latter to avoid assuming for themselves the specialised role of mediator ...?

The notion of artists / 'virtuosi' / 'cognitaires' etc. as the vanguard of the precariat is based on the equation of precariousness with irregular or casual working patterns. Yet it's hard to imagine a group of workers better acquainted with their own precarious status than those on the regular assembly lines at Siemens and Volkswagen, recently forced to accept a longer working week for no extra money in order to save their jobs from 'offshoring' within Europe.

The idea of transversal social unity in shared precariousness is closely linked to the insight that 'all life is work', in the sense that value is transformed from labour into capital right across the social field, not just in jobs. But 'all life is work' doesn't mean all work is the same. Far more value can be squeezed out of some kinds of labour than from others: hence the war on 'economic inactivity' waged by governments and employers, a desperate mobilisation to get as many people working (in the traditional sense) as many hours as possible. Pious identification between violently stratified social subjects does nothing whatsoever to undermine this war effort.

This section also includes: John Barker's 'Cheap Chinese' p. 96, a text on the structural insecurity of Chinese workers in mainland China and the UK; and Laura Sullivan's interview with Selma James and Nina Lopez from the Global Women's Strike, p.103, about Venezuela's recent legislation that will provide wages for housework.

PRECARI-US?

Does the term precariousness or 'precarity', as applied to the conditions of employment under neoliberalism, provide us with more than another trendy neologism? **Angela Mitropoulos** examines its use, misuse and associated political horizons

Few could be unaware that an increasing proportion of the workforce is engaged in intermittent or irregular work. But I'd like to set aside for the moment the weight and scope of the evidentiary, those well-rehearsed findings that confirm beyond doubt the discovery and currency of precariousness and which render the axiomatic terrain upon which such facts are discovered beyond reproach. Instead, I would like to explore something of the grammar at work in these discussions. As a noun, 'precariousness' is both more unwieldy and indeterminate than most. If it is possible to say anything for certain about precariousness, it is that it teeters. This is to begin by emphasising some of the tensions that shadow much of the discussion about precarious labour. Some of those tensions can be located under various, provisional headings which bracket the oscillation between regulation and deregulation, organisation and dissemination, homogenous and concrete time, work and life.

There are notable instances of this: consider recent research commissioned by Australia's foremost trade union body, the ACTU, into what they call 'non-standard' forms of work. As reported, most of those surveyed said they would like 'more work.' It is not clear to what extent that answer was shaped by the research, i.e.: by the ACTU's persistent arguments for a return to 'standard hours,' re-regulation, or their more general regard for Fordism as the golden age of social democracy and union organisation. 'Non-standard work' has mostly been viewed by unions as a threat, not only to working conditions but, principally, to the continuing existence of the unions themselves.

But what is clear is that the flight from 'standard hours' was not precipitated by employers but rather by workers seeking less time at work. This flight coincided with the first wave of an exit from unions. What the Italian Workerists dubbed 'the refusal of work' in the late 1970s had its anglophone counterpart in the figure of the 'slacker'. This predated the 'flexiblisation' of employment that took hold in the 1980s. The failure of this oppositional strategy nevertheless provoked what Andrew Ross has called the 'industrialisation of bohemia'. Given that capitalism persisted, the flight from Fordist regularity and full time work can be said to have necessitated the innovation and extension of capitalist exploitation – much like gentrification has followed university students around suburbs and de-industrialising areas since the 1970s.

The search for a life outside work tended to reduce into an escape from the

Menu 1
Mega-No-Lunch
Shitsandwich
Weight-loss guaranteed

Menu 2
Alopecia Feast
Starter: Bring your own prawn
RSI Steak
Eczema Gratin

Desert options:
Glaxo Glacé
Seroxat Surprise

Menu 3
Death
Tacograph
Congestion
Jam
Yorkie

Menu 4

Misery Meal (finger loosin' good)

Bonus point Burger
Banana Split-Shift
Sacrificial Shake
Multi-task Muesli

Warning your meal may be poisoned for training purposes

Menu 5

Call Centre Crush

Idle Time King Wing
Pin Code Pina Colada
Overwork Omlette

Served between 3-7 am - standing room only

Menu 6

Postmodern Chicken Farm

Dormitory Delight - half pay, half bed, full insomnia
Battered Brains (4 pcs)
Leg and breast
Love You Longtime Sling

All prepared with cystamatic care

Menu 7

All Day (and night) Brain Buffet

PreCog and Chips
Real Subsumption Breakfast
Bleak Pudding
Total Slavery Toppings:
No Daddy Sauce
Separation Salsa

All you can think, all we can eat!

Menu 8

Ebay Bid Bot Banquet Assemble Your Own Fu©kin' Meal

Shop Around the Cloq au Vin
Prosumer Provolone Melt
Server Seizure Sandwich

Always Ready Meal

side orders:
life
fun
happiness

Please have your last 6 digit

By Delivery :

take-me-out
Zone Crunch

cocktail

bar (8pcs)

factory and its particular forms of discipline. And so, perhaps paradoxically, this flight triggered an indistinction between work and life commensurate with the movement of exploitation into newer areas. This is why the answer of 'more work' now presents itself so often as the horizon of an imaginable solution to the problem of impoverishment and financial instability – not more money or more life outside work, but more work.

Take the distinction between work-time and leisure-time. These categories become formalised with Fordism, its temporal rhythm as measured out by the wage, clock and assembly line, and distinguished by a proportionality and particular division of times, as in the eight hour day and the five day week. Here, leisure-time bears a determined relationship to work – as the trade-off for the mind-numbing tedium of the assembly line, as rejuvenation, and as temporary respite from the mind-body split that line-work enforces. Yet leisure time was, still, substantively a time of not-work.

By comparison, while the perpetually irregular work of post-Fordism might, though not necessarily, decrease the actual amount of time spent doing paid work, it nevertheless enjoins the post-Fordist worker to be continually available for such work, to regard life outside waged work as a time of preparation for and readiness to work. Schematically put: whereas Fordism sought to cretinise, to sever the brains of workers from their bodies so as to assign thought, knowledge, planning and control to management, post-Fordist capitalism might by contrast be characterised – in Foucault's terms – as the imprisonment of the body by the soul. Hence the utility of desire, knowledge, and sociality in post-Fordism.

The long, Protestant history of assuming work as an ethical or moral imperative returns in the not-always secular injunction to treat one's self as a commodity both during and outside actual work time. One can always try to defer the ensuing panic and anxiety with pharmacology, as Franco Berardi argues. But something might also be said here about that other 'opiate,' the parallel rise of an enterprising, evangelical Christianity; not to mention attempts to freeze contingency in communitarianism, of one variant or another. The precariousness of life – experienced all the more insistently because life depends on paid work – tends to close the etymological distance between prayer (*precor*) and the precarious (*precarius*).

PRECARIOUS SUBJECTS

The term 'Precarity' might have replaced 'precariousness' with the advantage of a prompt neologism; yet both continue to be burdened by a normative bias which seeks

guarantees in terms that are often neither plausible nor desirable. Precariousness is mostly rendered in negative terms, as the imperative to move from irregularity to regularity, or from abnormality to normality. That normative burden is conspicuous in the grammatical development from adjective to noun: precarious to precariousness, condition to name.

Yet, capitalism is perpetually in crisis. Capital is precarious, and normally so. Stability here has always entailed formalising relative advantages between workers, either displacing crises onto the less privileged, or deferring the effects of those crises through debt. Moreover, what becomes apparent in discussions on precariousness is that warranties are often sought, even by quite different approaches, in the juridical realm. The law becomes the secularised language of prayer against contingency. This assumes a distinction between law and economy that is certainly no longer, if it ever was, all that plausible. It is not clear, therefore, whether the motif of precariousness works to simply entice a desire for its opposite, security, regardless if this is presented as a return to a time in which security apparently reigned or as a future newly immunised against precariousness.

There are nationalist denominations. Precarity (or *precarité*), in its current expression, emerged in French sociology and its attempts to grasp the convergence of struggles by unemployed and intermittent workers in the late 1990s. Most prominently, Bourdieu was among those who raised the issue of a diffuse *precarité* as an argument for the strengthening of the Nation State against this, as well as the globalisation that was said to have produced it. In its far less nationalist versions, the discussion on precarity is marked – sometimes ambivalently and not always explicitly – by the presentation of a hoped-for means of resistance, if not revolution. A renewed focus on changing forms of class composition or new subjectivities may have brought with it an irreversible and overdue shift in perspective and vocabulary. But that shift has not in all cases disturbed the structural assumptions of an orthodox Marxism in the assertion of a newer, therefore more adequate, vanguard. Names confer identity as if positing an unconditional presupposition. Like all such assertions, it is not simply the declaration that one has discovered the path to a different future in an existing identity that remains questionable. More problematically, such declarations are invariably the expression and reproduction of a hierarchy of value in relation to others.

For instance, if Lenin's Party, defined as the figure of the 'revolutionary-intellectual', paid homage to the mind-body

On a global scale and in its privatised and/or unpaid versions, precarity is and has always been the standard experience of work in capitalism

split of Fordism and Taylorism (where others were either cast as a 'mass' or, where actively oppositional, 'counter-revolutionaries'), to what extent has the discussion on precarious labour avoided a similar duplication of segmentation and conformism? Or, to put the question in classical Marxist terms: to what extent can an identity which is immanent to capitalism (whether 'working class' or 'multitude') be expected to abolish capitalism, and therefore its very existence and identity? Does a politics which takes subjectivity as its question and answer reproduce a politics as the idealised image of such? A recourse to an Enlightenment Subject replete with the stratifications which presuppose it, and ledgered according to its current values (or valuations), not least among these being the distinction between paid and unpaid labour.

Let me put still this another way: the discussion of the precarious conditions of 'creative labour' and the 'industrialisation of bohemia' tends to restage a manoeuvre found in Puccini's opera *La Boheme*. Here, a bunch of guys (a poet, philosopher, artist and musician) suffer for their art in their garret. But it is the character of Mimi – the seamstress who talks of fripperies rather than art – who furnishes Puccini and our creative heroes with the final tragedy with which to exalt that art as suffering and through opera. The figure of the artist (or 'creative labourer') may well circulate, in some instances, as the exemplary figure of the post-Fordist worker – precarious, immaterial and so on – but this requires a moment in which the precarious conditions of others are declared to be a result of their 'invisibility' or 'exclusion'.

For what might turn out to have been the briefest of political moments, the exemplary figure of precariousness was that of undocumented migrant workers, without citizenship but nevertheless inside national-economic space, and precarious in more senses than might be indicated by other uses of the word. And, far from arriving with the emergence of newer industries or subjectivities, precarious work has been a more or less constant feature of domestic work, retail, 'hospitality,' agriculture, sex work and the building industry, as well as sharply inflecting the temporal and financial arrangements which come into play in the navigation of child-rearing and paid work for many women. But rather than shaking assertions that the 'precariat' is a recent phenomenon, through the declaration that such work was previously 'invisible', the apprehension of migrant, 'Third World' and domestic labour seems to have become the pretext for calls for the reconstruction of the plane of visibility (of juridical recognition and mediation) and the eventual circulation and elevation of the

cultural-artistic (and cognitive) worker as its paradigmatic expression. The strategy of exodus (of migration) has been translated into the thematics of inclusion, visibility and recognition.

On a global scale and in its privatised and/or unpaid versions, precarity is and has always been the standard experience of work in capitalism. When one has no other means to live than the ability to labour or – even more precariously, since it privatises a relation of dependency – to reproduce and 'humanise' the labour publicly tendered by another, life becomes contingent on capital and therefore precarious.

The experience of regular, full-time, long-term employment which characterised the most visible, mediated aspects of Fordism is an exception in capitalist history. That presupposed vast amounts of unpaid domestic labour by women and hyper-exploited labour in the colonies. This labour also underpinned the smooth distinction between work and leisure for the Fordist factory worker. The enclosures and looting of what was once contained as the Third World and the affective, unpaid labour of

Why exactly is it important to search for a device by which to unify workers – however plurally that unity is configured?

women allowed for the consumerist, affective 'humanisation' – and protectionism – of what was always a small part of the Fordist working class. A comparably privileged worker who was nonetheless elevated to the exemplary protagonist of class struggle by way of vanguardist reckonings. Those reckonings tended to parallel the valuations of bodies by capital, as reflected in the wage. The 'lower end' of the (global) labour market and divisions of labour – impoverishment, destitution or a privatised precariousness – were accounted for, as an inherent attribute of skin colour and sex, as natural. In many respects, then, what is registered as the recent rise of precarity is actually its discovery among those who had not expected it by virtue of the apparently inherent and eternal (perhaps biological) relation between the characteristics of their bodies and their possible monetary valuation – a sense of worth verified by the demarcations of the wage (paid and unpaid) and in the stratification of wage levels.

To be sure, there are important reasons to continue a discussion of precarious labour and precarity, of how changes to work-time become diffused as a disposition. Precarity is a particularly useful way to open a discussion on the no longer punctual dimensions of the encounter between worker and employer, and how this gives rise to a generalised indistinction between the labour market, self, relationships and life.

The more interesting aspect of this discussion is the connection made between the uncertainty of making a living and therefore the uncertainty of life that is thereby produced in its grimly mundane as well as horrific aspects: impoverishment, as both persistent threat and circumstance; the 'war on terror'; the internment camps; 'humanitarian intervention', and so on. In this, the topic of biopolitics re-emerges with some urgency – or rather this urgency becomes more tangible for that privileged minority of workers (or 'professionals') who were previously unfamiliar with its full force. Impoverishment and war pronounce austere verdicts upon lives reckoned as interchangeable and therefore at risk of being declared superfluous. What does it means to insist here, against its capitalist calculations, on the 'value of life'?

This raises numerous questions. What are the intersections between economic and political-ethical values? Does value have a measure, a standard by which all values (lives) are calculated and related? Transformed into organisational questions: how feasible is it to use precarity as a means for alliances or coalition-building without effacing the differences between Mimi and the Philosopher, or indeed reproducing the hierarchy between them? Is it in the best interests for the maquiladora worker to ally herself with the fashion designer? Such questions cannot be answered abstractly. But there are two, perhaps difficult and irresolvable questions that might be still be posed.

First, what are the specific modes of exploitation of particular kinds of work? If the exploitation and circulation of 'cognitive' or 'creative labour' consists, as Maurizio Lazzarato argues, in the injunction to 'be active, to communicate, to relate to others' and to 'become subjects', then how does this shape their interactions with others, for better or worse? How does the fast food 'chainworker', who is compelled to be affective, compliant, and routinised not assume such a role in relation to a software programming 'brainworker', whose habitual forms of exploitation oblige opinion, innovation and self-management? How is it possible for the latter to avoid assuming for themselves the specialised role of mediator

– let alone preening themselves in the cognitariat's mirror as the subject, actor or 'activist' of politics – in this relationship? To what extent do the performative imperatives of artistic-cultural exploitation (visibility, recognition, authorship) foreclose the option of clandestinity which remains an imperative for the survival of many undocumented migrants and workers in the informal economy?

Secondly, why exactly is it important to search for a device by which to unify workers – however plurally that unity is configured? Leaving aside the question of particular struggles – say, along specific production chains – it is not all that clear what the benefits might be of insisting that precarity can function as this device for recomposing what was in any case the fictitious – and highly contested – unity of 'the working class'. To be sure, that figure is being challenged by that of 'the multitude', but what is the specific nature of this challenge?

Ellen Rooney once noted that pluralism is a deeper form of conformism: while it allows for a diversity of content, conflict over the formal procedures which govern interaction are off-limits, as is the power of those in whose image and interest those rules of interaction are constituted. Often, this arises because the procedures established for interaction and the presentation of any resulting 'unity' are so habitual that they recede beyond view. Those who raise problems with them therefore tend to be regarded as the sources of conflict if not the architects of a fatal disunity of the class. A familiar, if receding, example: sexism is confined to being a 'women's issue', among a plurality of 'issues,' but it cannot disrupt the form of politics.

What then is the arithmetic of biopolitics emerging from the destitution of its Fordist forms? If Fordist political forms consecrated segmentations that were said to inhere, naturally, in the difference of bodies, then what is post-Fordism's arithmetic? Post-Fordism dreams of the global community of 'human capital', where differences are either marketable or

reckoned as impediments to the free flow of 'humanity' as – or rather for – capital. In short, political pluralism is the idealised version of the post-Fordist market.

It might be useful here to specify that commodification does not consist in the acts of buying and selling – which obviously predate capitalism. Rather, commodification means the application of a universal standard of measure that relates and reduces qualitative differences – of bodies, actions, work – according to the abstract measure of money. Abstract equivalence, without its idyllic depictions, presupposes and produces hierarchy, exploitation and violence. Formally, which is to say juridically: neither poor nor rich are allowed to sleep under bridges.

What does it mean, then, to argue that the conditions of precarious workers might be served by a more adequate codification of rights? It does not, I think, mean that our conditions will improve or, rather, be guaranteed by such. Proposals for 'global citizenship' by Negri and Hardt are predated by the global reach of a militaristic humanitarianism that has already defined its meaning of the convergence between 'human rights' and supra-national force. Similarly, a 'basic income' has already been shown, in the places it exists such as Australia, to be contingent upon and constitutive of intermittent engagements with waged work, if not forced labour, as in work-for-the-dole schemes. The latter policy was applied to unemployed indigenous people before it became a recent measure against the unemployed generally. Basic incomes do not suspend the injunction to work often in low paid, casual or informal jobs; they are deliberately confined to levels which provide for a bare life but not for a livelihood. The introduction of work-for-the-dole schemes indicate that, where 'human capital' does not flow freely as *such*, policy (and pluralism) will resort to direct coercion, cancelling the formally voluntary contract of wage labour. The introduction of the work-for-the-dole scheme for indigenous people

in Australia followed on the collapse in their employment rates after the introduction of 'equal pay' laws. Their 'failure to circulate' was explained as an inherent, often biological, attribute (chiefly as laziness) and, therefore, the resort to forced labour was rendered permissible by those politicians who most loudly proclaimed their commitment to multiculturalism and the reconciliation of indigenous and 'settler' Australians.

So, how might it be possible to disassociate the value of life from the values of capital? Or, with regard to the relation between a globalised nationalism and aspirations for supra-national arrangements: how to sever the various daily struggles against precariousness from the enticements of a global security-state? Rights are not something one possesses – even if many of us are reputed, by correlation, to possess our own labour in the form of an increasingly self-managed or self-employed exploitation. Rights, like power, are exercised, in practice and by bodies. As juridical codes, they are both bestowed and denied by the state, at its discretion. There are no guarantees and there will always be a struggle to exercise particular rights, irrespective of whether they are codified in law. But, as a strategy, the path of rights means praying that the law or state might distribute rights and entrusting it with the authority and force to deny them.

That said, precarity might well have us teetering, it might even do so evocatively, for better and often worse, praying for guarantees and, at times, shields that often turn out to be fortresses. But it is yet to dispense with, for all its normative expressions, a relationship to the adjective: to movement, however uncertain. 'Precarious' is as much a description of patterns of worktime as it is the description, experience, hopes and fears of a faltering movement – in more senses than one, and possibly since encountering the limits of the anti-summit protests. This raises the risk of movements that become trapped in communitarian fears or in dreams of a final end to risk in the supposedly secure embrace of global juridical recognition. Yet, it also makes clear that a different future, by definition, can only be constructed precariously, without firm grounds for doing so, without the measure of a general rule, and with questions that should, often, shake us – particularly what 'us' might mean. 🏃

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PRECARIOUS STRAITS

What is obscured by the identification of the cultural worker as exemplary flexibilised worker or 'precarian'? **Marina Vishmidt** interrogates the recent fashion for equating artists with other forms of insecure (service) workers who lack their accompanying cachet

In recent years, there have been myriad attempts in curatorial, critical and media sectors to index the characteristics of their fields to the wider structural transformations in the landscape of work. These have mainly been enunciated along the axes of 'creativity' and 'flexibility' once deemed endemic to the artist as constitutive exception to the law of value and now valorised as universally desirable attributes in neoliberal policy statements and their bio-economic implementations. Many of the current tendencies to formulate analyses through the prism of culture as labour have begun to discuss the generality of conditions across fields of social production under the rubric of 'precariousness'. 'Precariousness' as a term strives to evoke all the downsides of the institutional embrace of informality. This embrace occludes the gleeful despatch of Keynesian social contracts or other state mediations of capital's risk, the etiolation of organised labour, and the 'personalised domination' of the deregulated workplace that Paolo Virno discusses in his writing.[1] 'Precariousness' signals a common thread of instability and exposure in the new landscape of work, shadowing the otherwise disparate life prospects of everyone from illegal service workers to academics and web designers. The real subsumption of social life in 'cognitive' capitalism is granted, and this subsumption has a paradoxical face: the more life is work, the less is work guaranteed to assure the propagation of life. Therefore 'precariousness' marks the real and ideological poverty of capital's subjectification, and, hopefully, the site for a broadly-based contestation of its effects.

As a diagnosis, 'precariousness' seems, well, remarkably flexible, mobile and adaptable. 'Precariousness' has surfaced in a number of recent interventions: at workshops in flagship institutions and in self-organised spaces, exhibitions, screenings and investigative, textual and audio-visual practices emanating from social centres.[2] It has scaled the agenda of European public art research initiative *Republicart*, which devoted a special issue of its web journal to the 'Precariat' in August 2004.[3] There have also been high profile national campaigns resisting the evisceration of legal statutes which

recognise the tenuous economic bases of cultural work (Intermittents du Spectacle).[4] Some of these projects, particularly the Unionising Workshop at London's Flaxman Lodge held in June 2004, have moved the debate on from the production of an abstract parity between the reproduction of subjects in the 'social factory' or the threadbare equation of wildly dissimilar types of communication work as 'immaterial labour'. Those discussions also thematised the connection between the production of subjectivity in 'creative work', the refusal of work, and the recomposition of workers as a class autonomous from, if always immanent to, the capitalist social relation, inspired by readings from the 'Italian laboratory' of Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno. There have been some developments in a media activist milieu also, with Italy's Chainworkers[5] setting out to mobilise the plurality of the casualised workforce abandoned by traditional unions by

The discernible eclipse of housework, care work, etc. in the cultural turn to 'precariousness' ... risks embedding itself precisely in the terms that it is interrogating – the dogma of 'creativity'

providing legal advice and material facilities, coordinating actions and even the ordaining of a new saint who intercedes for the 'precariat'.

The account which would have cultural production as exemplary is valid insofar as cultural economies spawn the prototypes emulated in most labour regimes that rely on unremunerated and mystified work to ensure the lopsided distribution of profit and prestige, as well as the deployment of 'creativity' to soft-pedal submission to these regimes. In that light, the artist or information worker is a model precarian, traversed as she is by intangible demands to commodify the very routines of her survival and the very idiom of her critique. However, what may also be instructive in the uses of 'precariousness', especially those that try to critically appropriate the figure of the artist as the ideal pliant and omni-creative subject of capital, is the omission of the ordinary

invisibility that always sustained the free movement of capital, Keynesian or networked: the flexible, informal, spontaneously value-adding sites of housework, personal care, seasonal and surreptitious labour – the disposable labour that was always at the core of the process if not the narrative of accumulation. The discernible eclipse of housework, care work, etc. in the cultural turn to 'precariousness', not only misses a whole swathe of the substance of 'relational' or 'affective' capitalism, but risks embedding itself precisely in the terms that it is interrogating – the dogma of 'creativity'. Whereas at one time domestic work was excluded from Marxian theory on the basis of its exclusion from the exchange of abstract labour power, as mere 'reproduction', nowadays it is excluded from critiques of emergent forms of labour not just because it is not considered 'creative', not just because it is unpaid, but

because 'creativity' supplies an alibi to an ossification of social and productive relations which cannot admit, let alone imagine, the challenge posed by the destruction of housework as a discrete activity.

Certainly, there have been sociological forays into the resurgence of (under)paid domestic work,[6] and Precarias a la Deriva have allocated much of their research to the ongoing invisibility of care work as the motor of restructured and informationalised capital, with a focus on the preponderance of women in 'precarious' sectors *such* as housework, *such* as call centres. Nonetheless, the discursive emergence of the term 'precariousness' to denote a shift away from 'immaterial labour' as both too precise and too constraining a descriptor, has often entailed an emphasis of the cultural worker as the salient of precariousness. Yet we do not need to strain to see that 'precariousness' has more to do with a generalised seepage into

the working world of the kind of informal and mundane degradation formerly confined to the corridors of labour without value, labour without sociality, labour without end – domestic labour.

> We pose, then, as foremost, the need to break this role of housewife the chrysalis in the cocoon that imprisons itself by its own work, to die and leave silk for capital.
> Mariarosa Dalla Costa

In her 1971 text *Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Mariarosa Dalla Costa proposes that the marginalisation of women's labour in housework presupposes the division and organisation of labour in capitalism as a whole. The housewife is the archetypal privatised industry, providing services that could and should be socialised. If capital relies on the family to compensate for the psychic, social and economic antagonisms of paid work, if the family is the locus of reproduction of labour power and its discipline, then the refusal of capitalist family structures amounts to refusal of work tout court. Women are thus uniquely situated to contaminate the whole of society with their struggle for self-determination – a struggle that is irreducible to securing 'fulfilling' work outside the home. While it would be slightly tendentious to transplant this analysis unmodified into a present at least marginally inflected by the capillary action of 30-odd years of feminism, the articulation of invisible and naturalised exploitation inseparable from the production of surplus value still holds, in a social field both stratified and homogenised by such production. Housewives, yes, but also children, migrants, prisoners, welfare recipients, the elderly, the demented, the drivers and the passengers of buses. It is crucial to note here that production of value does not automatically translate into the site of conflict, otherwise Dalla Costa would be fêted as one of the pioneers of cultural studies. It is housework and childcare that, as neglected site of production of value, is also a neglected site of conflict, as it is pivotal to accumulation. In staunch biopolitical terms, the family as control centre of life is thereby the control centre of productive potential.

Dalla Costa's analysis may also be leveraged to expose another dissymmetry in the adequation of cultural life forms with precariousness: the function of discipline in the production of subjectivity specific to the social arena in question. The disciplinary function of the family is well-rehearsed; the disciplinary function of culture is perhaps a bit more esoteric, bracketing as it does the image of culture as emancipatory. But this is precisely what calls for scrutiny in the formulation of the artist as precarious

worker. Culture/art is a tremendous disciplinary idiom in Western societies, and this is instantiated around us in ways as imperceptible as they are ubiquitous. The prominence of community art and cultural regeneration in rural and urban responses to deindustrialisation is relevant here. Community or socially engaged art tends to showcase the same defusion of antagonisms that the family once played host to, a safe space to be creative without reimbursement or real-world consequences of any kind (except for the art professionals of course). What discourses of precariousness in art worlds can alert us to, if at other times dissemble, is art's status as a commodity relation, and that its relative autonomy is underwritten by extreme dependence. In this sense any radicalisation of the art relation in the discourse of precariousness and becoming-precarious needs to concede its disutility as a paradigmatic case; at best it reflects or shares some of the earmarks of working life – isolation, anxiety, opportunism. The formula of the artist as a model precarian dissembles what is most at stake in the production of precariousness: the stratification of social production and the imposition of work. A more suggestive formula might be the artist or art worker as vanishing mediator of capital, vanishing precisely in their imaginary negation of its laws.

Perhaps what is more interesting, and potentially challenging, than the projection of similarities between the insecurity of cultural work and the insecurity of shitwork is a complex awareness of incongruities between these. It is one thing to note that the reconfiguration of work has traumatic repercussions across social fields; but these repercussions are not haphazard. The problematic nature of much activist-inspired or 'engaged' art is that it wants to generalise the conditions of art-making to the social without realising that it is as inescapably caught in the social logic it wants to disrupt. Perhaps a way around this would be to focus on the singularity of arts structures, stable and shifting, and the kind of critique this specificity engenders. What kind of singularity can impair functionality? The experimental features of art as an activity are always mitigating against its economic overdetermination as social field. The unrepresentability of contemporary configurations of work and politics, the readiness to spurn existing subjective dispositions in favour of not-yet existing or as-yet malformed techniques of thinking and becoming, may evoke this singularity. A purposeful engagement with uselessness characterises art *in principle*, and this also marks the potential of constituting other forms of life on the basis of the loss of measure theorised by some as the

innovation of post-Fordist work. What a loss of measure could imply for cultural production is that culture can no longer be relied upon to supply an alibi to other forms of work. But since disparate kinds of work produce different kinds of value, all work cannot be subsumed into culture.

Like everything else nowadays, art doesn't produce anything. This uselessness can be mobilised constitutively; there is still a great schism between uselessness and irrelevance to be exploited. Against the instrumentalisation of art and the instrumentalisation of its critique in the discourse of creativity, how far can we go with grasping a specificity that can be resistant to this, the specificity of the already existing and not-yet at once? This might be what is really precarious about art; the oscillation between what it can do as social production and how it is deployed as 'social engagement'. Without this recognition, the appropriation of precariousness in art worlds risks becoming another bad-faith eulogy to the lost dream of bohemia, rendered in the muted palette of the service industries.

FOOTNOTES

1 Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agents, MIT, 2004
2 Atelier EUROPA, a symposium and exhibition for the Munich Kunstverein, March 2004, http://www.ateliereuropa.com/; Unionising Workshop at Flaxman Lodge, a week of research, screenings, discussion and production, London, June 2004, http://flaxmanlodge.omweb.org/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=23&forum=11; Precarias a la Deriva, an initiative between research and activism arising from the feminist social center La Eskalera Karakola in Madrid http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias.htm; Producta, a series of events in Barcelona April 2003, http://www.yproductions.org/producta1_e.html and http://www.yproductions.org/proyectos/Producta1_sinopsis_ingles.pdf
3 http://www.republicart.net
4 http://www.intermittents-danger.fr.fm/ The literature of the Intermittents campaign is full of references to the indispensability of healthy culture industries for European tourism and profitability in general. While this indicates a perhaps judicious pragmatism in their campaign, it does detract from the potential expansion of the campaign beyond cultural workers, and it also swerves from critiquing the whole concept of a 'cultural exception' and how such an exception is maintained
5 http://www.chainworkers.org
6 Publications include *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migrants and Domestic Work* by Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Doing the Dirty Work: The Global Politics of Domestic Labour* by Bridget Anderson, and *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, eds. Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild

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CHEAP CHINESE

The perilous and exploitative employment of economic migrants, despite the public outcry against it, is an essential component of capitalist productivity. Concentrating on the structural insecurity of Chinese workers both in the UK and mainland China, **John Barker** *moves from the contextless media coverage of specific deaths to the macro economic picture that caused them*

Illustrations *Raquel Perez de Eulate*
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In June of 2000, 58 Chinese people died of mass suffocation in the container of a lorry that arrived on a ferry at Dover. They died trying to enter the UK illegally. The direct cause of these deaths was the blocking of the container's air vents by the driver, a Dutchman called Perry Wacker. He is the worst of criminals; a panicker lacking the basic nerve required and, in this case, cutting the air supply for fear of being caught. The reporting of the case by large sections of the British media was either downright callous or sympathetic in abstract terms only, the horror felt from putting ourselves in the shoes of those who died proved to be too much.

In early February 2004, 19 Chinese workers who had entered the UK illegally died by drowning on the dangerous shoreline of Morecombe Bay, Lancashire – sands rich in cockles. This time the reporting of what happened was more sympathetic. Once again the direct cause of their deaths was the reckless and incompetent greed of those employing them. It was reported that one of those who died, Guo Binlong, made a call on his mobile phone to his wife in the village of Zelang near Fuqing City not long before he drowned. He said, 'Maybe I'm going to die. It's a tiny mistake by my boss. He should have called us back an hour ago.'

Heartbreaking, twice over: the tiny mistake, that that's how Guo Binlong saw it, and the futility of the call. All the reporting implied that none of the 19 could read English or perhaps even speak it, and therefore would not have understood the sign up by the beach that said 'Fast rising tides and hidden channels. In emergency ring 999'. Perhaps if it had

PROUD TO PRODUCE

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been read and understood, even as the danger became obvious, there would have been a reluctance to ring 999.

In another case involving a 40 year old Chinese man, Zhang Guo Hua, who entered the UK illegally and who died in Hartlepool after working a 24 hour shift in a plastics 'feeder' factory for Samsung, it was in no one's interests, as the reporter David Leigh put it, to make a fuss – neither employers nor fellow workers. He was cremated without an inquest. And for Guo Binlong the mobile phone, one of the technological wonders of the present era of globalisation, that allowed a phone call from the darkness of Morecombe Bay, with the cold water rising, to a village in China, was useless to him. In contrast, a young female Londoner was happily saved from sinking mud on the shore of the Thames by using her phone.

The reporting of these deaths though more sympathetic, quickly identified the ruthless and criminal gangmasters as being responsible. Though they have remained largely unnamed the condemnation has been far stronger than in the case of Perry Wacker. The broadsheet papers talked of these gangsters using stolen 4-wheel drives in the same horrified tones that they portray loan sharks, as if the billions made by the 'high-street' banks belonged to a different moral universe. No, these gangsters were 'tough Scousers with torn jeans' and mixed in with them Triads and Snakeheads.

In the same period as these horrific deaths two other types of Chinese people in the UK are becoming important to its economy: students and tourists. All the students pay full overseas fees of £10,000, and in 2003 there were estimated to be 25,000 students making £250 million for British universities – a fourfold increase in three years. In 2004, the estimate is of 35,000 students. The attractions for British universities is obvious. For the students it offers the chance of a university education when places are so limited in China, and when a British degree is said to look

particularly good on CVs. What is certain is that the British government is not seeking to reduce their numbers, even when some also work in the black economy to help pay their way.

In October 2003, it was reported that the EU was expected to approve a new visa regime that will give Chinese people easier access to Europe. Chinese tour groups are expected to be given 'approved destination status'. This almost automatic visa granting would have an in-built safety clause from the EU's point of view in that Chinese tour operators would be heavily punished if any of their clients failed to return to China. This does not apply to the UK which is outside the Schengen Agreement but is equally keen to receive the money generated by such tourism. This is not negligible. Since 1998 the number of Chinese overseas travellers has almost doubled to 16.6 million. That is only a fraction of its 1.3 billion population, but the prediction is for 100 million overseas travellers by 2020, making them the world's biggest travellers. The UK does not want to be left behind but is seeking watertight agreements with the Chinese government to take back failed asylum seekers and issue new papers to those who deliberately destroy them, an issue the Blair government made much of after the Morecombe Bay horror.

These numbers, and prospective numbers, are another indication of the development of a middle-class in China; middle class in its consumption possibilities that is, or what might otherwise be called a nouveau riche. A copycat nouveau riche highlighted by the recent 'BMW case'. The wife of a rich property owner deliberately ran over the wife of a peasant, Liu Zhongxia, whose tractor she claimed, had scratched a wing mirror on her BMW in Harbin, Heliongjiang province, the heart of North East China's rust-belt, mimicking the Long Island heiress who recently maimed a few in similar fashion after a nightclub entry argument. The driver, Mrs Su, who had also paid someone to take her driving test,

was acquitted as no witnesses dared to turn up. That such bad behaviour and the incomes and spending power that allow it now exist is hardly surprising given the dynamic growth of its industrial economy. It can be argued that it is only through the policies of the nationalist Communist Party, determined only to allow in Western capital on its own terms (however much that might be wishful thinking) that this growth has taken place. It is equally the case that it

The broadsheet papers talked of these gangsters using stolen 4-wheel drives in the same horrified tones that they portray loan sharks, as if the billions made by the 'high-street' banks belonged to a different moral universe

results from the shift of so much industrial production to China from the First World, to take advantage of a low wage workforce, one which is also producing this nouveau riche. The divisions of levels of income and possibilities in China are now so great that they might be called class divisions, and so obvious that the new Communist Party leadership of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao have referred to it and of the need to narrow the gap between rich and poor. Beyond the never-ending campaign to root out the corruption of officials and their parasitic relation to the peasantry, this sounds like wishful thinking.

There are not going to be 1.3 billion Chinese in the 'middle-class' level global

consumer class. What would they be producing? Even in the 'First World' it is a bogus promise. In the case of China, with such an across-the-board global consumer class, the global environmental crisis would be obvious even to those who do not wish to see it. Instead the situation as it is, and as it is developing, is eminently suitable to the global investor class and its trans-national corporations and companies. As Oscar Romero puts it with the ruthless clarity of 'Third World' analysts, what matters to them is that 'national markets become increasingly liberalised so that they can seek the thin strata with high income in the underdeveloped countries ... they do not aim to sell to the entire population, it would be sufficient for 300 million in the upper-income brackets out of the total Chinese population to become their customers, though this may create a dangerous gap between the two Chinas.' (Oscar Romero, *The Myth of Development*, Zed Books). To manage this dangerous gap, what better than a highly sophisticated one-party state which can maintain a low-wage industrial assembly class, itself privileged from an even larger and lower-waged rural class. 300 million is enough, it dwarfs the present US market.

Taken with similarly proportioned figures in India, this development is a godsend to the global investor class which, as the SE Asian 'financial crisis' showed, was faced with a problem of global over-production. A financial analyst also trading in snappy one-liners, Ed Yardeni, talked of the world needing all the yuppies it can get. Looked at in this light, the Chinese one-party system may be the more reliable given the stunning defeat of the BJP party in India in the recent election; a party which as Arundhati Roy described so well in her essay about the Gujarat pogrom, had sought to manage the 'dangerous gap' with a mixture of neo-liberalism and Hindu nationalism. However chimerical the promises of the Congress Party might be, the election did allow the poor at least to say 'No' to the gap and the way it was being managed.

The poor of Britain and Europe know the present importance of China in particular, life would be that much harder without its prices: a pair of jeans for a fiver or toys for a quid. Its coming importance was highlighted 100 years ago in J A Hobson's *Imperialism*, a book unfairly famous only for having been used and misused by Lenin.

China seems to offer a unique opportunity to the Western business man. A population ... endowed with an extraordinary capacity of steady labour, with great intelligence and ingenuity,

inured to a low standard of material comfort ... Few Europeans even profess to know the Chinese ... the only important fact upon which there is universal agreement is that the Chinese of all the "lower races" are most adaptable to purposes of industrial exploitation, yielding the largest surplus product of labour in proportion to their cost of keep.

Western ignorance seems to have changed little: the Sinology department at Durham University is scheduled to close, and the UK government is to withdraw the small support it gave to those doing M.Phils in Chinese.

Hobson was in no position to anticipate a Communist Revolution or the developing class system of the present. He did however foresee those fears of this industrial development getting out of Western control, manifested in notions of the 'yellow peril' which crop up throughout the 20th century to cause havoc in the minds of the leftist American writers Jack London and John dos Passos. 'It is at least conceivable that China might so turn the tables upon the Western industrial nations, and, either by adopting their capital and organisers or, as is more probable, by substituting her own, might flood their markets with her cheaper manufacturers, and refusing their imports in exchange might take her payment in liens upon their capital, reversing the earlier process of investment until she gradually obtained financial control over her quondam patrons and civilisers.' Such speculation belongs elsewhere: I don't know, for example, how much Chinese capital is invested in US Treasury bonds, but presumably it figures prominently in the thinking of professional, militarised Western geo-politics. In their considerations presumably, oil figures a great deal. China's 'industrial revolution' depends on it. Last year alone its oil consumption rose by 10 percent, along with what *The Times* (11/6/04) calls the 'rampant demand' from not just China, but India and Brazil too; countries 'continuing to guzzle world supply'. Guzzle! It may well be that the spread of US military bases across the oil-producing world is a product of those considerations.

At the same time Hobson raises another possibility, that 'the pressure of working class movements in politics and industry in the West can be met by a flood of China goods, so as to keep down wages ... it is conceivable that the powerful industrial and financial classes of the West, in order better to keep the economic and political mastery ... may insist upon the free importation of yellow labour for domestic and industrial service in the West. This is a weapon which they hold in reserve, should they need to use it in order to keep the populace in safe subjection.' Hobson himself had seen the use of Chinese labour in the

While the Third World is raided for trained nurses whose training was a cost to those countries, immigration fears are regularly rehearsed
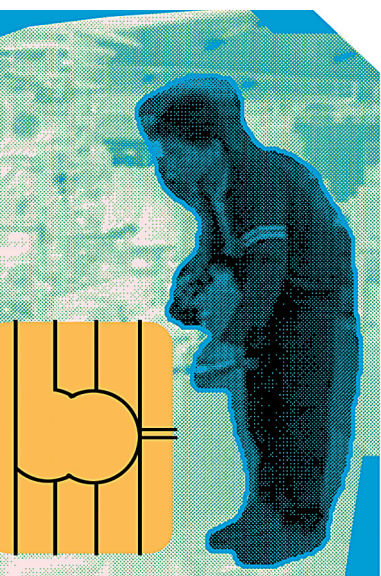
South African gold mines. Although, to our ears he sounds melodramatic and unwarrantably sweeping, nevertheless his considerations do overlap with yet another round of the 'Immigration Debate'. The disparity between the freedom of mobility for capital and non-freedom for labour is mentioned, if at all, and then forgotten as if these really do represent parallel worlds. Instead, the same yes-and-nos go round the carousel. Yes we need some skilled workers; yes, we must rationally look at future demographics and who will be needed to do the work to pay our pensions; but at the same time watch out for bogus refugees who are really economic migrants; watch out for the illegal immigrant. But not too hard.

After the death of three Kurdish workers on a level crossing on their way to pick spring onions in the East of England, it was suddenly discovered there were 2000 Chinese in Kings Lynn as if they had never been seen before. In Kings Lynn! Their deaths were more sordid in the banality of the accident than the thriller-like narrative of Romanian ex-train workers fixing signals so that other migrants could leap onto the Eurostar at obscure spots. The reality of the immigration debate is also more sordid. While the Third World is raided for trained nurses whose training was a cost to those countries, immigration fears are regularly rehearsed. The net result is that so many immigrants live in fear, and this fear is as functional to capitalist economies in the present era as it has been in the past. Migrant workers in Fortress Europe, and especially illegally-entered migrants, are far more likely to accept wages and conditions that are essential to its needs, and which in turn have a knock-on effect on wages and working conditions generally. Racist politicians and professional opinionists have their own grisly agenda, but these are functional to capitalist economies and their household names. The focus of these opinionists on 'failed' asylum seekers who are not allowed to work and, more recently, on a 'flood' of Roma and other Eastern Europeans who can work legally as EU citizens, gives the game away Their spotlight is not on Kings Lynn, a national blind spot. 'Policies that claim to exclude undocumented workers,' says Stephen Castle, 'may often really be about allowing them through side doors and back doors so that they can be readily exploited.' Or, as he put it some 30 years ago, commenting on the repatriation demands of Enoch Powell and other racist politicians: 'Paradoxically their value for capital lies in their very failure to achieve their declared aims.'

Inside Fortress Europe, for the UK in particular with its avowedly American-style deregulation, this process is all too visible. It is the dirty secret of the UK's economic success under New Labour. And they are proud of it, these shadow social democrats; the UK's official trade and investment website boasts of it. 'Total wage costs in the UK are among the lowest in Europe,' it says. 'In the UK employees are used to working hard for their employers. In 2001 the average hours worked a week was 45.1 for males and 40.7 for females. The EU average was 40.9. ... UK law does not oblige employers to provide a written employment contract. ... Recruitment costs in the UK is low. ... The law governing conduct of employment agencies is less restrictive in the UK. The UK has the lowest corporation tax of any major industrialised country.' Recently, Jack Straw has 'defied Europe' as the papers would have it. In a speech to the CBI, he promised that the UK would insist that the charter of fundamental rights created no 'new rights under national law, so as not to upset the balance of Britain's industrial relations policy', that is the one established by previous Conservative governments. In Britain there is nowhere for the exploited to turn and almost no employers are prosecuted for using illegal migrants.

To the extent that media coverage of the horror of Morecambe Bay went beyond fingering tough Scouser gangmasters in stolen 4-wheel drives, it focused on the power of supermarkets in the agricultural sector and their relation to those who do the harvesting – a harvest which doesn't stop for a festival because the operation is non-stop, all year round. Migrant labour is up by 44 percent in the last seven years. Much of it is 'legal' via seasonal agricultural schemes, but of the 3-5000 'gangmasters' who organise this at least 1000 are illegal and give no protection to their workers. But then 'gangmasters' are in effect employment agencies and these, as New Labour like to boast, are the least restricted in the EU.

Despite Morecombe and the ensuing hand-wringing, nothing has changed. In September 2003 the House of Commons committee on the environment and food, chaired by Michael Jack MP, found that the agencies supposed to deal with 'illegal gangmasters' were making no real impact and set out the changes that would be needed. In mid-May 2004, a report by the same committee declared that the government had no clearer picture of the situation, and enforcement action against them had not increased. There had, it concluded, been 'no evidence of any change in the government's approach since last September. Indeed, in some respects, enforcement activity has diminished because of lack of resources.'

In Britain there is nowhere for the exploited to turn and almost no employers are prosecuted for using illegal migrants

The beneficiaries of this, are the 'household' names of Tesco, Sainsbury and the rest, all profiting from this underclass. Andrew Simms describes a situation where 'Long chains of sub-contractors, commercial confidentiality and contractual obfuscation, allow household names to hide behind plausible denials ... we have evolved a system better at hiding, or distancing cause from effect.' This at a time when New Labour has never stopped talking of responsibilities in return for rights, exchange value-business. Those who died at Morecombe are believed to have moved on from Kings Lynn, in all likelihood taking a drop in pay from the vegetable picking rates of a market dominated by the 'high street' supermarkets.

The distancing of cause from consequence, the not-me-guv cry of the rich, the powerful and their portraitists, appear in all their colours in the *Teeside Evening Gazette's* report on a fire at the Woo One factory in the Sovereign Business Park, Hartlepool at the beginning of April this year. It mentioned the death of Zhang Guo Hua but only to emphasise that there was no proof of a connection between the haemorrhage that killed him and his working conditions. He had, it reported, been through the usual kind of work: cutting salads for Tesco suppliers in Sussex; fish-processing in Scotland; and packing flowers in Norfolk. Usual for whom?

The Queen had opened the nearby Samsung plant in 1996. It has a global turnover of $33 billion. When it opened the local MP, Peter Mandelson, wrote an article in praise of the company saying: 'some have the impression that the success of the tiger economies is based on sweatshop labour. This is a false picture.' The false picture is that sweatshop labour is exclusive to the 'tiger economies'. Zhang Guo Hua worked a 24-hour shift in Hartlepool. It was his decision of course, one can hear the not-me-guv voice saying. Woo One, the company Zhang Guo Hua worked for, was a 'feeder' factory for Samsung, its practices its own, as Samsung would have it. Zhang Guo Hua spent his last 24 hours stamping the word SAMSUNG onto plastic casings either for microwave oven doors or computer monitors, on his feet throughout. When he collapsed and went to hospital it was under another name. It was only when he was dead that a friend gave Zhang's real passport. So that even though he was cremated without an Inquest, it was in his own name.

An ex-worker at Woo One said that the minimum working week was 72 hours and the minimum shift 12 hours. Its managing director, Keith Boynton, agreed that English workers were not required to work these hours, but it wasn't him guv, the Chinese workers were *technically* employed

by an outfit called Thames Oriental Manpower Management with offices in New Malden Surrey close to Samsung's corporate HQ. Thames Oriental Manpower Management – a name that could only have been dreamed up by its proprietor a Mr Lin, not a tough Scouser in ripped jeans but a man who had been granted asylum claiming, claiming that is, that he was a North Korean refugee. Mr Boynton of Woo One said that 'What he (Mr Lin) pays the workers is up to him.' Mr Lin, it was reported had also taken control from Woo One of the nearby three-to-a-room set of dormitories and presumably, because he is now the villain, charged what he liked.

At this time Samsung boasted of record UK factory profits through 'unit cost reduction.' To get some idea of the process whereby this might happen, two pieces of Marx's structural economic analysis come to mind. He had for one thing de-constructed the notion of productivity long before the era of productivity deals. The very notion is one which exactly distances cause from consequence, or rather, and all the more modern for that, muddies the cause. 'Productivity' smears together: the

Migrant labour is up by 44 percent in the last seven years

productiveness of labour, that is the improved technology which allows for greater production; intensity of labour, which is how hard people work per hour (and here much of the improved technology simply increases the intensity of labour); and the length of the working day. These latter two factors are characteristic of 'primitive accumulation', and boy was that going on in Samsung's Hartlepool circus. Marx's misnamed Equalisation of Profit Law describes the mechanism whereby this works. The surplus or profit engendered by companies like Woo One, does not all go to them; the size of Samsung, the concentration of capital involved, and its power in relation to both its suppliers and marketing, means that it takes the lion's share of what has truly been accumulated in primitive fashion by small dependent suppliers. This is not some one-off phenomenon; one study shows Toyota having some 47,000 small firms working for it in a hierarchical structure, with most of those in the lowest layer passing the surpluses of 'primitive accumulation' up the chain to transnational corporations like

Toyota who benefit from that mystery called 'value-added'.

When the story emerged in *The Guardian* (13/01/04), local MP Peter Mandelson said that he had 'written to Samsung about allegations made against Woo One in this tragic case.' The question is then, did he ever receive a reply because two days afterwards Samsung announced, out of the blue it was said, that it was closing the factory involved – the Wynyard in Billingham. It blamed the high level of wages in NE England and said it was re-locating to Slovakia where wages stood at £1 an hour. To which address did Mr Mandelson write? Was it passed on by a Post Office re-direction instruction. Has he received a reply? It seems unlikely given that Samsung's decision can hardly have been spur of the moment, or that a meeting with Woo One would have been a priority in the two days remaining. It transpired that Woo One themselves had already started to make its own move in the direction of Slovakia, and indeed announced some three weeks later that it was to close its computer casings plant in Hartlepool. On the news of Samsung's departure, Mr Mandelson, his letter still in the post somewhere, said that the price of their product had fallen worldwide, and that was 'the reason for its closure'. Prime Minister Tony Blair said he deeply regretted the loss of jobs involved but that 'It is part of the world economy we live in.'

There is of course much truth in what he says, but there is a complacency to that same voice which talks so much of our responsibilities that grates. If wages in Slovakia are £1 an hour, in China they are likely to be fifty pence, yet there is a need felt in the 'First World' to maintain low-cost mass production within its own frontiers even while its investor class shifts production to such countries. There is for one thing a structural limit to how many lawyers, journalists, IT specialists and bankers are required even in the First World, whatever might be said about education, education, education, while at the same time an increasing reluctance to cushion the circumstances of the excluded population. For another there is a fear at the psychic level of political economy that if so much industrial production is shifted to different parts of Asia, it will somehow weaken the West, be both sign and symptom of lazy decadence. More specifically than notions of decadence, there is a need for cheap labour in the First World, within its own frontiers, 'for it means that the South cannot extract monopoly rents for its cheap labour and bad working conditions' as Robert Biel puts it. There are sweatshops in London and Los Angeles even while automatic looms are capable of weaving 760 metres of denim per

minute. As Hobson suggested, and the irony stands out in neon, this First World low-cost production requires migrant workers, workers made fearful by an unscrupulous media and political class.

Migrant workers are also essential to low-cost China and its 'economic miracle'. The numbers are hard to establish, 80 million is one estimate, 94 another, of recent migrants from the Chinese countryside, many of whom are also 'illegal'. Many Chinese cities require residency permits while it is these 'peasants' who do the jobs that Beijingers, for example, won't do themselves. And, just like anywhere else, for Albanians in Greece for example, they are accused of being thieves and dirty, while also exerting a downward pressure on local wages. Should there be a shrinkage of economic growth at a global level, these Chinese migrant workers will be the first to lose their jobs. For one thing 90 percent of them work without contracts, according to Li Jianfei, a law professor at the People's University. Even the state-run Trade Union estimates that they are owed over 100 million yen in back wages, but a campaign for repayment is for those with contracts only. Much of this is in the booming construction sector, where non-paying sub-contractors blame large companies underpaying them, the Law of Equalisation of Profit in crude form.

In more classical form this law is also inherent in the condition of the coal mining industry. China's increasing oil dependence is well known, but it is also the world's largest coal producer. Chinese companies are making sizeable profits on legal and illegal mining operations, but at prices to industry which mean the real rates of profit of the consuming industries, often foreign-financed, are even greater. Exerting more pressure on the industry and its highly exploited workforce is central government's demand for more output. At the same time the industry has an appalling safety record; around 7000 miners were killed in 2003. There are promises of more inspectorates and the closing of illegal mines but, in the face of this 'energy crunch', this is likely to remain rhetorical. Safety investment is far less than the announced allocation. The grim reality is that with the retrenching of state-owned industries and the accompanying loss of benefits and pensions, the unemployed and the rural poor have entered the industry in huge numbers and are willing to work for cash in appalling and unsafe conditions, often assisting coal mine owners in avoiding safety procedures to ensure continued employment, as the *China Labour Bulletin* puts it. The death of one man in Hartlepool is hardly on the same scale, but the pressures for 'not making a fuss' are similar.

The wishful thinking of the new Communist Party leadership about reversing the dynamics of inequality looks like mere cynical rhetoric since it doesn't prevent it from maintaining a hard line against any independent worker protests over pay and conditions. A strike over pay at the part Taiwanese financed Xinxiong Shoe Factory in Dongguan city in April of this year resulted in several arrests. The Ferro-Alloy strike in Liaoyang province, involving 1600 workers, resulted in long prison sentences for Yao Fuxin and Xiao; meanwhile the workers are still without retrenchment compensation. In Hubei province, six workers have been arrested and are awaiting trial on charges of

There are sweatshops in London and Los Angeles even while automatic looms are capable of weaving 760 metres of denim per minute

'disturbing social order' after a peaceful demonstration at the Tieshu factory; this after 15 months of peaceful campaigning to recover more than 200 million Yuan in back wages, redundancy payments, workers shares and other moneys owed them by the bankrupt factory's management.

Other workers from the Tieshu factory have been sentenced to terms up to 21 months of 're-education through labour', a punishment which bypasses the criminal justice system. We do not know the extent of prison labour in China but it too is a component holding down general wages and conditions. There is nothing to get smug about, prison labour in the UK is being organised in a much more serious manner than before. The Woolworth's type chain in the North of England, Wilkinsons, is highly dependent on it for its products. A recent piece in *The Economist* (6/5/04) goes further, saying 'Hard-working immigrants transform the prison system'. It describes how Wormwood Scrubs (where a regime of extreme and racist staff violence is still being investigated) is full of cocaine drug mules from South America, and how the prison runs production lines for airline headsets and aluminium windows. The best jobs, it says, pay £25-40 a week 'depending on a prisoner's place on the ladder of privilege (as in all prisons, inmates are paid more for the same job if they behave

themselves)'. It goes on to say that 'it is serious money for a third-worlder ... so a steady stream of remittances flows from Wormwood Scrubs to poor countries.' A grotesque conclusion might be that the poor victims of Morecombe Bay would have been better off there.

After the effective and international demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle, the unity displayed there, the unity that was most unsettling to the global investor class, was quickly confronted with the sneers of professional opinionists. The many American trade unionists present, they said, had no global consciousness, they were just there to protect their jobs. Their demands for basic standards and rights for workers in the poor world were just a subtle form of protectionism, protecting their privileges. It is true that the Clinton administration would do almost anything to secure free trade deals in American interests, and also that Third World voices have been raised to say that such demands for minimum standards and conditions are aimed at cutting off the only way in which they can develop economically, that is with a monopoly on cheap labour, but it is reasonable to ask in return who and what these voices represent. The 'Third World' is not some homogenous space and the class divisions in India and China are clear to see. Increasing inequality within countries rich and poor, is a global reality.

It is such a reality which gives us a nominally social-democratic and a nominally communist government, both spurning any effective protection of workers. Instead then, why not support those working for better wages, conditions and respect in China for example. Lawyers like Cho Li Tai and the Centre for Women's Law Studies and Legal Services at Beijing University; peasant activists like Li Changping; and most of all those imprisoned for demanding basic rights. For this to mean anything in the UK, a start would be mounting support for the Private Members Bill of Jim Sheridan MP and backed by the TGWU, for a thorough registration of 'gangmasters'. If it were to succeed it would at least remove one pillar of the government's boast of its cheap labour and lightly regulated employment agencies and go a step beyond cursory hand-wringing which was the extent of the response to the Morecombe tragedy. Six months later, in August, it was reported that rival 'gangs' of cockle-pickers had to be rescued from the same sands. ✈

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WAGES FOR ANYONE IS BAD FOR BUSINESS

Venezuela's 'Bolivarian constitution' contains a unique article (Article 88) recognising women's unwaged work as economically productive. Wages For Housework (WFH) has been fighting for this recognition since 1972, and has particpated in the annual Global Women's Strike (GWS) since its inception in 2000. GWS members attended Venezuela's international 'Solidarity Women's Encuentro' in July 2002, and saw women at the heart of the revolution and its social changes. Laura Sullivan spoke to Selma James and Nina Lopez of WFH and GWS

WFH believed 'women had a right to money of their own', says James, 'because the power relations between women and men, and in fact all power relations under capitalism, were distinctions of wages and a hierarchy in production.' She and her colleagues fought for that money to remunerate the unwaged work of women the world over, meeting some resistance, for example, accusations that WFH was founded because Jewish people like James 'are only interested in money'. James scathingly lambasts the liberal women's movement. She contends that feminist critics neglected to understand that women – already institutionalised in the home – only have 'two ways to go: they can either get money from the state, or go out and get a second [i.e., waged] job.' 'Women [who went into

the male workforce] were absolutely rolled over – the feminists orchestrated it, praised it – they didn't see women were being rolled over, and they complained women weren't getting equal pay. They also asked for "non-traditional jobs" for women. When the first woman was killed in the mines, I was very angry.' The politics of women's liberation endorsed by the WFH, then, starkly contrasts with a fight for women to enjoy the same capitalist exploitation and oppressive conditions as men.

James explains that when others were 'disconnecting production, which was the production of value and surplus value, from reproduction, which was making human beings', WFH declared that 'housewives and other carers were part of the working class,' that is, women's unwaged labour was

productive in the Marxist sense because it contributes to the reproduction of labour. [see inset box] Disgusted with the 'many idiots' who said that women in these unwaged positions were outside of capitalism, James emphasises that WFH 'is an organising movement,' while 'all those who opposed it, organised nothing – they didn't say, "We'll do this instead"'.

A similar emphasis on practical effectiveness underpins the work of GWS in Venezuela. As James and Lopez tell it, when a CIA-backed coup took place in the country in April 2002 and president Chavez was kidnapped by the opposition, the women 'saved the revolution' when they came down from the shanty town neighborhoods in the hills around Caracas 'and demanded that Chavez be released. Everyone was in a state of shock. The women insisted that the military do something. The military, who were largely loyal to Chavez, went and got him back.'

Through its newspaper, talks, demonstrations, and videos, the GWS counters media misinformation and silence, documenting Venezuela's revolutionary achievements, such as Bolivarian schools and circles, land redistribution, progress in health care and literacy, as well as women-centred efforts. The GWS sponsored a US tour by Nora Castañeda, president of the Women's Development Bank, which helps 'women living in poverty become independent protagonists in the revolutionary struggle',[1] particularly through

Women – already institutionalised in the home – only have 'two ways to go: they can either get money from the state, or go out and get a second [i.e., waged] job'

financing thousands of co-operatives. Castañeda emphasises that the daily pressure of women and indigenous people on the Constituent Assembly was crucial to the passage of Article 88, which declares that women's work in the home is 'productive', that is, 'creates value' and entitles women to social security (i.e. pensions, education, and health care), and Article 14 of the Land Act, which gives women heads of household priority in land distribution. A March 2004 GWS letter to the National Assembly urges the full and honest implementation of Article 88. Other priorities, such as the recent referendum recall vote, have delayed

Argelia Naguanagua de Ramos
because we don't have any water.

Emma Ortega
Coordinator for the movement for agricultural reform
Only at a local level can nutritional sovereignty succeed in overcoming

Natali Jaimes
Women's bank
They are organized in groups of five to nine women in order to form economic

Maritza Marquez
Loan recipient of the Women's bank, 23 de Enero
In order to get a loan we had to participate in three meetings.

I bought this material with the loan from the women's bank.

its implementation.

Until recently, Lopez explains, the left was largely uninvolved with and unsympathetic toward Venezuela. Traditional Marxists saw Chavez as problematic because his base was primarily in the unwaged sector, 'rather than at the so-called point of production.' James contends that Chavez is 'married to the movement, to the grassroots, which he thinks is central – as Marx did – as the left does not.'

James contextualises the relationship between Chavez and his followers: 'It's not the first time in history that the movement has related to a leader as a saviour – people did to Lenin, who wasn't totalitarian. In the same way, black people related to Malcolm – he could do no wrong.' James views access to power as the pivotal issue: 'When people find a leader who wants to lead them where they want to go, the intellectuals are shocked – they just have no grasp of how it feels not to have power and then somebody who has a bit of power and wants to go in the direction you want to go and take you with him – they don't know how that feels, they haven't been without power.' James and Lopez emphasise people's involvement in the Venezuelan government, whose 'constitution speaks of the people as protagonists of the democracy, aiming for people to represent themselves.' Chavez is 'an organiser, totally practical, connected to the grassroots. His military background is useful – civilians don't know how to run a government.' Chavez applies his disciplinary skills to all levels of governing, including the recent election, in which volunteers telephoned ten people to discuss candidates and to encourage voting. In a month and a half, the whole country was organised in such a fashion, with a 73 percent turnout! Boldly and practically devising 'a basically foolproof electoral system (knowing that the big problem was to avoid fraud),' Chavez demonstrated his 'big trust in people's organising abilities, particularly women, who were the majority in the neighbourhoods and helped folks to vote.' The election was peaceful because it was well organised and centrally involved women.

I wonder how to reconcile James' emphasis on the role of women and the celebration of the revitalisation of grassroots politics with the focus on the president, a top-down form of power, as opposed to spelling out that the ultimate goal is the end of representational politics altogether. In other words, women are identified as political levers in the revolutionary process in Venezuela, but to what end? Is their horizon ultimately antithetical to the goals of Chavez, who, after all, must not only work to stay in power but who has also been increasingly complying with neoliberalisation (i.e. the

My investigation of the history of the WFH campaign became an unanticipated detective effort. The essay that undergirds the work of WFH, 'Women and the Subversion of the Community,' is often cited from a 1975 booklet as being co-authored by Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James; however, James's introduction to this collection refers to the 'Dalla Costa article'. And yet a note added by the 1975 publishers (the Power of Women Collective) insists the essay was jointly authored, claiming Dalla Costa publicly admitted this many times. However, not only has Dalla Costa told me James's name was added to the essay without her permission, the first, 1972 English publication of the essay in this booklet lists only one name: Dalla Costa. Perhaps these conflicting attributions reflect not only the split between James and Dalla Costa – who did not sign on to the WFH campaign – but also the essay's more pressing contradictions over whether seeking wages for housework is appropriate.

On the one hand, having made the case that 'domestic work' is a 'masked form of productive labor' (36), the essay concludes that 'the demand that would follow, namely '"pay us wages for housework" ... could scarcely operate in practice as a mobilising goal' (36). On the other hand, an endnote seems to make the opposite case, arguing that 'the demand for a wage for housework is only a basis, a perspective, from which to start, whose merit is essentially to link immediately female oppression, subordination and isolation to their material foundation: female exploitation. At this moment this is perhaps the major function of the demand of wages for housework' (54).

concessions he's made post-coup)? Chavez is undoubtedly a unique leader very much in touch with 'the people': for the progress of women and all Venezuela's disenfranchised it is presently essential that he stay in office. Yet isn't there still a contradiction between Chavez's position as a charismatic leader in a hierarchical system, and the WFH goal of the *destruction of hierarchies*?

While the GWS women are clearly in sympathy with the goal of overthrowing capitalism globally – and to their credit, more involved on the ground with poor women, women of colour, and 'third world' women than most academic or other feminists – their anti-intellectualism manifests in static theorisations (starting and ending solely with the unwaged/waged distinction and the fight for women to receive wages for all their labour in the home) and their lack of a real plan for how this strategy fits in with the broader field of struggle against capitalism. When I asked, 'what succeeds wages?', the question was not at all well received. In the first instance it was misunderstood to mean 'What do women do once they get these wages?' (met with the hostile response of 'You wouldn't even think to ask this question of men'), and in the second, seen as an overly

theoretical concern about whether a movement or strategy is 'anti-capitalist' versus seeing what it accomplishes on the ground, in people's lives. Calling the question itself 'inappropriate', James challenged, 'If you see workers on a strike demanding a 25 percent rise, is it for or

Women are identified as political levers in the revolutionary process in Venezuela, but to what end?

against capitalism? Your problem is that you haven't made up your mind about wages for anyone – capital has. Wages for anyone is bad for business. If you waver, you decide that you don't care if capitalism is hurt, you care if [your strategy] is anti-capitalist.'

At the same time, frustration with perceived strategic or theoretical shortcomings should not lead left intellectuals and activists to dismiss totally the efforts of groups such as the GWS and

the women they champion in Venezuela. We should continue to learn about and understand the context – the political and material urgency – that informs such efforts. Making an easy critique from outside, the 'anti-hierarchy' 'pro-decentralisation' left cannot account either for the popularity of leaders such as Chavez and Castro or for the dialectical relationship between such leaders and state structures *and* socialist policies, practices, and projects that make a real difference in people's lives (e.g., Cuba's continued 98 percent post-revolution literacy rate; the redistribution of land and wealth underway in Venezuela). Without doubt, the implementation of the remarkable Article 88 will make a great difference in the lives of many Venezuelan poor women of colour, and we should appreciate an organisation such as the GWS, which publicises and furthers such policies. ✦

FOOTNOTE

1 Interview with Nora Castañeda, *Global Women's Strike* newspaper, No. 2, November 2003, page 3

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Migrasophia:

Unusual phrases for the usual phrase book (extracts)

This phrase book is a part of my larger project called *Migrasophia*. *Migrasophia* consists of videos and installations, posters, as well as essays. *Migrasophia* is an attempt to articulate visual transformations brought about by global migrations. It is a documentation of the specific historical event of the cross circulation of knowledge by migration which connects disconnected worlds, as well as the construction of a genealogy of migration and the way it is mediated. Videos and a phrase book, posters and plans will continue this project. All this is mediated through representations connecting them in a particular way via the discovery of meaning. The project will continue for as long as this discovery continues.

Things and events in our world of global migrations do not propose their own intrinsic meaning, but instead represent the state of constant breakdown and transformation. Meaning itself is a practice and produced by migrants depending on their knowledge of places and languages. Moving across the disseminated terrain of culture, the migration of people makes visible 'invisible' places and ideas, since the cross-circulation of ideas is inscribed in their movement. In order to problemitise this, I have constructed a new term: *Migrasophia* (like in migration+(philo)sophia). It can be said that construction of new terms is not such a new activity, but derives from the artistic activity of Dadaism and later Conceptual art. It is not alien for literature or philosophy to break down the ordered grammar and syntax of language in order to create a new broken language in an 'aphasic' opening to locate the meaning derived from ideas. What some called 'non-sense' has been announced by Deleuze as an overabundance of sense held within, waiting for its time to emerge. The deformation of Earth and the breaking down of language negotiate sutures of becoming. Migrants too, very often operate by using broken language to stratify the landscape they move across.

Since the language of art symbolises the events of the world to come, it is also the main instrument for the production of meaning. Mistakes made in the process of the global breakdown of linguistic and semiotic structures exceed the linguistic bureaucracy of correcting. At the very moment of misprint they develop into new meaning. This way of meaning production brings back the missing, invisible dimension of reality. The global flux of malfunctioning in comprehension and the phase of brokenness of the English language itself is opening up new terrain for the creation of meaningful strata: instead of relying on old grammar, mistakes can be developed into new meanings: not by denying old rules of grammar or by privileging neologisms, but by finding their combination, which is articulated in mistakes.

The following extracts consist of stereotypes in everyday language perceived differently, because they constitute an event of migration. These phrases are combined with 'neologisms' created out of mistakes.

Zeigam Azizov,
London, August 2004

Where are you from?
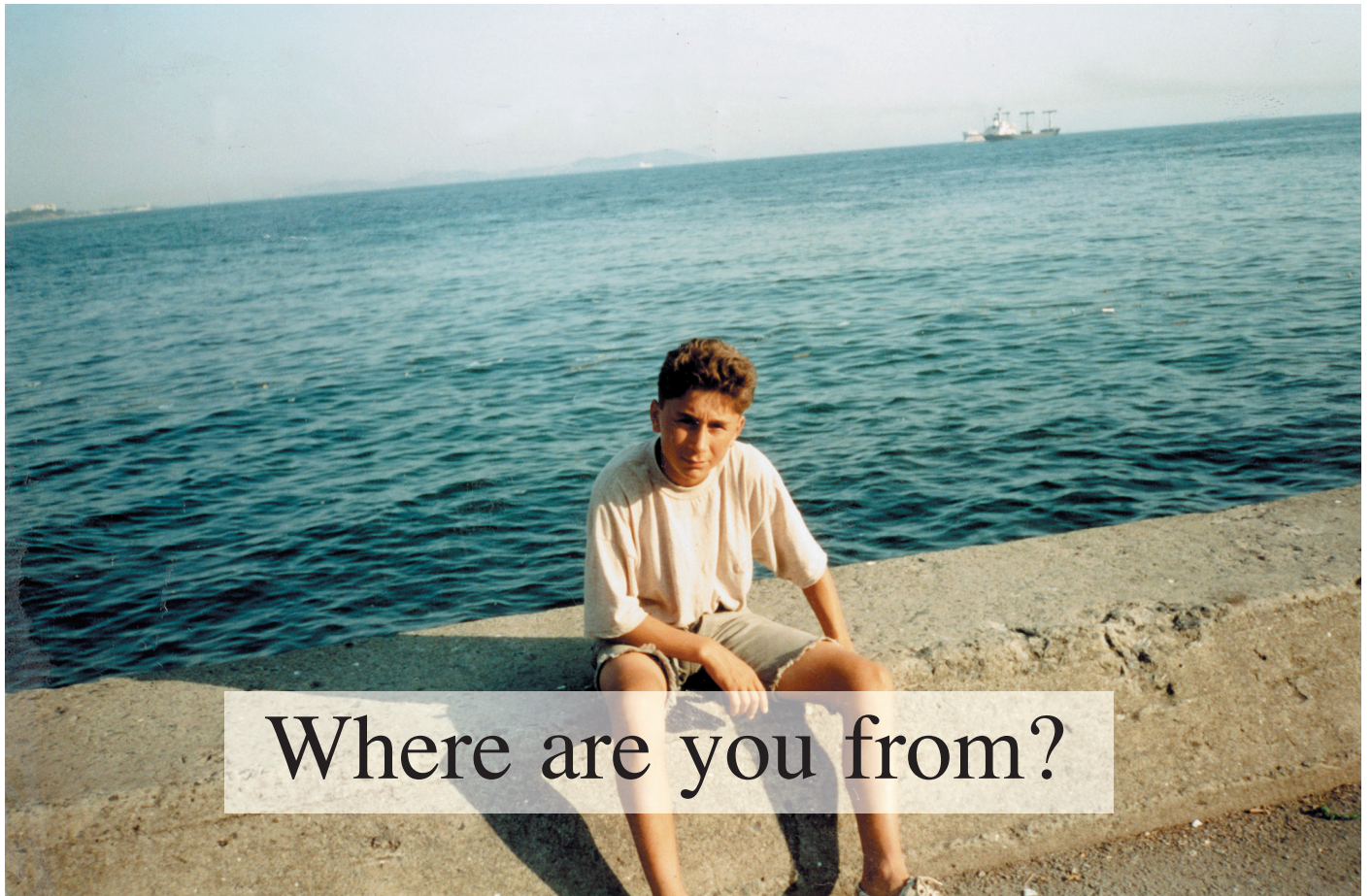
All these books are in English how do you read them?
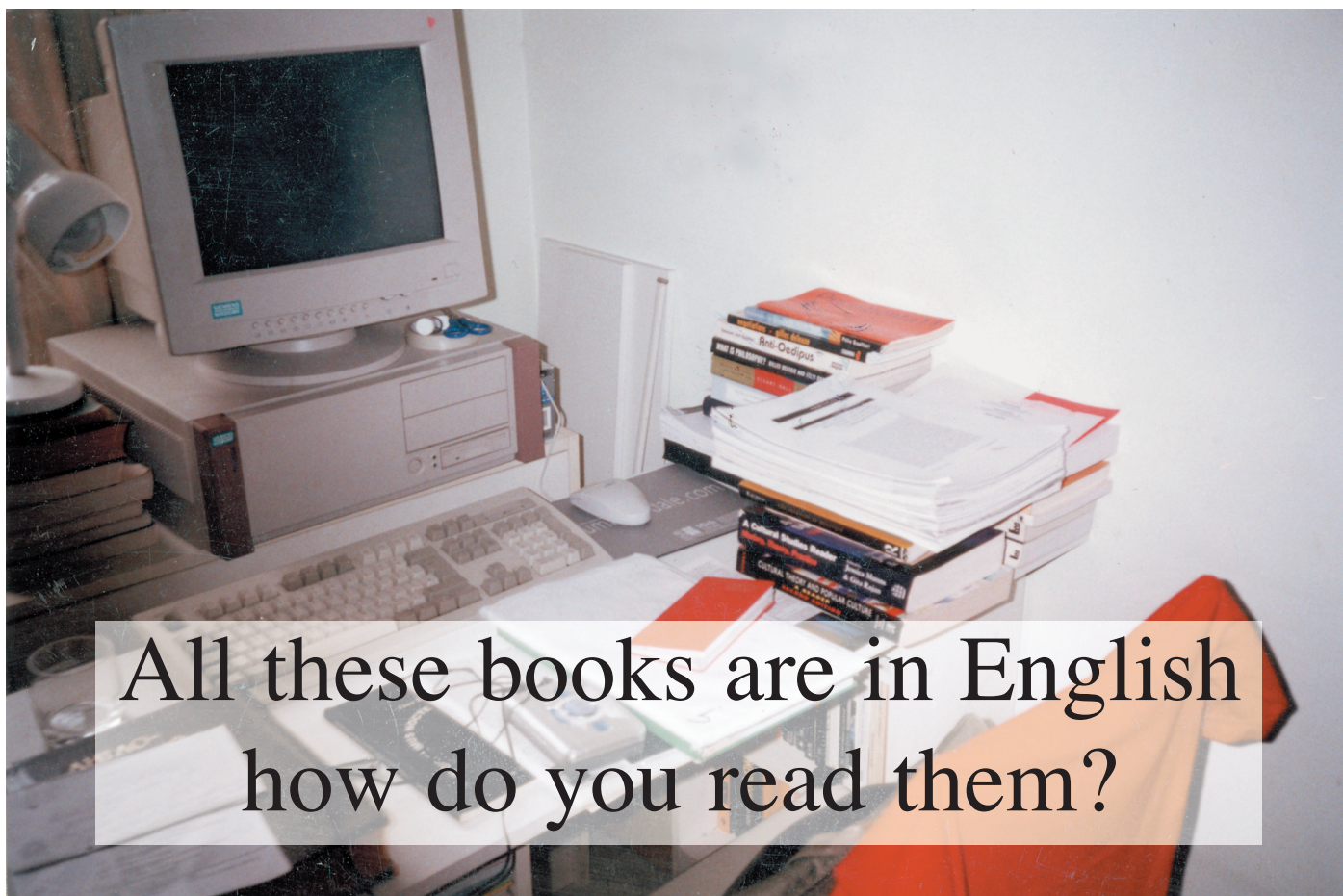
Did you apply for the kebab shop?

How did you get materials in Russia?

Do you know where Manchester is?

In English we say:
"Yes Please!" or *"No, Thank You!"*
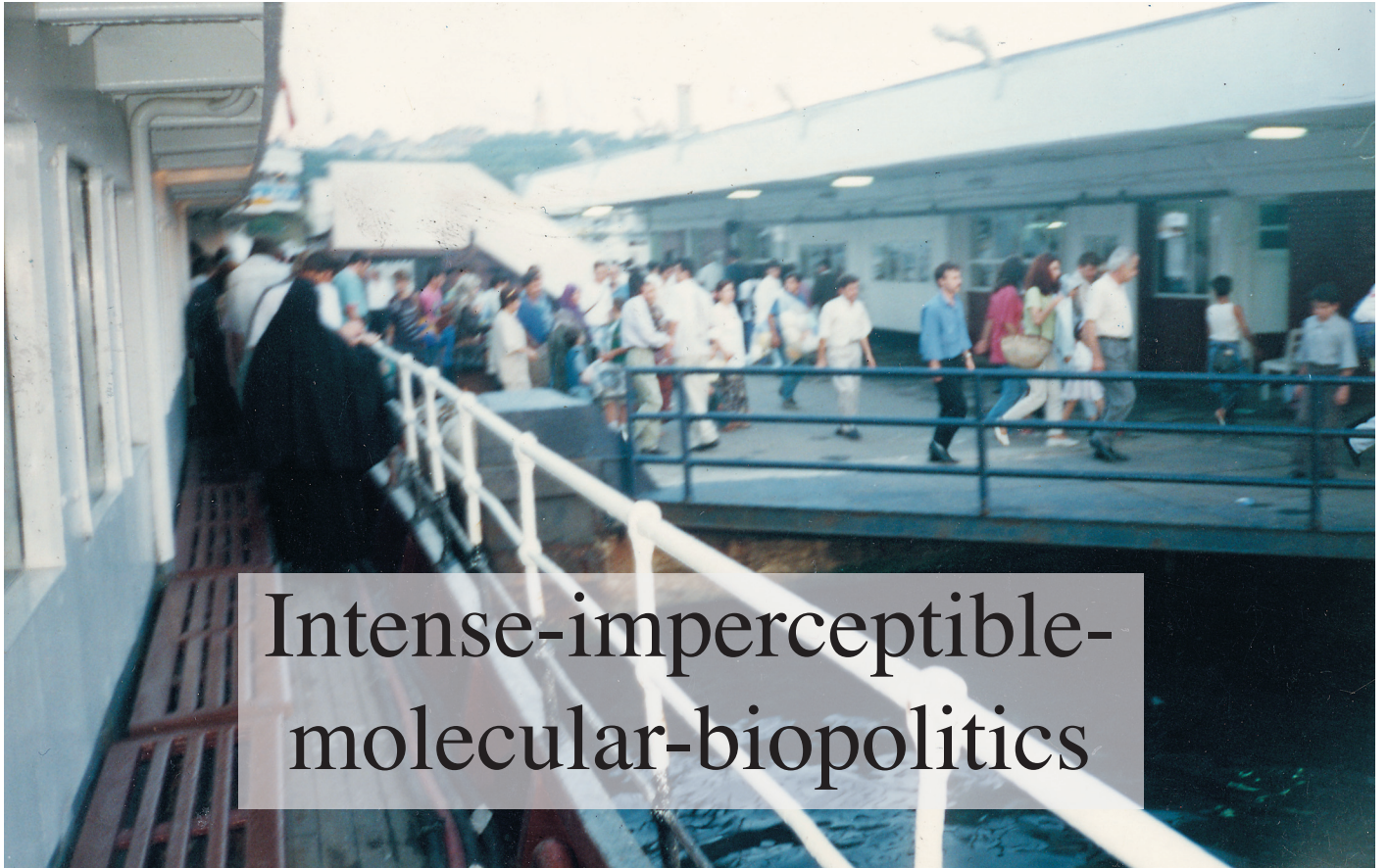
Intense-imperceptible-molecular-biopolitics

quasiepistemological-isotopological transformNational migrasophia

Can you read the menu?
Yes I can!

THE DISSOLVING FORTRESS – NOTES ON THE FUTURE OF WIPO

The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), though hardly a household name, has a reputation for helping intellectual property holders enforce their interests at the expense of the world's consumers – most notoriously those in 'developing countries' dying for want of generic drugs. Now, by adopting the 'Development Agenda' proposed by Argentina and Brazil on 4 October 2004, WIPO appears to have acknowledged that another conception of intellectual property is possible. Voting to incorporate ways to develop and promote creativity into its basic goals, WIPO says it will 'focus more on the needs of developing countries', and open up access to intellectual property rather than just restricting it. Is this the beginning of a new WIPO dedicated as much to the productive benefits of sharing as the rights of ownership?

JJ King was involved in the drafting of the Geneva Declaration which contributed to the recent change in policy. Here he looks back at the history of IP and puts the shift from enforcement to access in context

The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) presides over a process of regulating ideas that began in the early stages of industrial internationalisation at the end of the 18th century. Since the interests of nation states in different phases of development have often diverged, this process has required managing. In the early 19th century, for example, Britain complained of the piracy of British books abroad – especially a thriving trade in Dickens bootlegs in the United States. In Germany, however, an 1870s survey of economists found that 95 percent favoured abolishing the patent system altogether. This inspired the Netherlands to actually do so, and the system was not restored there until 1910. The Swiss constitution for some time prohibited the adoption of a patent system. Even England, with a crown that had liberally handed out all manner of patents, considered the idea of abolishing patents.

If the United States had been somewhat cavalier in its treatment of foreign nation states' intellectual works, things changed at the turn of the 19th century. Like Germany, the US had become by then a powerful producer of industrial ideas and creative works. It thus had come

to see the value of protecting itself, through intellectual property law, against the rapacious interests of other countries. At the International Exhibition of Vienna of 1873, it was amongst those who threatened to stay away if their exhibits were insufficiently protected from potentially piratical national interests. Perhaps the strength of its innovation had something to do with the use it had allowed its citizens to make of other nations' ideas.

The Austro-Hungarian government responded with temporary IP protection covering the exhibition. A discussion ensued, prompting further conferences in Paris, and in 1883 the Paris Convention was signed. This decreed that patents apply transnationally, making possible an international market in industrial ideas that the bilateral agreements preceding it had not been comprehensive or systematic enough to achieve.

The Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878 launched an equivalent market in copyrighted ideas. Dickens had not been the only author suffering from rife piracy of works copyrighted in foreign states. In Europe, states routinely pirated each other's popular works: in fact, as Peter Drahos has pointed out, most pirates took the view

they were performing a public service in the free dissemination of knowledge. The 1883 Congress of the International Literary Association in Berne explicitly set out to follow the example of the Paris Convention by creating a multilateral copyright agreement. In 1886, the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works finalised matters.

This period of treaty-making in intellectual property necessitated an internationalised administrative structure. The United International Bureau for the Protection of Intellectual Property (BIRPI) was founded in 1899, and superseded by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in 1967. Quite naturally WIPO made its business the harmonisation of the international laws it presided over.

This creation of an international regime of information law was a keystone of today's market in communication and information commodities. By making information scarce on the grounds of protecting innovation and creativity, harmonised IP law assigned a commercial value to knowledge. Information and communication have since become 'producer goods', qualitatively determining the global organisation of life and work. In many fields crucial to developed nations — for example semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, or media — control over processes, ideas, and information has become critical to industrial expansion. The importance of immaterial property interests has become obvious to business and government alike. These interests marshal what takes place in the West's industrial backyard, or in its offshore factories, providing an informatic backbone to its movable, dispensable physical inventories. Thus intangibles, protected as IP, have come to dominate the business agenda.

Naturally, developed nations want to protect the advances in processes, ideas, and information control that history has granted them. Waves of bilateral agreements, followed by occasional multilateral standard-setting like Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), have been enacted to this end. The US attempt to 'forum shift' IP matters from WIPO into the WTO was a direct response to moves on the part of developing countries to block expansions to intellectual property treaties, such as universal pharmaceutical patents, there. There is still a North-South divide in the politics of intellectual property. Each raft of bilateral or multilateral treaties has advanced intellectual property standards based on maintaining the current economic order. This, as Peter Drahos and John Braithwaite have pointed out in *Mute* issue 27, is what underlies the individualist ideology of intellectual property: 'the institutional project of information

feudalism: acquiring and maintaining global power based on the ownership of knowledge assets.'

Given that WIPO has continued to aggressively promote the interests of intellectual property owners through a variety of fora, it is little surprise that a movement to change the organisation has grown up in the last years. Developing countries have baulked at WIPO's tactical function, pointing out the undue priority it grants to strong protection at the behest of its richer members, and the lack of attention it pays to developing economies and the

At least on paper, WIPO is no longer an organisation that blindly supports more IP no matter what

public interest. This so-called 'development agenda' has become a significant force at WIPO, supported by growing civil society participation in some of the WIPO committees. In August 2004, a proposal surfaced by Argentina and Brazil to change the WIPO charter, adopting a new programme emphasising developing countries' concerns with access to knowledge and technology. The proposal called for a moratorium on WIPO negotiations aimed at raising intellectual property standards until these development needs were properly considered.

The Civil Society Coalition (CSC) represents 26 NGOs from 12 countries, North and South, concerned with access to medicine and knowledge, and better mechanisms to support creative activity. In summer 2003 the coalition requested that WIPO hold a major meeting on open collaborative efforts to create public goods and pointed to areas of the modern economy, such as Free Software development, in which significant innovation was occurring without traditional intellectual property protection. Evoking arguments that had not had a public outing since the mid-19th century, they also suggested that poorly designed intellectual property protections could be counter-productive in terms of innovation and creativity.

This excitement over innovations in information, medical and other technologies as suggestive of new models for regulating ideas was palpable at The Future of WIPO conference in Geneva this October. Organised by CSC and the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue, speakers included Yochai Benkler of The Yale Law School. Benkler pointed out that the production of

the civil society contingent is in danger of eliding the more complex and fugitive problems involved in the knowledge/economy nexus – for example, the exploitation of informal know-how in casualised labour

the GNU-Linux operating system could not have been achieved using traditional IP and organisational models; indeed, the continuing creation of the operating system relies on an ingenious inversion of copyright law and open structure of composition. The open publication of the human genome discussed by Tim Hubbard, and hundreds of other innovative collaborative efforts to create public goods including the Wikipedia, seemed here to represent strong new models for social cooperation and, for some, economic development.

How, and if, these new forms of production and social life will impact on the more entrenched relations of material goods and exchange remains unclear, although activists like CPTech's James Love have made it very clear that IP activism can save lives. But the fact that such legal-organisational forms can work, and work well, makes the deliberate manipulation of knowledge and technology to undermine development and social cohesion absolutely intolerable. Likewise, the increase in knowledge about treating diseases, and the ability to disseminate that knowledge widely, has made obvious the turpitude of a legal-technical apparatus which, designed explicitly to maintain artificial scarcity, ensures that millions are denied access to essential medicines they need.

Thus, more and more groups are agreeing from different positions in the political spectrum that concentrated ownership and control of knowledge, technology, biological resources and culture is to be resisted by any means possible. 'We're against "IP on steroids",' says James Boyle of Duke Law School, a proponent of the information commons who presented his own manifesto on WIPO's future at the conference. 'We need a combination of a mass movement and a change in elite thinking about IP – each of which comes to understand the value of the public domain.' Like Benkler, Boyle thinks peer production networks can actually out-compete proprietary solutions in certain cases – the trick, he says 'is finding out where.'

What marked The Future of WIPO out from the slew of events treating issues around the commons, peer production and intellectual property was the sense of mission, and history. A group of actors who have committed the last few years to working around IP used the conference to work through the so-called Geneva Declaration on the Future of WIPO. IP, it argues, should support, not retard or restrict, innovation and creativity, including follow-on and collaborative work; it should be sensitive to concerns over access and consistent with social and ethical concerns over privacy, freedom and fairness. 'We want an IP system that serves society, not the other way around,' says James Love, whose group CPTech has been central in drafting the document. The declaration became critical in backing the development agenda at WIPO, charting a new course for an organisation that has, until now, continued a 200-year tradition of protecting the interests of dominant economies.

Reports of intense pressure from the highest levels of WIPO for developing countries to back off from the development agenda only indicated to conspirators in the CSC the support which this was gathering. But when the general session of the WIPO capitulated, putting development and the promotion of creativity front-and-centre in its objectives, many were shocked. At least on paper, WIPO was no longer an organisation that blindly supported more IP no matter what.

'This is a huge shift,' explains Love. 'Not only does it question directly the idea that the South should harmonise to the standards found in the North, but it more fundamentally redirects WIPO to look at innovation and creativity, rather than IP *per se*. It also brings the free software and public goods approaches into the debate, as well as abuses of rights, control of anti-competitive practices, and necessary exceptions to rights in order to promote access.'

It may seem that what forced capitulation to the development agenda at WIPO was arguments which had become too powerful for a UN organisation to publically ignore. In a sense that is true. But what is absolutely critical to bear in mind as the struggle around IP goes on, is that it is social-technological conditions themselves which contextualise and give force to these arguments, demanding that both sides come to the table and face each other. Where the rent being extracted through the global proprietary knowledge regime is no longer secure, that is not because of any arguments made against it on a moral basis. It is the social impact of information technology and post-fordist relations of production that compel both WIPO, civil society, and the grassroots to respond.

More specifically, it remains important to remember that the pressure on the institution of copyright is issuing not from legal activism, but from the actions of people working in networked concert – for example in mass sharing and piracy, or peer production communities operating outside the traditional market economy. In concentrating on the most visibly egregious aspects of the current regime (access to medicines, traditional knowledge and endogenous educational development, for example,) the civil society contingent is in danger of eliding the more complex and fugitive problems involved in the knowledge/economy nexus – for example, the control over informal know-how exploited in the tendency towards casualisation of labour. It may be precisely in these relatively uncharted areas that we can grow a movement for the liberation of ideas and culture. Potent disruptive forces have been released across the networks that are shaking the institution of IP to its core. As well as leveraging this potential at the international bargaining table, these forces must be fostered in their own right. The real change in the air at The Future Of WIPO, after all, was one blown on the wind of the networks. 🏃

J.J. King <jamie@jamie.com> is currently accepting rejections for his latest novel

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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

INSIDE OUT

Helen Chadwick's interest in the flux of being and the blurring of multiple boundaries made her far more than a precursor to the yBas. Stella Santacatterina reviews her recent retrospective at the Barbican

She often appeared as an actor, as a victim, her body a mask, unfolding and changing in order to interact with other elements chosen for their beauty or sensuality

Helen Chadwick sadly died very suddenly in 1996 at the young age of 43 and at the moment an artist usually enters their mature phase. The Barbican's retrospective therefore is a homage to the work she achieved in her short lifetime, as well as a testament to the extent of her influence on the following generation of artists. The retrospective brings together some 70 of her most significant works, unfolding like a film of her artistic life as one moves from room to room, and in which the feminine aspect of her creativity emerges through an oscillation between a conceptual tightness and a softer, more erotic sensibility.

Her work investigated with didactic rigour the ambiguous relationship between nature and culture, between creativity and the quotidian, between a domestic and a universal dimension, between the sacred and the profane. Her themes are not easy ones to approach; feminine identity and its ancestral link with ritual and the preservation of the species can too easily risk falling into the commonplace. Chadwick, however, approached them with an apparent lightness of touch and a playful provocation. From this attitude emerged her 'feminine thought' which, in contradistinction to the masculine, is always a contextual thought because it extends itself in every direction and takes into account multiple, cultural and eclectic social situations. This all-embracing tendency was also reflected in her experimentation across a wide range of material and processual possibilities, from the inorganic to the organic, from sculpture and photography to multimedia installations.

Early work of the first half of the '80s, such as *Ego Geometria Sum*, 1982-83, involved an interrogation of feminine identity and the use of the female body in art history. However, rather than subscribe to Anglo-American feminism's prohibition on images of the female body as overdetermined by masculinist objectifying discourse, Chadwick provocatively made performative use of her own body as a tool, disturbed and manipulated, to open a dynamic dialogue with the space. In this sense she often appeared as an actor, as a victim, her body a mask, unfolding and changing in order to interact with other elements chosen for their beauty or sensuality. In these respects her work can be more properly linked historically with the strategies of artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Gina Pane, Yoko Ono and the opening of a direct corridor between art and the everyday advocated by Fluxus, Yves Klein, Manzoni and the early Arte Povera of the 1960s. In the installation *Oval Court*, 1984-86, photocopies of her body in

sensuous poses drawn from sources such as Boucher's *Mademoiselle O'Murphy*, Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* and the Leda and Swan motif, are intertwined with ribbons and animals, and scattered with sculptural golden spheres in a neo-Baroque excess of visual and tactile pleasure. Chadwick's allegorising strategies removed any possibility of reading her work according to a physiological or psychological representation; rather, the work suggested a narrative of which we are not consciously aware and whose conclusion brings our thoughts to another reality. As Norman Brown said, 'Being doesn't belong to its owner. He and his body are simply the hook upon which, for a time, a collective product is suspended.'

Ego Geometria Sum and *The Juggler's Table*, 1984, introduced elements evocative for the artist of her own past – everyday images of a front door, a child's bed, a pram, a piano, a font, a tent, her own naked image pasted onto plywood geometric forms – thereby restaging the ideal in a personalised dimension, or perhaps trapping the subjective in the image of the ideal. Chadwick referred to the installation *Ego Geometria Sum* as a 'personal museum': relics or memorabilia of a fragmentary archive tracing the entropic and metamorphic trajectory of her own early life. In Kleinian theory, the drive to make art is nothing less than the attempt to recreate the lost and shattered object of desire. A related linking of eroticism, death and mourning permeates much of her work, but above all in *Piss Flowers*, 1991-92 – bloom-like casts of pissing in the snow by the artist and her male partner, *Wreath to Pleasure*, 1992-93, a series of medallions of Cibachrome photographs of dried flowers, and *Cacao*, 1994 a continuously bubbling chocolate fountain. All these works blur the boundary between male and female genitalia, and hence the culturally fixed notions of gender; but it is their perpetual circular motion that alludes to the endless flux of desire that never touches the thing itself. This movement of the object of desire was most directly addressed in Mishima's influential film *In The Realm of The Senses*, in which the woman expresses the impossibility of reaching fulfilment by severing her lover's penis.

Towards the end of her life Chadwick's work became increasingly concerned with more social expressions of the ambiguities of death, mourning and pleasure, as they were reconfigured through the diseased and medicalised body following the discovery of invasive viruses like AIDS. The series of photographs entitled *Viral Landscapes*, 1988-89, combines the traditions of the Romantic coastal landscape with images of

Right ▷ **Helen Chadwick, *The Oval Court*, Collaged photocopies, Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum, London, © Helen Chadwick Estate, Photograph by Edward Woodman, 1984-6**

Following page ▷ **Helen Chadwick, *Piss Flowers*, Bronze, cellulose lacquer, © Helen Chadwick Estate, Photograph by Anti Kuivalainen, 1991-2**

her own stained human cells taken from the cervix, the mouth and the ear. They scatter across and contaminate the surface of the landscapes uncovering the abject body that is the repressed face of the sublime. In some respects Chadwick's use of bodily excretions and internal body parts recalled her earlier student work: a handmade book with satin and human hair in the form of a vagina. In the Cibachrome light-boxes *Eroticism*, 1990, a human brain resting on luxurious fabric, *Self Portrait*, 1991, a brain cradled by hands, and *Loop My Loop*, 1991, a knot of intestines and silky golden hair, there is an exvagination of the interior of the body to the exterior, alluding to the fragile boundaries of body and self, and capturing the perishable and abject nature of soft tissue in the frame of art as if it could effect some alchemical transformation to eternity.

Chadwick's themes, imagery and overall approach to the materiality of art prefigure what was to emerge as the dominant tendency in British art during the 1990s. Indeed, in the late 1980s Chadwick was an influential lecturer at both Goldsmiths College and the Royal College of Art when the yBa generation were still students, as well as having a high profile in the London art world – she was the first woman artist to be nominated for the Turner Prize in 1987. In retrospect, it is astonishing how far her ideas were subsequently marketed and exploited in the tabloid press by younger artists (and their supporters) as their own provocative breakthrough in art. And yet, from Damien Hirst, Sam Taylor-Wood, Tracey Emin to Marc Quinn, and so forth, we see a disturbing spectacularisation of what for Chadwick was a passionate and personal enquiry into the conditions of contemporary existence. Unlike this cadre of artists, Chadwick was not concerned with sensationalism or the infantile transgressive mode, but with a search for the moments of intersection between art and life. ⫯

Helen Chadwick: A Retrospective, Barbican Art Gallery, London, 29 Apr – 1 Aug 2004, and touring

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NETWORK CULTURE

Steve Wright reviews *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* by Tiziana Terranova

Tiziana Terranova is a name familiar to readers of *Mute*. **Issue 28 carried a lively and** informative discussion between Terranova and Marc Bousquet, addressing the contemporary university as both node of accumulation and site of social conflict.[1] Of her other writings to date, pride of place goes to an influential essay on the peculiarities of that labour which capital has sought to subsume to its digital economy.[2]

Now we have *Network Culture*, an important work that deserves to be read and discussed widely. The book is rich in its scope: in particular, in the fruitful confrontations and collisions it sets up between internet culture and contemporary movements against global capital. At the same time, it is not always an easy read, given the complexity of some of the issues addressed and arguments advanced, and the familiarity presumed with a wide range of debates. Fortunately Terranova writes well and takes her readers seriously, so that the insights provided repay persistence with some of the book's more difficult passages.

Network Culture offers a series of distinctive and original arguments, while finding inspiration in a range of different critical perspectives. In a fundamental way, however, *Network Culture* is very much an engagement with many of the key themes dear to the post-operaista (post-workerist) theories that emerged from the wreckage of the Italian autonomist movement of the 1970s. These theories have become familiar to English-language readers, above all through the writings of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. Given the fascination with such ideas today in activist milieux, *Network Culture* is likely to find readers in circles well beyond the academy.

The first chapter explores a number of implications thrown up by Claude Shannon's 'classic' conceptualisation of information in terms of the signal-noise relationship within a conduit linking sender and receiver. At this theory's heart is a reading of the transmission of information as 'the communication and exclusion of probable alternatives' (p.20). What is so enjoyable about Terranova's account here are the implications for political work that she draws out from her critical reading of this conduit metaphor of information. As *Network Culture* illustrates, the notion of communication that stems from this metaphor attempts to narrow the field to 'alternatives formulated on the basis of known probabilities within the constraints set up by the interplay of

code and channel or medium' (p.25). If this is so, then what Terranova calls 'a cultural politics of information' must entail not merely a battle over the meaning of what currently informs us within late capitalism:

It involves the opening up of the virtuality of the world by positing not simply different, but radically other codes and channels for expressing and giving expression to an undetermined potential for change. (p.26)

The second chapter of *Network Culture* explores a number of online practices such as packet switching, and asks whether these can help us resolve some of the more vexed problems within contemporary forms of political engagement. For example, does the internet's open architecture – which in the face of difference, forgoes uniformity in favour of communication protocols – have something to tell us about challenges in terms of 'extensibility' currently facing movements against global capital and war? Here Terranova also reminds us how much online practices themselves have changed over the past decade since the takeoff of the World Wide Web, particularly in terms of community formation. The central chapter of the book is a slightly reworked version of Terranova's essay on 'Free Labour'. Beginning with a tilt at Richard Barbrook's arguments concerning online anarcho-communism, the chapter grapples with the net-related unpaid labour performed outside the wage relation. Terranova is insistent that this labour, in all its pleasurableness for those concerned, is 'a desire of labour immanent to late capitalism' (p.94), and that claims about the anti-capitalist potentialities of movements such as that of open source must be offset by a healthy dose of scepticism. The fourth chapter follows on from this, discussing different aspects of that 'soft control' which attempts to turn labour's potentialities towards capital's continued reproduction. *Network Culture* then closes with a brief but enticing exploration of some of the key features that mark out 'the virtual movements of this early twenty-first century' (p.156), with the question of communication once again to the fore.

As should be obvious, *Network Culture* is part of a broader debate, and the book's bibliography provides some helpful pathways into that wider discussion. Given the book's central themes, it would be useful to examine its arguments

> **Claims about the anti-capitalist potentialities of movements such as that of open source must be offset by a healthy dose of scepticism**

alongside those of Ron Day, who has likewise engaged both with post-operaista theory, and information theory 'classics' such as Shannon, Weaver and Wiener.**3** More provocatively, it would also be useful to read *Network Culture* alongside Doug Henwood's latest offering on the 'new economy', and Ursula Huws thoughts on a growing 'cybertariat', both of which seek to meet capital's claims about its new 'weightless economy' head on.**4**

As with any text worth reading, there is much to argue with in this book. Those not enamoured of the 'immaterial labour' thesis advanced by the post-operaisti will be perplexed by some of *Network Culture*'s arguments, not least the assertion that

the work of writing/reading/managing and participating in mailing lists/websites/chat lines … falls outside the concept of 'abstract labour' (p.84).

In a similar vein, Terranova offers the following tantalising statement about another key post-operaista concept:

Unlike class, however, a multitude is not rooted in a solid class formation or a subjectifying function (although it is also a matter of class composition) (p.130).

She elaborates a little on this: the category multitude is of necessity 'vague' in that it seeks to denote something that while 'not deny[ing] the existence of the stratification of identity and class', nonetheless threatens to reach beyond them (p.130). Is this a case of wanting to have your cake and eat it too? How exactly might class composition analysis prove useful here? This question is not answered directly in *Network Culture*, even if a range of suggestive beginnings are provided in the second half of the book.

In the concluding paragraph of her original 2000 essay on 'Free Labour', Terranova argued as follows:

As the spectacular failure of the Italian autonomy reveals, the purpose of critical theory is not to elaborate strategies which then can be used to direct social change. On the contrary, as the tradition of cultural studies has less explicitly argued, it is about

working on what already exists, on the lines established by a cultural and material activity which is already happening.**5**

Perhaps I also want to have my cake and eat it too, but why shouldn't we aspire after both these goals? Certainly we don't need strategy in the sense of some predefined pathway to salvation laid down from on high by specialists, whether these claim to be 'theorists' and/or 'leaders'. But couldn't strategy encompass a collective attempt to develop some sense of the directions in which we'd like to head, together or apart? Or at the bare minimum, some sense of what it is we seek in various ways to move away from? If so, then *Network Culture* can be seen as a stimulating contribution to the ongoing SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of contemporary power relations in and around online networks. We should all look forward to Terranova's future offerings to the development of that 'inventive and emotive political intelligence' (p.157) which is so sorely needed today. ⨍

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1. T. Terranova & M. Bousquet, 'Recomposing the University', *Mute* issue 28, Summer-Autumn, 2004

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3. R. Day, *The Modern Invention of Information: discourse, history and power,* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001

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WASTE PRODUCT

With the release of 'the first major documentary' about Gustav Metzger directed by Ken McMullen, Hari Kunzru looks at the artist's life and work

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Sometimes at East End art openings, the tiny bearded figure of Gustav Metzger is to be seen, making his way through the crowd. Metzger is something of a ghost at the Shoreditch feast, an artist who has worked in East London since the 1940s, but has always vigorously opposed much of what the area has come, post-Britart, to stand for. As early as 1977 he was calling for 'years without art', in protest at the hyper-acceleration of the art market. During the '50s he led protests against the gentrification of the old fishing quarter of Kings Lynn, where he had a studio. In a week which has given us Sam Taylor-Wood posing in her knickers for the *Evening Standard* and Tracey Emin launching a range of 'limited edition luggage' it is worth noting that he usually refuses to be interviewed facing a camera. 'I, ' he says drily, his back turned to a TV crew making a documentary about Michael Landy, 'am against the artist as celebrity.'

Metzger has reversed his stance for the makers of *Pioneers in Art and Science: Metzger*, which bills itself as 'the first major documentary' about his life and work. It is possible that the artist's face-to-face cooperation was granted on condition that the film should consist solely of edited extracts from two or three recent conversations, without archive material, comment, or indeed context of any kind, but whether this format was decided on by the artist, the director or a limited Arts Council budget, the result is no more or less than a video interview, mildly dressed-up with DVD caption titles, not a 'major documentary', let alone (pace the back of the box) a piece 'designed to fully utilise the potential of the DVD format'. It's okay, but those seeking an overview of Metzger's practice are probably better served by the catalogue for his 1998 retrospective at Oxford MOMA [ISBN 1 901 352 04 8].

Metzger is probably best known as the organiser of DIAS, the 1966 Destruction in Art Symposium, which involved artists such as John Latham, Yoko Ono and Barry Flannagan and introduced a querulous London to the work of Viennese Actionists Hermann Nitsch and Otto Mühl. This meeting emerged from his own theory and practice of 'auto-destructive art', art which enacts or in some other way contains its own annihilation. In actions during the late '50s and early '60s he donned protective clothing and sprayed acid onto nylon sheets, which dissolved over a period of several minutes. Seen in a 1961 film, the busy gestures of this small intense man, dressed as if for chemical or nuclear attack, seem

Expressionism at a moment when American government funds were propelling it through the public art spaces of Europe as part of the cultural cold war. Metzger, a founder member of the Committee of 100 and a Jew who as a child watched the Nuremberg rallies pass under his window, was taking on the system which produced both art-capitalist accumulation and the arms race.

Less discussed is his later espousal of 'auto-creative art', which led to work with liquid crystals and an uncharacteristic bout of modishness in the form of lightshows for events at the Roundhouse involving The Who, Cream and The Move. This fascination with the beauty of crystal growth suggests both a general concern with art as process (a suggestion enforced by his early interest in kinetic artists such as Tinguely) and a belated Romanticism. In his 1960 Auto-Destructive Art manifesto, Metzger tersely wrote 'not interested in ruins (the picturesque)' and, while it would be misleading to read auto-destruction through the Romantic cult of the fragment, he seems more integrated than might initially be suspected into the great pan-European post-war cultural project – the conversation in the ruins, the sifting of the ashes. Neither of Metzger's parents survived the Holocaust. During the '90s he exhibited a series of 'historic photographs', iconic images partly or entirely obscured by screens. Onto a picture of Hitler taking the salute of massed Hitler-youth he welded a solid steel plate.

In the '60s Metzger's art tended to be seen as a straightforward manifestation of what the poet Jeff Nuttall termed 'bomb culture', the urgent search for alternative ways of living in the shadow of nuclear cataclysm. Since the dissolution of the binary terror of the Cold War into a distributed network, a longer historical lifespan becomes evident. Technological domination, the acceleration of capital – the intensification of these processes gives continuing relevance to Metzger's sardonic proposal that auto-destructive practice is an appropriate 'public art for industrial societies.' His lifelong (but incomplete) retreat from the art economy is perhaps just an auto-destructive piece of greater than average duration. For Metzger destruction appears to have the dual meaning of 'annihilation' and 'waste'. This art which cannot be recuperated is also a figure for the economy of consumer excess. Expenditure without hope of recompense is both a source of honour and an activity which gives off noxious emissions, black smoke from crematorium chimneys. ⚘

Hari Kunzru's <hari@harikunzru.com> latest novel is *Transmission*

SEX CELLS

Andrew Goffey reviews *Abstract Sex: Philosophy, Biotechnology and the Mutations of Desire* by Luciana Parisi

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Sex, Roland Barthes once remarked, is everywhere but in sex. A computer program, an advertising pitch, a car, a recipe: all are candidates for the erotics of libidinal investment. Uprooted from its referent and transformed into a mobile, infinitely displaceable signifier, sex becomes an indispensible component in the games of abstract equivalence of contemporary capitalism. Whether its destiny is to become an element in the reactionary investments – the reterritorialisation of drives – essential to the

> **Parisi wants to discard all of the dualisms – mind and body, nature and culture, form and matter – we rely on when we talk about sex**

shoring up of an economic system, however, requires an imaginative rethink of the way that we conceptualise sex.

Luciana Parisi's recent *Abstract Sex: Philosophy, Bio-Technology and The Mutations of Desire* wants to have done with the attempt to understand sex and its politics through culture and its vicissitudes. It also wants to have done with attempts to understand gender through nature and its avatars. In fact, in keeping with the very Deleuzean inspiration of her book, Parisi's 'micro-feminist' take on sex wants to discard all of the dualisms – about mind and body, nature and culture, form and matter – we rely on when we talk about sex. Her vision, and it is a vision, is literally a molecular one in which sex is instantiated in any number of biologically, culturally and technologically defined assemblages.

Like a number of other contemporary researchers, Parisi is tired of the debate about nature and culture and of the way that it remains, implicitly, in the background of 'radical' PoMo theories of gender as performance. Although *Abstract Sex* wants to cut across the biological-technological divide, it is to biology that Parisi turns for her basic conceptual vocabulary. However, the biology she likes is not the crude genetic determinism favoured, for example, by recent evolutionary psychology in its attempts to explain sex and gender, but rather the alternative conceptual models provided by researchers such as Lynn Margulis. Margulis and her co-workers

have a lot to say about the possibility of models of evolution which provide an alternative to the step-wise refinements of (neo)Darwinian descent with modification. The concept of symbiosis provides strong evidence for the horizontal transfer – Margulis calls it 'genetic trading' – of genetic information as an alternative mode of transmission. Concurring with recent critical accounts of molecular biology, symbiosis enables a critique of the metaphysical privileging of unity and linearity over multiplicity in favour of 'a-parallel' or 'non-linear' evolution.

For Parisi, sex is abstract because it is everywhere: it is 'abstracted'. It ceases to designate the sexed reproduction which serves as a model for much biological research (as well as forming the 'givens' sitting in the background of the cultural approach to gender) and spreads disease-like from bacteria through human culture and into the macro-parasitic machinery of capitalism. Sexed reproduction – familiar to humans and some other life forms – becomes a historically relative mode, not the conceptual centre from which to understand other forms of sex relation: bacterial sex and cloning designate other equally valid types entailing their own organisation and following their own rules.

Abstract Sex is remarkably lacking in the censorial tone familiar in many critical accounts of sex and sexual politics. The term itself 'Abstract Sex' is a bit of a provocation: becoming abstract is not something to be disparaged. It simply is, albeit in an infinitely mobile and mutable format, actualising into: microbial sex, bacterial sex, meiotic sex, aquatic sex, human sex, turbo sex, cybernetic sex... Sex sex sex. This absence of critique is not a simple ommission but the consequence of the happy nihilism of the theoretical stance that *Abstract Sex* adopts. The attack it launches on the dualistic quality of our thinking about sex develops the implications of the Nietzschean critique of transcendent values proposed by Gilles Deleuze. In this world, concepts cease to be representations of things and become more like colours: colours as such are not representations of the world – they either suit you or they don't. Hence *Abstract Sex* develops a sort of conceptual poetics in various shades of black: terms seem just to crop up in the course of a chapter, naming something into existence without following the academic niceties of rational justification. The procedure is disarmingly simple but complex, bewildering even, in its effects: *Abstract Sex* doesn't want to be pinned down by the

(representational) norms of theoretical discourse. As a consequence, it is difficult to say, in the detail, what *Abstract Sex* is about: 'aboutness' is tied in too closely to the problem of representation to provide a useful measure of the value of a piece of writing – and incidentally, once discarded, makes the idea of the 'review' somewhat redundant.

In a conceptual universe which has abandoned representation and its principles perhaps the only half sensible way of evaluating a book is to see what new questions it forces you to ask. *Abstract*

For Parisi, sex is abstract because it is everywhere: it is 'abstracted'

Sex does a good job of developing a productive critique of the anthropomorphic assumptions of much theorising about sex and gender and its technique of magnifying the place of sex and reproduction onto every stratum of nature-culture is a useful reminder of the relatively limited place of human sex across life forms. At one point in her book Parisi acknowledges that what she is doing might appear simply to be another form of anthropomorphisation 'the extension of a cultural conception of femininity onto the unknown – the interpretation of random matter'. Whether 'sex' with all the historical associations which weigh it down is a word adequate for a creative rethink of the propagation of life forms and for the functions of the human mode of sexed reproduction within the cosmos is clearly a speculative issue. Parisi's bet is ultimately that a passage via philosophy is necessary in order for this to become a political problem.

Luciana Parisi, *Abstract Sex: Philosophy, Biotechnology and the Mutations of Desire*, London: Continuum Books, 2003 £18.99 ISBN 0826469892

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TERMINAL PLATITUDES

Terminal Frontiers at Street Level Photoworks was a much overdue show addressing migration, globalisation and technology. Daniel Jewesbury reports on a missed opportunity

[delete where appropriate]

☐ LOCAL?
☐ STRANGER?

Terminal Frontiers is, to all appearances, a quite disparate group exhibition, comprising digital installations and single-screen video works, as well as documentation of educational workshops and an anti-deportation campaign. The show is the work of Virtual Migrants, a collective set up by artists Kooj Chuhan and Aidan Jolly to examine themes of migration, globalisation and identity through digital media. Many of its elements are produced in collaboration with other artists and with the participants of various outreach projects; separately billed, in an 'also starring' role, is Keith Piper, who shows a specially produced interactive digital artwork.

In the 1980s and '90s, influenced by lively debates around postcolonial studies, a generation of British and Irish artists made race and difference their central themes. The last few years have seen these concerns recontextualised within a changed political landscape; increasing global inequality and anxiety about national borders have become the ubiquities of the day, and generalised fears of the Other have again been articulated for political advantage. Completing this tableau, the new technologies, and their attendant ideologies, have enabled the reconfiguration of markets at an international scale; they've also become the predominant means by which we in the West negotiate our relationship with the

rest of the world, and construct our own subjectivity. Terminal Frontiers, which promises to draw these multifarious strands together, is a timely proposition.

Unfortunately in this instance the artists don't seem to be up to the challenge. Having set the bar fairly high to begin with ('deconstructing and reconstructing debates about nationality, history and identity'), they apparently fail to appreciate the complexity of their task. What they have produced lacks tension and incisiveness, offers few insights beyond the commonplace, and is bereft of formal dexterity. In Kooj Chuhan's portentous installation *What If I'm Not Real*, an overabundance of stuff – video projections, multiple soundtracks, sculptural elements – is mistaken for genuine narrative intricacy, in a piece that is, ironically, thoroughly simplistic in its treatment of themes of migration and unbelonging. Three characters, dressed in white gowns and masks reminiscent of Greek drama, and floating on rafts, are seen on separate projection screens. They represent an immigration official, a migrant parent and a lost child, their stories overlapping between the three screens, so that as the bureaucrat shakes spots of red ink from his fountain pen onto a piece of Home Office headed paper, spots of 'blood' suddenly appear on the parent's gown. On

Most of the works in Terminal Frontiers seem to forsake internal complexity, or formal self-reflexiveness, for pretentious overstatement and gross simplification

the soundtrack, different voices compete: 'You should have claimed asylum on entry. You have no right to exist... I do exist, I am here, I am here, I will exist. I had a home, but it became no longer my home...' Chuhan has used the most affected symbolism to aestheticise forced exile, treating the experience through these three 'types'; but this is neither Jarmanesque visual poetry nor Brechtian dialectic, and the resulting piece is almost entirely one dimensional. As it draws to what is described as its 'terror-filled conclusion', the parent pours blood from her gown into a bottle, which she then stuffs with a rag and sets alight. So the spurned refugee becomes the nascent terrorist? This amateurish, clumsy attempt to conflate the misery of deportation and global homelessness with an observation that oppression breeds resentment ends up implying something quite different, as if all those *Daily Mail* headlines were right after all: it's a good job we don't let them in, they're all mad jihadists anyway.

Elsewhere this inability to communicate beyond platitudes is seen in Aidan Jolly's video piece *Dust Rising*, in which a series of interview soundbites (described as 'political analysis') commenting on the political exploitation of September 11th are interspersed, almost inevitably, with footage of G W Bush himself pronouncing on the War on Terror. As a political statement, the

piece is a crude reflection of the broad liberal consensus; as an aesthetic entity, it seems totally random. The interviews are rendered in blue monochrome, and a naff 'camcorder viewfinder' effect overlaid, as if, rifling through the menus in Final Cut Pro, it just seemed a good idea at the time.

When one's dealing with such immensely complex areas, and moreover, attempting to produce something that has both political and aesthetic integrity, one's strategies of representation must be rigorous and credible. Most of the works in Terminal Frontiers seem to forsake internal complexity, or formal self-reflexiveness, for pretentious overstatement and gross simplification. Keith Piper's multimedia installation *Delete Where Appropriate: Local/Stranger* is a case in point. The viewer-user is guided through an interface which mimics an immigration questionnaire, while to the side of the screen one sees oneself relayed via a webcam. The bottom of the screen is occupied by a busy Flash animation of various passport photographs. Navigating through the questionnaire, one is prompted to describe oneself as a 'local' or a 'stranger', based on one's geographical origins and the origins of one's parents. The results are then processed and a bogus 'response' appears on screen, in my case informing me that I had been classified as an economic migrant and would be removed

forthwith. The piece is utterly didactic; in itself, this is not necessarily a bad thing, but the interface itself is so clunky, so poorly designed and rendered, that the delivery of the punchline comes only after frustration and boredom have already set in.

Terminal Frontiers is a classic mismatch of good intentions and terribly inadequate products. It attempts no investigation of the complexity of difference; it says 'we're here because you were there', but goes no further, as if this were a revelation on its own, as if the mere act of stating this made everything else comprehensible. Essentialism, nationhood and identity, globalisation itself, simply aren't examined. Moreover the works fail to unify their form with their subject matter; as a result, even their aesthetic pretensions finally come apart.

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THE DISHONOUR OF POETS

In the latest edition of *The Yale Anthology of French Poetry* **the academic canon is extended once again.** Howard Slater **explores the incompatibility between poetry and the academy**

Anthologies are blighted by a need to encapsulate, instruct and introduce. This nationalised tome is no exception. If it's 'a monumental work that will serve as a point of reference for contemporary French Studies for years to come' then we've got to breathe a sigh of relief that we've got day jobs and deplore scholarship. This is the problem of anthologies: there's not enough of what grabs you (the birthing drama of alienated consciousness), too much of what's supposed to impress you (soon-

> **With this anthology the singularity of passion and attitude that can't be taught seems to have been replaced by an analgesics of politeness that's on the syllabus**

to-be-politicians and tenured academics) and omissions that you have to concede as not being within the parameters of the selection criteria (concrete, sound and code poetry). So, when the parameters are trumpeted as having been extended – the inclusion of poets from a French speaking diaspora, the growing presence of women writers, the inclusion of writers from other 'genres' and the inclusion of prose-poems – then you have to wonder, this late in the day, not only just how culturally conventional the academic poetry environment still is, but also how rooted this word 'poetry' is to a measurable textual practice.

Of course this has always been sensed and it's a primary reason why many people would condemn such a taught poetry and why others would attempt to write it on their own terms and publish it amongst themselves. This is what those poets that form the spine of the middle third of this anthology made happen. However, with the exception of Tristan Tzara, the selections here from the Surrealist Group (Breton, Desnos, Peret et al) are drawn from that aspect of their work that many consider the most tiresome – the lyrical love poem that resounds, ad infinitum, with the name of the muse. It is a shame that the selection parameters, rooted as they always are in the individual poet – the sensate subject of a taken-

for-granted centrism – do not, here, extend to collaborative works such as Breton & Soupault's automatically anarchic *Magnetic Fields*. Here it's left to fringe Surrealists to provide the futurity of the 'hidden third': the telescopic emotional power of Antonin Artaud, Georges Bataille, Michel Leiris and Bernard Noël meets the now almost not so unknown Dora Marr, Joyce Mansour and Malcolm de Chazal.

This thematic focus on Surrealism in the anthology extends to the titling of one of the chronologically ordered sections; so that even when surrealism is becoming eclipsed, by, say, OULIPO, in the period 1946-66, we still have the header-parameter 'The Death Of André Breton' to contend with. Perhaps the reason for this is that Surrealism, being a cultural revolutionary movement, is flagged up for the cachet of its attack on worshipped mores, its bringing to poetry a nonconformity, an irrational reflux that attempted to make language into a logic of sensuousness. It is this aspect of Surrealism that the Situationists took on as a 'poetry of acts', an expanded field of poetry, a development of poetry away from the written page, away from the word and away from the subject as the locus of creativity. It could be said that this urge to be immersed in language, to be somehow behind the words in a temporary becoming and disarticulation of their meanings, to be outstripped yet somehow in control, is a tendency of poetry in general that was first whiffed in Lautréamont and Rimbaud and manifestoed by Surrealism as psychic automatism. It is as present in the work of Blaise Cendrars and Pierre Reverdy (retrospectively associated with cubism) as that of Ghérasim Luca, Annie Le Brun and Jacques Roubaud. With the former two there is that liberating use of the non-sequitur as it segues into a montage of intuitive links and haphazard socialisation that is seen later in the theoretical writings of Bataille, Lyotard, Irigaray and Cixous.

To some extent the expectation of sparks in this anthology dips-off in the latter stages as professional appearances seem to outweigh the minoritarian and discrete voices of small press poets. The solipsism of prize winners, the showy fare of formal invention and pastoral throwback just serves, here, to remake literature as an auto-reproductive cultural form, a loop without grain. So, the project of a liberation through literature becomes more muted. That the Lettrism of Isidore Isou and Gil Wolman is not included, that the sonorous and iconoclastic drive of Henri Chopin

and Bernard Hiedsieck is cut out and curtailed by a hypostatised 'Surrealism' makes you nostalgic for the probably unrepresentative pages just passed. Maybe there's something to be said, then, for Mary Ann Caws's chronological approach in that you get a sense of undulation and folding, retroaction and overreaching. However with this anthology the singularity of passion and attitude that can't be taught seems to have been replaced by an analgesics of politeness that's on the syllabus. That said, if poetry is an articulation of 'intensive durations', then the poetry of controlled aggression is here represented by such as Abdellatif Laâbi, Léon-Gontran Damas and Danielle Collobert. Painful but autotraumatising; experience troubledly formalised.

Not knowing the full range of what's presently on offer it's hard to draw many conclusions from this anthology, but there's some pointers to be had not only from the academic environment (anger-filter) that birthed this anthology but from the way that textual practice has, albeit belatedly, burst its genre confines (the inclusion of Picasso and Houellebecq is more of a selling point than an attempt at transversality when there's Pierre Guyotat's *Eden Eden Eden* and Raymond Roussel being left to one side). Poetry can still be a subversion of language and received meaning, a political force; it can still be a fleeting solidity, a prop to becoming and a context for conjecture, but it doesn't always take the form of recognisable language and it sometimes has to involute into buccal sound, rapped theory and verbose graffiti. With this in mind you cannot take this anthology too seriously because, hindered by the commodity forms of 'national', 'poetry', 'anthology' and 'Yale', it cannot capture some of that which has been fleeing for pleasure: Jacques Brel ->Francois Dufrêne ->Luc Ferrari. Like Proust and his railway timetables, like Debord and his street maps, some poetry has left books behind.

Howard Slater is on the boad of dire rectors of Difficult Fun records http://www.difficultfun.org and is an occasional uploader onto Ourganisation http://ourganisation.org

Haunted Sublimity

Ben Watson scratches deep into David Toop's candy-coated history of 20th century music,
Haunted Weather: Music , Silence and Memory

For several years, David Toop wrote a column for *The Wire* **magazine, and he writes like a** columnist: casual, personable, rambling. His previous book, *Ocean of Sound*, was about Ambient, and bannered a pop/avant pantheon on the back (Sun Ra, Brian Eno, Kraftwerk, Lee Perry, Kate Bush, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Aphex Twin, Brian Wilson). This one doesn't say who's onboard, but promises to answer deeper questions: 'Is it possible to grow electronic sounds?' and 'Can the resonance of a room be played like an instrument?'. On the back, there's praise for *Ocean of Sound* from the broadsheets. The quotes have the sound of relief about them: at last, they imply, someone's explained what all that avant-garde/experimental/incomprehensible stuff is about. 'Dive into it too recklessly,' warns *The Independent on Sunday*, 'and there is a slight risk of drowning, but let it lie around the house a while and it will seep into your brain by osmosis'. In this sense, Toop's lightweight methodology is unimpeachable. Any criticism will sound churlish, protectionist, elitist.

Toop pulls the right levers: the rhizomes of Deleuze and Guattari, the joy of Zen gardens, Apple logos shining from laptops. Here the history of 20th century music is a treasure chest, a horde of wonders. The avant-garde, so long a byword for aural pain and laughable irrelevance, is suddenly sexy. Chapter headings are theory driven rather than fan oriented: 'space and memory', 'sampling the world', 'growth and complexity', 'to play', 'machines and bodies'. However, Toop is no theorist, and skips among other people's ideas like a child on a pebble beach: small objects of fascination are quickly dropped for others. He begins with John Cage's experience in an anechoic chamber – he heard the sound of his own body – and free associates from there to various sound installations, concerts and books. Emails from friends are recycled, the kind of stuff we expect from tourists: 'I like to see changing view of landscape through a window of a train or an airplane. Especially, the view from airplane is wonderful.' (Yoshio Machida)

Something vanishes with tourism: a place's politics and social tensions. Likewise, the real structuring problems of modern music are blithely ignored. After 20 pages, Toop's chatty positivism becomes cloying, as if he's simply too blissed-out to do any research, think something through, stick to a subject. Everything is reduced to chats with Eno on the mobile, an email from Björk, contemplating blackbirds in his Japanese garden.

Rather than simply complacent, Toop's politics are left-liberal. He registers skepticism about the exaggerated mysticism of some musicians, notes when 'marxists' make protests, feels discomfort when ethnic musicians perform in western concert spaces, suddenly explodes with indignation that Van Morrison is honoured above the lead singer from the O'Jays. Yet when he quotes Iain Sinclair from *Lights Out for the Territory* (lines about the 'money lake' of the City), one is startled by the anger, cuttingness and reality of Sinclair's words. Obviously, tour guides aren't supposed to be polemical, but Toop's cosiness becomes suffocating, as if the whole world only exists to be reproduced sonically in a safe domestic haven (also, where's lust and desire? *Haunted Weather* must be the most sexless book on music ever written).

Well, nothing wrong with Mantovani and Nat King Cole and cocoa and slippers. They have their functions. What is weird is the artists Toop chooses to paint his cosy world picture. A page count reveals the hierarchy beneath Toop's rhizomatic sprawl: John Cage (27); Toru Takemitsu (20); Derek Bailey, John Stevens (16); Christian Marclay (12); Brian Eno (9); AMM, Eddie Prévost, Morton Feldman, R. Murray Schafer, John Zorn (7); Masaki Kobayashi, Evan Parker, Marcel Duchamp (6). Toop himself is a high flyer: Thames Festival and Whitney Biennale commissions, Millennium Dome think tanks, curating Sonic Boom at the Hayward (sponsored by Ford). He tracks the technological cutting edge: USA, UK and Japan are the obvious sites. So no surprise that Cage and Takemitsu, the USA and Japan's most famous 20th century composers, top the list. But who represents the UK? Derek Bailey and John Stevens? You can hear the cry 'But who the fuck are they?' ringing down the corridors of Broadcasting House. The unique British class system – a moronic ruling class with no culture except memories of Empire and Elgar, and a working class with an exceptional input on global rock and pop – leaves its quaint imprint.

Stevens and Bailey, working class and proud of it, are the founders of Free Improvisation – a name for site-specific, real-time music making which bucked every tenet of art-world postmodernism in the '80s and '90s. Just when concepts of simulacrum, computerisation and commercial collusion swept the art schools, Free Improvisation vaunted craftsmanship and actuality – plus extraordinary disdain for commercial or institutional recognition. Free

improvisers like Bailey and Stevens developed new, highly idiosyncratic languages on their instruments. Bailey used electricity, Stevens didn't: neither cared what instrument their collaborators played (trombone or broken hi-fi set, sampler or naked voice) as long as they could control their sound, keep it lively, responsive, interesting. Modernist 'difficulty' migrated from the salons of Vienna to upstairs rooms in city pubs. While Minimalism and 'accessibility' swept the board in the academy, musicians outside made

> **After 20 pages, Toop's chatty positivism becomes cloying, as if he's simply too blissed-out to do any research, think something through, stick to a subject**

a virtue of the opposite: collective interaction, contingency, virtuosity, the unrepeatable.

The fact that Free Improvisation – that most prickly and demanding of musical activities – should figure in Toop's book is partly to do with his background. A refugee from Hornsey Art College, collecting glasses at the Roundhouse, he and Paul Burwell needed a gig. In 1971, Stevens gave them one at the legendary Little Theatre Club in Garrick Yard. Toop admits that as an improvising guitarist he was no contender, but he loved the experimental, untheorised, practical approach. Toop also loved pop, and looked longingly at the exposure and sales granted to pop acts. Having written a book on Rap, in the '90s Toop was intrigued by Ambient and laptop musics (what Bailey disparagingly calls 'lounge electronica') which appear to be giving Improvisation a new lease of life. He admits that a gig he was involved in at the Spitz, which sought to combine veteran improvisers and the new experimenters, was a fiasco. Following Cage, Toop naturalises sound ('wake up and listen to the breeze in the leaves …'), indulging precisely the species of asocial and unhistorical fetishism criticised by Adorno. Therefore he cannot achieve the socialist explanation of the Spitz fiasco: Free Improvisation is a revolt against pre-recorded sound management, and off-the-peg laptop software ('triggering samples') is a managerial tool.

Although Derek Bailey and John Stevens

feature in *Haunted Weather* as if they're national figureheads like Cage and Takemitsu, Toop can't explain why they've worked all their lives beneath the radar of establishment recognition. Maybe it's because they play music rather than 'compose' it, and in so doing rediscovered – in a practical way – Adorno's thesis: that far from guaranteeing a shared vocabulary, a 'community of sound', bourgeois musical parameters (the tempered system, imposed abstract tempo, depersonalised musicianship) are obstacles to musical communication. The players' modernism of Bailey and Stevens – from quite an unexpected angle – confirms Adorno's musical Marxism.

Technological fetishism is a ready means for recuperation of avant-gardes. Cubists and Futurists are equated with designers of Art Deco lamps and wind-up gramophones. Ignoring the fact that samplers and software encode and impose the parameters of Western music, the 20th century musical avant-garde is narrated as a dialogue with the machine. This is music understood like the history of automobile manufacture (remember who sponsored Sonic Boom?), a gradual 'ascent' to the prone posture of the 'comfortable' consumer (as Devo would put it). Toop's techno-fetishism prevents him understanding the real history of the 20th century: a struggle between the collective possibilities brought about by socialised production and the ideology of the family and nation state. The sound of this struggle is far more interesting than that of mere technological advance.

The surprise is that Toop remains aware enough of objective musical values to move on from Ambient and pay attention to Free Improvisation, for which consumer gadgetry (unless obsolescent, dirt cheap and therefore surreal) is anathema. As usual, the bland, blind sublimity of 'curatorship' – that weasel word for buying in the labour of others – is haunted by the social actuality of production. Toop's book will appeal to working musicians much less than listeners. ⚘

Haunted Weather: Music, Silence and Memory, David Toop, London: Serpent's Tail, 2004 £14.99 ISBN 1852428120

Ben Watson runs http://www.militantesthetix.co.uk with Esther Leslie, and has just published *Derek Bailey & the Story of Free Improvisation* (Verso)

THE DEATH OF THE DEATH OF THE PORTRAIT

In the Hayward's show *About Face* exploring the fate of portraiture, the image of the face became a mask that hid its technical and discursive means of production – reviewed by Richard Wright

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It's hard not to like a show that's full of faces. The general mood of wonder and fascination makes it hard not to forgive its reductive pop discourse of the 'death of the portrait'. But such throwaway theory makes it difficult to account for the finely calibrated visual parameters of the human image. Any theoretical or technical analysis tends to be quickly overtaken by a human perceptual system that is subtle enough to register all the infinitesimal visual nuances of a face.

Here's an example: in Raphael Hefti's photographic series *Estheticiennes*, department store beauticians are all heavily made-up using the ranges they promote. Four are shown confronting the viewer head on like a police line-up. Unlike most of the other exhibits, there is no apparent digital manipulation of these photographic records, yet what is it that makes them appear so unnaturally predatory, like a row of vampires mesmerising their victims? When you look very closely you can see that the photographs have been taken with two vertical lighting panels on either side of the camera. This has created two vertical highlights on either side of the pupils, producing an unsettling 'cats eyes' effect. This effect is quite subliminal, possibly even unintentional, a by-product of the apparatus.

If this is typical of conventional photography, how much more difficult will it be to account for the effects created by sophisticated digital compositing, retouching and calculation. Even when pictures use the same imaging techniques they can lead to entirely different representational outcomes. Nancy Burson's classic of early computer art, *Warhead I* (1982), is constructed by blending together the world's leaders according to the proportion of their nuclear arsenals. The resultant image portrays a dark, calculating character crowned by Brezhnev's heavy eyebrows, Reagan's craggy jowls and Thatcher's pinched lips. In the year 2000, Chris Dorley-Brown created *The Face of 2000* by photographing 2000 residents of Haverhill and morphing them all together to produce a single face. The result is a soft, almost featureless, angelic-looking white youngster who appears to be about fourteen years old. Whereas Burson's image still seems to function as a representation of a graspable set of political data, Dorley-Brown has updated this process of computerised blending to function on an industrial scale. It operates not only as a visualisation of the town's population, but also as a visualisation of the very process of representational politics itself, revealing it to be an inadequate, mythical chimera.

Of course none of this comes across in the show itself. Like all big gallery shindigs, it is limited to showcasing only one or two examples of each artist's body of work, as well as offering only a brief gallery caption by way of explanation. These constraints can be very limiting. On the website of *The Face of 2000* [http://www.haverhill2000.com], by contrast, you can trace the process of morphing right through from its initial categorisations into gender and age groups. For example, you can also see how *The Face of 2000* grows up from the under fives through to old age, an apparent ageing process that is actually sampled from only one single year of time.

Most of the artists in this show have chosen to take the fashion aesthetics of celebrity as their starting point, perhaps feeling that this is the dominant genre of facial imagery. They also tend to stick within the concrete, literal register of photography instead of brazenly announcing the image's artificiality in order to work at a symbolic or analytical level. Yet despite the viewer's usual unquestioning acceptance of a naturalistic photographic image, perhaps the greater visual acuity characteristic of

Left ⚘ **Portrait of the reviewer as a young man, made with Max Ishchenko's** *Ultimate Flash Face v0.42 beta* [http://flashface.ctapt.de]

facial perception might allow a more penetrating and revealing encounter than normal. But when curator William A Ewing discusses the new aesthetics of 'the face' in his catalogue essay, he appears to regard it as no more revealing than the valueless play of expressions worn by a model. The show seems to treat the face's visual complexities as cosmetic, as capable of being only a factual result of the image's manufacture instead of being reflective of it.

The human image has been invaded by the competing interests of fashion, ethnicity and demographics. Yet through all this the face retains its sense of tactile presence. Faciality operates at the outer reaches of cognition yet far closer than critical distance would allow, keeping us alert to any signs of agency working beyond its immediate contours. This concreteness of the photographic or video image might be further developed to the point where it could slip between different modes of perception, between different subcutaneous tissues of information. So is the human eye's sensitivity to facial imagery enough proof that it can detect the traces of these formative processes and initial contexts?

At the end of the show were a couple of computer workstations running an identikit type program called *Ultimate Flash Face* by Max Ishchenko [http://flashface.ctapt.de]. This simple game that invited the visitor to assemble a self portrait out of a random collection of eyebrows, noses and hairlines had the effect of reducing our nations cultural intellectuals to the state of children squealing with delight. Yet after my companion and I had printed out the results from this software system, this successor to portraiture, something did not look quite right. We realised that it had left a subtle self-image of its own. The standardised facial elements we were given to choose from had the effect of rendering everyone at about twenty one years old (roughly the age of the writer of the software as far as I could see).

The challenge for artists is to attune the visual register with a level of material production by approaching the whole process as one of authoring. The question is no longer whether we can still take the portrait at face value, but whether we can take the underlying algorithm at face value. Without this sense of awareness, an exhibition like this is in danger of degenerating into an identikit collection of isolated snapshots. The face such an exhibition presents to the world is one tailored only for a fashion parade of art gallery shows. ꝭ

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About Face: Photography and the Death of the Portrait, Hayward Gallery. London, 24 June – 5 September 2004

BUG REPORT

Christian Nold visits Jodi's solo show at FACT, Computing 101B, and considers their shift from PC to gallery installation

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I was expecting something rather special when I went to visit the Jodi exhibition at the FACT Centre in Liverpool. Net.art duo Jodi (Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans) had been very influential for me when I was at art college in the late '90s and first started exploring the internet. I was deeply impressed by their online work which seemed to invade my home computer with intimidating streams of green computer code which cast harsh shadows onto my bedroom walls. This being their first UK solo show, I was curious to see how they would deal with the physical gallery space.

The show, entitled Computing 101B, consists of two large installations that explore the opposition between the use of the computer for work and play. In addition, these pieces are contextualised by a number of information booths that Jodi have added to display their own personal and satirical take on the history of computing from the invention of the mouse through to the modern incarnation of the Macintosh.

The piece in the lower gallery, *My %Desktop* (2002) consists of four simultaneous wall projections showing recordings of the Mac Classic operating system used by an unseen operator. Instead of voyeuristically watching somebody at work, we see an orgiastic display of digital disorder. Stacks of new folders are rapidly spawned and disorganised. Tool tips appear and disappear senselessly while the system sounds, click and quack in a cacophony across the four screens. Standing in front of the projection the experience is one of both familiarity and profound absurdity. It is as if the invisible user has abandoned work and created their own strange game within the constraints of the desktop.

The upper gallery contains a brand new ten-screen video piece called *Max Payne Cheats-Only Gallery*. The title refers to the first person shooter game, which on its release in 2001 was praised for its realistic violent graphics and atmospheric film noir plot. 'Maximum pain – teenagers love it so do we', Jodi comment, which is why they've constructed the videos using the game's built-in cheat mode.

Entering the gallery the visitor is immediately assaulted by loud grunts, alarms and gun shots resonating through the space. The gallery has been transformed into a series of twisty 90 degree walkways reminiscent of many first person shooter games. Peep holes inserted into the walls which, when gazed through, afford small glimpses of the screens showing the game.

Through one peep hole, Max, the protagonist spins around senselessly firing into the ground until the recoil from his bullet comically drops him off the top of the stairway. Other holes reveal bizarre camera angles as the result of the games' cheat mode. The camera is suddenly inside Max's body and we see through his gun into the endless stream of shell casings falling into an exquisite black void. Approaching another hole we hear someone being relentlessly beaten with a lead pipe, but upon looking we see Max is alone, persistently beating the floor.

> **'We don't want to be endlessly called desktop abusers or game modifiers. We wanted to do something that was non-aesthetically ours'**

The psychological drama that has been built up through the use of the peepholes and sounds is thwarted once we gaze through the holes. We expect gore and instead see aestheticised repetition. It is as if the teenager playing the game has distractedly kept their finger on the trigger while picking up the phone to talk to a friend. Like in *My %Desktop*, the invisible user has rejected the plot and created their own casual 'play'.

Both these pieces represent quite a departure for Jodi from the intricately programmed websites and game modifications that had made their name. Jodi explained: 'There is nothing to expose, no tricks added – then it's just the emotional attachment of the user ... We don't want to stick with our aesthetic. We don't want to be endlessly called desktop abusers or game modifiers. We wanted to do something that was non-aesthetically ours. No scary black blobs on jumping white backgrounds, but trying to achieve the impossible – an abstraction within the aesthetic of a game which is already set.'

By adding so little to the source material they have indeed set themselves a difficult task. The spatial rearrangement of the gallery in the *Max Payne* piece is very effective but this, in turn,

Below ‹ **JODI**, *Max Payne Cheats-Only Gallery*, July 2004, photograph by Christian Nold

shows up the timidity of *My %Desktop* which doesn't go far enough in transforming the iconic familiarity of the Mac desktop. In particular what seems to be missing is the implied danger and invasiveness of Jodi's previous work. As they have said themselves 'You are very close to a person when you are on his desktop.' It is this level of intimacy which is lost with the large scale projections.

The looping of the *My %Desktop* videos lacks the drama of a clear beginning and end. This was quickly remedied at the exhibition's launch with the first ever Jodi live performance, *Desktop Improvisations*. The audience seated in a dark cinema, watch Dirk theatrically walk up to the lonely laptop placed in a spot light, where he positions himself carefully.

A butler serves him with a variety of different mice arranged on a silver platter. He begins by repeatedly trying to drag the hard disk into the wastebasket and vice versa emitting an audible rhythm of errors. The performance then passes through a series of almost orchestral movements as he probes the functions of the desktop in turn – folder creation and deletion, stickies, tool tips, text to sound.

What emerges brilliantly is what Jodi describe as the 'circus of the interface'. Suddenly we can see an anthropomorphic psychodrama in the minutiae of the computer. The most powerful moment occurs when the screen is at its fullest and the ancient laptop slows with the load of spawning all the folders. As the delay between each window opening gradually increases, so does the sound which accompanies this action.

Dirk is in total control, tinkering and even toying with the materiality of the computer. What we see is an incredibly skilful display of human/computer coordination. The generic, invisible user of the installations has become exposed as a virtuoso performer.

Watching this routine I am strongly reminded of Vertov's 1914 film *Man with the Movie Camera*. Both seem to push and expose the formal possibilities and constraints of their medium in order to create a mechanical but emotional truth. Like Vertov's 'desire for kinship with the machine', Jodi similarly seem to aim for a cyborgian union. Yet unlike Vertov, Jodi's Kino-Eye does not produce clarity or 'introduce creative joy into mechanical labour'. Jodi reject the fantasy of techno utility and refuse to follow the established script for both work and play. For Jodi real play is anarchic and should not be scripted or constrained. 'Ridiculing something is a form of politics. Clowns can make fun of power situations. Sometimes you don't even know it yourself but a mask falls.'

There is, however, something slightly nostalgic about this idea. Jodi's choice of two separate galleries, one representing work and the other play, strengthen the impression that the two are still distinct. In contrast, Lev Manovich in *The Language of New Media* talks about the insidious way in which we now use the same interfaces for work and pleasure. Play has ceased to be delineated from labour.

The impression that Jodi are choosing slightly outdated targets is reinforced by their use of Engelbart's research as part of their educational booths. In 1969, Engelbart's research team flashed up a series of random objects on a screen and timed how long it took users to click on them with a variety of input devices. This methodology of timing the reactions of the user became a central tool of the Human Computer Interaction (HCI) field. In Jodi's exhibition they gently mock these approaches by juxtaposing the primitiveness of these methods with their grand, cyborg aspirations of 'augmenting and expanding the human intellect'. Seen in conjunction with their gentle critique of the Mac Classic GUI, Jodi do seem to be aiming at a rather outdated straw man of computing's future.

Today, the HCI community has moved onto the new buzzwords of 'Physical Computing' and 'Experience Design'. The vision is that designers no longer create products but redesign daily experience. There is a strong marketing focus bent on manipulating the user's emotional attachment to their environment. Physical computing on the other hand tries to hide the technology in the background while making our interactions with information tangible through symbolic stand-ins.

I would love to see Jodi shift their critical and mischievous gaze onto these new soft reincarnations of the cyborg dream. How intimidating might a virus or hacker intrusion really be when our seating – a physical computing favourite – starts to misbehave and we are literally forced to feel the uncanny other. ⸱

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ART(S COUNCIL) HISTORY

The Arts Council are making history – in their own image. Olga Goriunova reviews *New Media Art: Practice and Context in the UK 1994-2004*

New Media Art: Practice and Context in the UK 1994-2004 **presents a number of projects** supported by the Arts Council England from 1996 to 2004. It is also a related collection of new and reprinted essays, case studies, and discussions brought together to help the reader build a contextual understanding of the UK's new media art scene of the past decade. Texts are divided into three major parts: 'history' (new media art's deep historical roots), 'context' and 'practice'; with 'context' subdivided into 'visual arts and the expanded field' (art context and different models of development), 'arts infrastructure' (infrastructures seen from a recent historical perspective), 'technology, use and play' (internet and the gaming boom, promises and fallacies), and 'artistic freedom, legal protection' (questions of open source, free software, licensing, and authorship). Projects are presented according to a certain format following the essays that either directly refer to them or describe the phenomena they address.

The publication is not meant to function as an anthology or seminal reading, it is rather an attempt to present an imprint of a certain epoch at a certain geographical location, documentation that will comprise the lasting portrait of an era.

The intention that brought the publication to life might be the following: an art institution should report on the way it has spent its budget, and the attempt to do it in a smarter way than art institutions usually do is praiseworthy. It is not a glossy catalogue listing funded projects and making you feel sorry for the trees. It is a publication that brings together project descriptions (some of which indeed became very influential and well known first; world-wide), essays analysing them, email communications, presentations, and more historical or theoretical endeavours establishing connections to previous art movements or economic, social and political factors influencing the development of media art in the UK. So, it is a smart and interesting step. But here exactly is the trap.

The context is wider and includes much more than only the projects supported by the Arts Council. But only these projects could be presented (some others do get a mention in the essays, some are still left out). So the Arts Council or, better, the imaginary network of the book's makers needs to focus on its own activity, but wants to include other people's activity. Similarly, the narration always has to return to the Arts Council's role, which means that the book's narrative circle, whilst straining to expand, is always confined within certain limits, always stretching to reveal the richness and follies of the decade but never hitting its target. The tension is not resolved. In the end, it seems the imaginary network wanted to present its own work, but tried hard to present the whole scene that surrounded it as one oriented to itself. This is not true but rather a surface effect of the contradictions of the shrinking and expanding circle.

It is not the art institutions that develop arts and culture; they can contribute to, serve or influence it in many ways, but they are definitely not the engines of the process. Quite often this view is not shared by art institutions themselves. The main disadvantage of the book is that its historicising efforts are based on these premises; the disadvantage is intensified by the fact that the title does not contain a reference to the Arts Council, but refers to the context the publication fails to build neutrally.

However, this all being said, the book is still worth reading. It remains an interesting publication presenting some context and practice, a resource of information for an outsider and probably a source of arguments for insiders.

In addition, it could be quite effectively used by researchers focusing on the sociology of art or questions of art, money, and power: one could analyse the lists of artists' names and identify the ones that appear occasionally and those that appear regularly each year (some who have never been heard of and others who are very well known, with good and bad reputations), analyse sums of money and various correlations between years, names, amounts, groups, topics, genres, etc. One could also research the questions of locality and globality, focusing on the choice of factors that build the context – some of which made an impact or triggered certain new media art movements in many countries, while there are clearly other unmentioned factors that were not relevant or were not so influential for the UK scene, like the collapse of the USSR and discourses around Eastern Europe. The list of things made visible by such a publication could be continued.

> **'Companion Species' are the hybrid beings co-constituted by humans and any other species that have symbiogenetically given birth to and co-evolved each other**

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POST-HUMANISM = POST-ANIMALITY

In *The Companion Species Manifesto*, Donna Haraway has substituted dogs for cyborgs, but who or what is wagging the tail of the new post-humanism? Review by Tim Savage

Donna Haraway's 100-page pamphlet: *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* deserves a central place at the table of a newly emerging conversation exploring 'the question of the animal'. Yet since what we know as 'the human' has always been defined against a seemingly endless taxonomy of putative others – be they 'dehumanised peoples', 'plants', inanimate 'objects', or 'animals' – what 'humanity' is conceptualised as finds itself fundamentally at stake with this question too. Recent contributions to this topic include Giorgio Agamben's new book *The Open: Man and Animal* (2004), two recent anthologies entitled *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* and *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Post-humanist Theory*, as well as a number of Jacques Derrida's recent musings. Deleuze and Guattari's earlier work about 'becoming-animal' also finds pride of place at this human/animal/table interface too.

Haraway opens the first pages of this new manifesto in characteristic fashion by immediately historicising her earlier work:

I appropriated cyborgs to do feminist work in Reagan's Star War Times of the mid-1980s. By the end of the millennium, cyborgs could no longer do the work of a proper herding dog to gather up the threads needed for critical inquiry. So I go happily to the dogs to explore the birth of the kennel to help craft tools for science studies and feminist inquiry in the present time, when secondary Bushes threaten to replace the old growth of more liveable naturecultures in the carbon budget policies of all water-based life on earth.

She then proffers the 'Companion Species' as a heuristic figure to replace her earlier 'cyborg' and for the political tasks which lie so urgently at hand. 'Companion Species' are the hybrid beings co-constituted by humans and any other species that have symbiogenetically given birth to and co-evolved each other. Symbiogenesis, albeit reductively, refers to how various beings (i.e.: bacteria, genes, larger organisms, etc.) can in fact only come into living existence through utter co-dependence on other quite different beings. Haraway asserts that particular populations of humans and dogs have in fact co-evolved each other throughout most of humanity's history and that there can be no way in which humans can accurately understand not only what 'canines' are, but what 'humans' are, without accounting *historiographically* for this complex mongrel fact.

Thus 'human' and 'canine' species are not ontologically distinct identities and any narration of history that pretends that humans are the central historiographical agents is not only historically incorrect but also *politically reactionary*. In line with Theodor Adorno's proviso against all identity thinking after Auschwitz, Haraway asserts that 'relation' is the minimal unit of analysis and being. Here then the bourgeois borders of all 'individual identities' are smashed open and even biology's conventional species taxonomies are no longer held to be sacrosanct.

This 'question of the animal' then also poses a

> **Thus 'human' and 'canine' species are not ontologically distinct identities and any narration of history that pretends that humans are the central historiographical agents is not only historically incorrect but also *politically reactionary***

huge problem for conventional humanist forms of historiography – or, how we tell historical stories. For Haraway both the historical content and historical form known as 'Modernity' can be mockingly characterised as 'The Greatest Story Ever Told'. Nietzsche long ago observed that with 'Modernity' God is declared dead and humans jettison themselves into his mythic historiographical position – that of magically possessing almost exclusive world-making powers and historiographical agency. Here humans become 'subjects' and pretty much everything else is relegated to the role of 'objects' for instrumentalisation. Haraway's work is certainly far from unique in revealing the violent power relationships inherent to this humanist historiographical picture and yet she is peculiar in the way in which she attempts to engender, decolonialise, queer, and animalise it. This, she believes will result in a telling of historical tales that are not only more historically accurate, but that will also constitute a better resource for our collective future.

The Companion Species explores the human-canine hybrid and symbiogenetic being in a non-systematic variety of different ways. Rigorously

materialistic, Haraway opens the manifesto with a queasy admission that her dog's tongue has upon occasion caressed the back of her own throat. She speculates that viral vectors and non-filial genetic exchanges have actually made the two species up, in the flesh. The manifesto concludes with a scene of sexual voyeurism, which due to the anticipated sensitivities of *Mute* readers, I will not attempt to describe here.

In between, Haraway explores dog-human relationships. She critiques the dangerous fiction of unconditionally loving dogs and relationships whereby humans treat dogs as furry surrogates for children. Haraway would prefer to have dogs to children, and if she did ever give birth she would prefer it most of all to be to an alien. The human-pet relationship too is challenged as too difficult a feat for most animals to perform. Occasionally, a working relationship may grant specific canines a greater chance of surviving in this far from perfect world. Haraway also narrates her own dog-training experiences and glosses some of the theories surrounding appropriate human-canine relationships.

What the reader will not find in these pages however is any celebration of animal rights or any abstracted notion of equality alleged to exist between dogs and people. And lest the reader expect a love story with soppy romantic undertones; Haraway reminds us of dogs' historical role in the genocide of Native Americans, in the maintenance of African-American slavery, and in assisting US soldiers in carrying out war crimes in Vietnam. *Companion Species* was written sometime before Abu-Ghraib.

The manifesto also rewrites the history of two registered breeds of dogs – the Great Pyrenees and the Australian Shepherd. Yet Haraway knows the importance of the undocumented be they human or canine and so she also turns to the Satos (Puerto Rican Street Dogs whose presence in cyberspace facilitates their adoption into Northern US homes with all the attendant colonialist baggage such adoption practices customarily portend). Haraway's historicising resolutely shows that biological notions of 'pure breeds' are as fictitious as their racist counterparts in the human world. Everywhere though the question of who these various and quite different populations of non-human others are, what they might need, and how we can enter into a more mutually beneficial relationship with them is foregrounded.

A few comments remain. I wonder what this new attempt at historiography would have turned into if the symbiogenetic figures chosen had been other than humans and dogs. A wide

BACK TO THE FUTURE — ARS ELECTRONICA AT 25

This year the Ars Electronica festival glimpsed the future through the past.
Michelle Kasprzak reports

In 1979, Ars Electronica was born. The concept was to produce an innovative festival that would integrate art, technology and society as major themes in its workshops, symposia, and concerts. 25 years later, what started off as a small but ambitious festival has transformed the city of Linz from an industrial city into a culture capital, and become the Oscars of the electronic art world. But what has really changed in a quarter century for this behemoth of festivals?

By bestowing this year's festival with the theme of Timeshift: The World in 25 Years, it

> **Prudent people know that attempting to predict the future is usually a fool's game, and so the theme is defeated before the festival even begins**

appears that the Ars organisers were not interested in becoming overly nostalgic. Rather, the theme suggests that the 25th Ars Electronica would unfold in keeping with the innovative spirit that sparked the genesis of the festival, endeavouring to put a finger on what the next 25 years will hold, not just for Ars, but for electronic art itself.

But prudent people know that attempting to predict the future is usually a fool's game, and so the theme is defeated before the festival even begins. The conference presentations this year mostly focussed the idea of the future through the lens of the past, or as Marshall McLuhan would have said it, 'We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future.'

Of the notable few who were brave or foolish enough to step forward with some divinations of the future, Bruce Sterling's lecture stands out. 'The future is already here, it's just not well distributed yet', Sterling tells us. He described the slavery of early adopters to their over-functional gizmos as the precursor to the imminent development of smart, auto-Googling objects he calls 'Spimes'. Spimes will be high maintenance but also high functioning, with their own e-mail addresses, histories, and intelligence of their own life cycles and potential for re-use. This history and intelligence that Spimes offer will allow us to deal more effectively

with growing piles of techno-trash, since the Spime itself will tell us when it is ready to be recycled, and how. His messages were visionary, though disheartening – dealing with our disposable culture involves being in thrall to objects that won't stop e-mailing us, and the elderly will blog the intricacies of our involvement with Spimes because they have nothing better to do than complain.

In an attempt to extract the most out of the future-as-theme, a new competition called The Next Idea was introduced, wherein young artists were invited to submit an unrealised concept for judging. The Next Idea, in principle, seemed to hold the most promise in terms of providing the wild and speculative gaze into the future that the theme of the festival demanded. However the winner of the competition, *Moony*, by Akio Kamisato, Satoshi Shibata, Takehisa Mashimo, disappointed by privileging technical feat over content. 3D butterflies are projected onto water vapour, and react to the outstretched hands of visitors. The prize announcement describes the potential for the technology to 'work with computers in ways that go beyond manipulating a keyboard and a mouse'. A quick browse through the Ars archives, particularly at work by Golden Nica winners David Rokeby and Luc Courchesne, would show that going beyond the keyboard and mouse is a fait accompli, and that content need not be sacrificed on the altar of techno-fetishism. To be fair, living up to the moniker of The Next Idea is daunting, and when you speak of the 'next' thing at any electronic art festival, techno-fetishism is never far behind.

Which brings us to the two main exhibitions, in order to seek out that ideal marriage of technical novelty and compelling content. An exhibition at Linz's new Lentos Museum of Golden Nica winners from previous years proved that the winners' work holds up well over time. Simultaneously at the O.K. Centre, the exhibition of this year's Golden Nica winners and honourable mentions was on view. Since the show at the Lentos was basically a greatest hits show, it may not be surprising to note that it was more satisfying. However, what was surprising was that some of the work from 2004 seemed more dated than the work in the Lentos. Again an obsession with interactivity that doesn't rely on the keyboard and mouse does viewers a disservice, when the only reward for learning the right sequence of hand-waving or foot-tapping is content that is not particularly strong.

The weak showing of 'interactive' work

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universe of complex relationship is figured but the story is partially skewed towards these two initial, however complexly constituted non-identitarian historiographical agents. Yet in fairness, no one can escape partial, selective, and biased accounts of history. Haraway always admits this, which is what her earlier essay *Situated Knowledges* is all about. However, perhaps with the inappropriate quibbling of the vegetarian, after reading her declare that she fed her dog liver biscuits and that she ate hamburgers at Burger King, I found myself asking what this story would have looked like if it had been written from the vantage points of those deadened *meaty* beings? Is there not a truly subaltern form of historiography potentially creatable here? Specific dogs are creatures Haraway loves. I'm not sure that this in itself is a sufficient recipe for constructing the type of historiography that we so desperately need.

It may also be that conflictual relationships are overly sidelined, although being far from absent here. Haraway is rightly loathe to provide grist for the mill of the neoliberal social Darwinists who overpopulate this planet, but real history consists of huge amounts of conflict that are absolutely central to what we have all become. Telling new (her)stories wields the potential power to produce better worlds but I am unconvinced that her text inhabits the historical violence that generates it well enough.

What if the existence of something akin to class difference not just between humans, but between humans and dogs and between different animals themselves were figured into the story? Absurd to some perhaps, but as I write this review in a Manhattan where there are restaurants for pampered dogs, maybe they are not. It is not only to issues of co-constitutive loving but to these issues of complex insurgency that I hope this emergent conversation about the 'question of the animal' will begin to consider in the times ahead.

The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, And Significant Otherness, Donna Haraway, Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003, £7.00 ISBN: 0971757585

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Top > Akio Kamisato,
Takehisa Mashimo, Satoshi
Shibata, *Moony*, 2004, photo
courtesy Ars Electronica

Bottom > Mark Hansen, Ben
Rubin, *Listening Post*, 2003,
photo courtesy Ars Electronica

highlighted a problem for me, again, in the theming and naming of components of the festival and the festival itself. The 'Interactive Art' label doesn't really apply to *Listening Post*, this year's Golden Nica winner in that category, because *Listening Post* could hardly be called interactive at all. What is interesting about this it is that its excellence, combined with its misdefinition as interactive, offers the least hypey and most interesting peek into the future of electronic art. The piece, by Americans Mark Hansen and Ben Rubin, consists of 231 small displays arranged in a grid. A computer scans Internet chat rooms and message boards, filters the raw input, and outputs selected snippets of text to the displays. A sombre soundtrack fills the room, and occasionally a computerised voice speaks one of the text snippets aloud.

The poetry of *Listening Post* derives from the fact that the communication of the chatters lives outside of the chat room, but only for a moment, and it is not archived. In other words, *Listening Post* operates very differently than the history-conscious Spimes mentioned earlier. The *Listening Post* has no memory, it is a monument only to the present. Its effect is hypnotic, and viewers who sat in front of the piece for a time were watching a performance for which the stage direction was provided by a filtering algorithm, and the characters were the thousands of chatters who were supplying pieces of content.

Watching *Listening Post* for several minutes provided the view of the future of electronic art that I had been waiting to see, one in which artists orchestrate systems, find beauty in the analysis of information flows, and become choreographers of data. The rear-view mirror just needs to be polished up a bit to see that technology will keep on marching backwards into the future, and it is up to cultural producers to direct that march to a meaningful place.

Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria, 2-7 September, 2004

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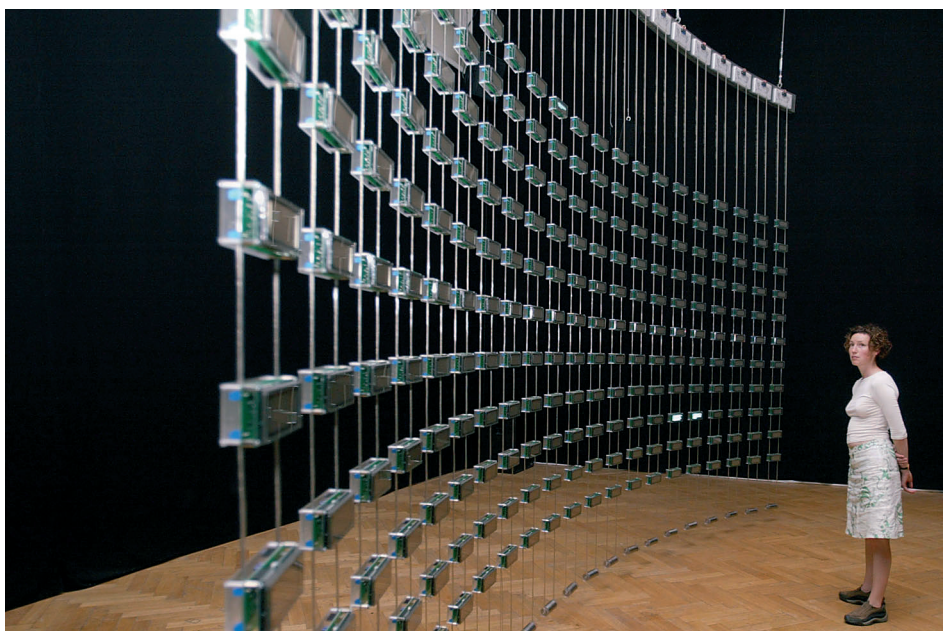
THE INSECURITY LASTS A LONG TIME

Anthony Iles reviews the online journal *Republicart*'s issue about 'precarious' labour

Republicart's examples are indications of a social movement in formation, but the figure of the precariat remains a contentious one

Republicart
http://www.republicart.net
Barcelona Forum
http://www.forumbcn2004.org
and Counter-Forum
http://barcelona.indymedia.org?catergory=forum_2004
Euromayday 2004
http://www.euromayday.org
Stop The Clock, *Aufheben* **pamphlet, 2000, by Precari Nati, Wildcat, Aufheben et al**
http://www.geocities.com/aufheben2/stc_intro.html
'L'intermittence et la puissance de métamorphose', Maurizio Lazzarato,
http://multitudes.samizdat.net/article.php3?id_article=1082
Unionising Workshop at Flaxman Lodge
http://flaxmanlodge.omweb.org
Greenpepper Magazine
http://www.greenpeppermagazine.org/

Republicart **is a multi-lingual online journal, publishing articles on the intersection of** activist and artistic projects loosely theorised by its editorial as public art. The site is a container for a number of EU funded projects and research on fairly commonplace themes: cultural networking, public space, and social engagement. However, *Republicart*'s recent issue focusing on the 'Precariat' – a subject it proposes as the new proletariat of informal and casualised labour – arrives at a moment when discussion about the condition of human capital and its capacity for action comprises what the editorial rightly calls a 'concatenation' of theories and practices. 'Precariousness' and 'precarious work' have rapidly become terms for thinking through the collapse of the distinction between labour and non-labour and the expansion of capitalist forms of valorisation over all aspects of life. Precariousness names a situation in which, for an increasing number of workers, temporary, 'atypical', workfare or contract work are the bread and butter served on a plate of social insecurity. *Republicart*'s precariat issue brings together recent material by, and reports on, groups and movements, which adopt the term 'precarious' to describe and theorise their struggle within and against contemporary capitalism. It forcefully advances the idea that the precariat consitutes an emerging social movement, but essentially evades a proper analysis of exactly *who* is precarious and why.

Precarias a la Deriva's text on the *Republicart* site, 'Adrift Through the Circuits of Feminised Precarious Work', problematises the condition of precariousness as one in which the negative and positive poles of flexibility are inextricable, the conflict between commonality and singularity constant. Their situation bespeaks both a lack and an excess of 'work', a generalisation of instability combined with the 'cognitisation' of everyday tasks and jobs. They are the first to point to the difficulties of organising on the basis of 'a precariousness which can do without a clear collective identity in which to simplify and defend itself.'

Elsewhere on the *Republicart* site, in his account of EuroMayday 2004, Gerald Raunig quickly shrugs off the difficulty of political organising per se for the atomised and time poor casual worker. Coordinated between Barcelona and Milan, various species of *precarie* – chainworkers, intermittents, flexworkers and scientific researchers – occupied the streets and the internet in actions 'against the growing precariousness of life.' In Barcelona, the protest developed out of converging struggles against The Forum, a kind of Neoliberal World's Fair, which encountered formidable resistance from those whose lives it attempted to flatten under a dazzling vision of Barcelona as a city of culture. At the same time, in Milan, the Chainworkers, a group of media and labour activists supporting struggles of the non-unionised, blockaded department stores, employment agencies, malls and fast food chains to disrupt and contest the exploitation and flexibilisation of service, migrant and knowledge workers. The potential for organisation amongst chainstore workers in particular, as Raunig asserts, seems rich in opportunities, sharing as they do wage-levels, standardisation of tasks, and boredom. As the Chainworkers' Alex Foti has pointed out, unlike workers in factories whose employers can shift production elsewhere (outsourcing overseas, etc), *their* employers are rooted to the site of consumption of the goods they sell, making them an easy target and an ideal point for the generalisation of this kind of action.

Also involved in EuroMayday 2004 and represented on the *Republicart* site by their text 'The Spectacle Inside the State and Out', the French entertainment workers participating in the Coordination des Intermittents et Precaires have combined the defence of their established legal rights (until recently they received annual unemployment benefits as occasional workers in the arts) with the assertion that they constitute part of a new class of flexible labour. Regarded by the major French unions as an undesirable anomaly, Les Intermittents' challenge to economic determinism and the deregulation of social rights has led to a national debate on the very role of knowledge and culture in France. This debate continues to be elaborated by the research groups initiated across the Coordination des Intermittents. Whilst it remains to be seen whether their actions successfully restore their particular form of 'dole autonomy', more importantly they have continued to develop avenues of conflict outside of their initial confrontation with the state in a process Maurizio Lazzarato has called 'a deregulation of conflict.'

Groups such as the Intermittents, Precarias a la Deriva and Chainworkers are working in situations where union support is not an option, but little space is given in *Republicart* as to why

UNDER THE PAVEMENT, THE ID

Josephine Berry Slater gets to the bottom of Paul Noble's recent show at The Whitechapel Gallery

this is so, or how unions might respond to the growing pressure from sectors they have hitherto seen as marginal. Whilst the actions of the Chainworkers and Intermittents do go beyond the tradition of union activism there is little evidence for this here. The examples *Republicart* draws on are indications of a social movement in formation, but for the moment the figure of the precariat remains a contentious one. If *Republicart* is positing the precariat as a new kind of proletariat then where is the discussion of the

> **Unlike workers in factories whose employers can shift production elsewhere, Chainworkers' employers are rooted to the site of consumption of the goods they sell, making them an easy target**

composition of this new class? The site's predilection for artistic examples of precari-ousness has led them to overlook the work of other groups such as Precari Nati and Kolinko (see *Mute* issue 28), whose analysis of contem-porary labour conditions draws on a much more rigorous investigation of how capitalism contains and exploits the energies of the social body and the various forms of refusal it encounters. Casting the precariat's struggle in terms of battles for better legislation misses the opportunity to investigate the tendency for self-organised (or 'disorganised') labour to develop a more generalised struggle than the demand for employment and social rights, breaking with the capitalist organisation of work altogether. ᚠ

Republicart Precarity issue
www.republicart.net/disc/precariat

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'"What's that?" … "It's a pig's dick on a stick"; pinstripe-suited man fucking cow with huge** dick; turd branding Macdonald's golden arches onto cow; vets as assassins; dogs in hot-dog rolls.'

These are some of the lines I jotted down whilst looking at *Egg* (2004), a huge egg covered with doodles chronicling a world overrun with animal cruelty, which greets you on entering Paul Noble's Whitechapel show. A sustained description of Noble's polymorphically grotesque and fertile doodlings could escalate into a bout of Tourette's.

> **Noble describes it as an 'exercise in self-portraiture via town planning'**

The tireless permutations of nightmarish buffoonery, sadistic romping, pornographic capery, infantile lewdness and fiendish activity defy recall let alone description. Noble's outpourings are like a cargo load of cartoon history run through the paper shredder of the unconscious; The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers meets R. Crumb meets Hieronymous Bosch meets Ren and Stimpy meets a teenager's doodle-smeared exercise book. This steroidally pumped and very British slant on a '60s permissive pop culture gone to pot forms the base material – literally often the bricks and mortar – of a possibly sublime edifice which remains elusively out of view.

We view this edifice in greater and lesser degrees of magnification, production and decline, from its living mortar composed of turd people, to the grandeur of its necropolis (*Ye Olde Ruin*, 2004) and temple of consumption (*Mall*, 2001-02), to its deserted and devastated interior (*Nobson Central*, 1998-99). Noble describes it as an 'exercise in self-portraiture via town planning', and indeed it comes over like an enlightenment grid of rationality festooned with the irreducible fruits of the id. This tension between a voice of reason struggling to be heard against a pencilled sea of inchoate psychic warfare is underscored by Noble's recurrent use of a three dimensional font, part Corbusian cityscape, part graphical script, which can only be intermittently deciphered. The city/subject is its own portraitist, its own chronicler, and as such is solipsistically incapable of gaining the distance required for coherent visual or textual representation. Like the human mind failing to map itself, this inhabitant of the urban and cultural environment cannot stand

Above Paul Noble, *Nobson Central*, 1998-99

outside himself or indeed inside himself and look out; his selfhood is hopelessly dissolved into the surrounding social fabric and fiction.

After the myopic acrobatics of the the first room in which the visitor is first asked to remove their shoes so as not to scuff the pristine white floor, then to squat in front of *Egg* to examine it from every available angle, and then to squint up at the psychedelic mayhem of the more diminutive *Huh Huh* – the panoramic grandeur of the second (carpeted) room comes as a relief, at least for a while. Standing in the middle, it's possible to survey each wall-sized pencil drawing in turn: the necropolis; the temple of consumption; the obliterated and desertified *Nobson Central*. But soon the lure of their highly worked detail and cryptic oddness pulls the eye and accompanying body back in, demanding a strangely helpless state of over-proximity. The payback is undoubtedly generous, but the possibility that careful extrapolation across all these details will finally erupt in some flash of synthesis is never realised.

Interestingly, the desertion of *Nobson Central* by all lifeforms is strangely soothing. In what looks like a city devastated by siege – reminiscent of shots of Ramallah after Israel's ruthless attack – closer inspection reveals to be a grid-like arrangement of tarnished modernist shells offering no signs of life past or present. There are no personal effects, no furniture, no papers, no gardens, no food – just the odd pile of bagged and depersonalised rubbish. After the hysterical couplings of the first room, the cloying 'individualisation' of graves in the necropolis, the futile signification of illegible script encrusting the mall, there comes a complete absence of life's productivity in this work. Life looks implausible from the start. And this in the drawing which comes closest to resembling an actual city – an overview of Nobson's centre.

As Surrealist chronicler Maurice Nadeau suggested: 'The important thing was to bring the unconscious of a city into unison with the unconscious of men'. Following this cue, we could speculate that Paul Noble's unconscious desire is the death of mankind, his cities and his desires (based on the balm of the desertified Nobson Central). Or are these epic tableaux evidence of an attempt to imagine a city built out of desires unbounded, in all their baseness and sublimity? The video work of an anus presented to us from Islamic prayer position that confronts us on leaving the show might support the latter theory. Although usually screened out, our spiritual supplication before the divine depends upon our fundamental ability to raise the arse skywards. ↟

Paul Noble, The Whitechapel Gallery London, 10 September – 14 November 2004

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SOMETHING OVER AGAINST IS (OR) ACCIDENCE COMMENCED

Anja Büchele and **Matthew Hyland** on the American poet Susan Howe and her latest book, *The Midnight*

Howe is out to re-write history in writing the process of thought

...She believes tables move

without contact I am skeptical.

A book reviewer has called Susan Howe 'an iconoclast but one who keeps the pieces'. Her writing smashes thrall to images as methodically as the 17th century Calvinists of the English revolution destroyed Church relics and artworks. From the shattered but preserved *matter* of verbal 'images' – appearance and sound of words, logical differences between elements of syntax, the compulsive bond of sign to memory – she begins a work of determinately haunted construction. With casual self-insight, she writes in her most recent book, *The Midnight*, 'I wondered about the relation between one concrete slab and another concrete slab.'

Concrete slabs, in themselves, are unintelligible, unthinkable. But the relations between them, as traces of action, decision, thought, may not be. The figures inhabiting Howe's poems – proper names, other books, historical events, abstract concepts – do so in opaque fragments, upheaved among other fragments in restricted but unfinished syntactical gestures. Stranded this way, each particle is too singular to signify on its own. At first the logic of syntactical sense seems merely to organise clouds of immemorial vapour, too fine to resolve the aporias where the syntactical series themselves break off, bifurcate and overlap. Yet the same figures recur unevenly through the course of each (long) poem. Within the reading process, memory's nervous leaping at quick flashes of coincidence hesitantly discovers threads of consistency.

Howe introduces a sound recording of another recent work, *Pierce-Arrow*, by naming some of its threads of reference in advance [http://mediamogul.seas.upenn.edu/pennsound/ authors/Howe/Howe-Susan_from-PierceArrow_ Penn_April-15-1999.mp3]. No such catalogue exists for *The Midnight*. If one did its elements would sound stubbornly disparate, including (woefully incompletely): tissue interleaves in books printed before 1914; bed hangings (New England/Calvinist/technical details); 'over againstness' in Calvinist preaching; C.S. Peirce/Pragmatism; 'Michael Drayton'; F.L. Olmstead and the 'park'; theatres/curtains; Mary Manning ('tongue so caustic' writing in Dublin, emigrant, Howe's mother); (Uncle) John Manning; (Aunt) Louie Bennett; *The Master of Ballantrae*/R.L. Stevenson; 'exercise of the windpipe'; transmission, mis/appropriation of

memory's material supports; *sleep and insomnia*...

The poem's body is entanglement of these unreconciled strains.

In poetry, all things seem to touch so they are.

'When I just said that thought is an action, and that it consists in a relation, although a person performs an action but not a relation, which can only be the result of an action, yet there was no inconsistency in what I said, but only a grammatical vagueness.' [C.S. Peirce]

If thought, as the logician C.S. Peirce maintains, is 'a thread of melody running through the succession of our sensations', Howe transforms the in-betweens, breath, hush, hesitation, sharpening the notes to undo habit. Peirce, 'an unpractical pragmatist with suspect metaphysics' is the pre-eminent figure in *Pierce-Arrow*, and returns briefly in *The Midnight*. His pragmatics of relation, of the action of thought, resounds in her practice of logic as poetry and poetry as logic. She places contents in cross-eyed association by dislodging prepositions, pronouns, the smallest syllable. Habit implodes into pieces that continue the curvature of thought.

word flesh crumbled page edge

Howe treats words, silence, a space, a crossed-out line, a sounded breath, a question mark, as matter: 'documents resemble people talking in sleep'. In *My Emily Dickinson*, *Pierce-Arrow* and *The Midnight*, Howe follows the action of Emily Dickinson's and Peirce's thought through their manuscripts, where it materialises in handwriting and sketches as word merges with drawing. Distinction between quotation and the poet's 'own words' dissolves in a single, restlessly growing body of writing.

Howe defies the frozen-worded norms of scientific academia where the manuscript is reduced to source material, a mere preliminary stage on the way to the authoritative work. *She is out to re-write history in writing the process of thought*. The wildly strewn thought-matter she encounters in manuscripts is as much part of this project as is her account of their inaccessibility in the world of libraries. She passes through reading rooms, bureaucratic procedures, hidden books in huge libraries, the vertiginous smallness of micro-film, the reader's-pass and the copy card, then on through Peirce's 23 variations on 'praises to', his logical diagrams, his outlaw status, his fortune-telling wife, their poverty and the fight over pragmaticism, or Emily Dickinson's generous dashes, her fierce handwritten letters and the contents of her library, which in turn converge with the history of early puritan settlers and an urgent critique of feminist readings of her work.

Howe perpetuates these material presences, which act in and through the text. She reads another's body of thought as material process in

time, drawn into the present tense of her encounter with it. Through this two-fold transmission, words, marks, silences, breaths are made to produce new material effects that continue beyond both moments, insistently undone and renewed in the temporality of reading the poem.

Counterforce bring me wild hope

non-connection is itself distinct

Thinking is willing you are wild

to the weave not to material itself

If poems are the impossibility of plainness rendered in plainest form, so in memory, the character of 'either'.

Susan Howe stands at a far remove from the celebration of equivalence and exchange blazoned on the banner 'L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E'. (see Keston Sutherland, 'Junk Subjectivity', *Mute* issue 28) Her pragmaticism vindicates the bloody non-equivalence of particulars, of the possible worlds entailed by different utterances. She writes long poems made up of short lines crowded with overlapping half-articulations, conflicting logics of conjunction caught in an impossible 'either'. Yet 'alternative' ways of proceeding from 'either' are never interchangeable, or even commensurable, *because they lay conflicting claims to the past*, asserting reciprocally insufferable versions of what leads up to them. (One or two illustrative quotations would be pointless here, because this civil war of contingencies stretches indefinitely in all directions, it's coextensive with the poem.) Throughout Howe's poetry, the work of reading is plagued by retrospection, suspension, projection; a perpetual struggle over the poem's 'past' in its 'present'. The verse's operation in time incessantly poses this problem: the abyssal difference between this OR that, the only unexchangeable singularity, lies in 'history', yet all history is enclosed in the given scrap of matter, however corrupt or commodified.

Howe's manner of attentiveness to history is unusual in the ascendant American poetic avant-garde. Also unusual, and not only in that company, is her concern with oblivion as something integral to historical transmission, rather than as its mystic limit. Where so many modernists invoked with resounding desperation whatever seemed durable enough to shore against their ruin, she seeks the persistence of a 'slighted' past in the workings of its own erasure. Forever in pursuit of the action on the real of the irremediably forgotten, she cross-examines manuscripts and single, damaged copies, hoping to discover the secret seriality of accident. Emily Dickinson's precisely irregular dashes, the two-handed writer and insomniac Peirce's thousands of pages overrun with diagrammatic scrawl, or the obsessive bibliography of a spurious King's Book: these are

> **The abyssal difference between this OR that lies in 'history', yet all history is enclosed in the given scrap of matter, however corrupt or commodified**

what Howe calls 'transitional objects', both expressive of thought and charged with the complexes of bodily shocks that engendered them exactly as they are.

It's doubtful whether she would suffer a moment's peace from this preoccupation with history's meagre physical ciphers, the corporeal force of unrecorded events. 'I wish,' she wrote at the start of the collection *The Europe of Trusts* (1990), 'I could tenderly lift from the dark side of history voices that are anonymous, slighted – inarticulate.' 'Voices' of silenced antagonists surviving inasmuch as proud and articulate monuments celebrate nothing but their (provisional) defeat.

In relation to detail every first scrap of memory survives in sleep or insanity. ⚐

THE WIRELESS LOVEBOAT: ISEA 2004

As well as a vast array of exhibitions, talks, and networking opportunities, the 12th International Symposium on Electronic Arts (ISEA) featured a three-day trip on a cruise liner. **Armin Medosch** gives us an inside-outsider's account of his voyage into the depths of new media art

We are waiting for the cruise to begin on the 'Riviera Pool' deck – the one with the swimming pool, jacuzzi, potted palm trees and removable glass roof

All pictures ⊳ **Minna Tarkka**
<minna.tarkka@m-cult.org>
Right ⊳ **The 'open deck' area on the Silja Opera cruise, August 2004**

FOOTNOTES

1 'ISEA2004 is the 12th Symposium on Electronic Arts, organised for the first time in two capital cities and a ferry between them.' Quote from ISEA website where the reader will find the full programme and excerpts of some of the highlights. http://www.isea2004.net/

2 Taken without irony, 'Wireless Experience' feels uncomfortably close to a marketing slogan for 3G mobile phones. The choice of sociology Professor Michel Maffesoli as keynote speaker on this topic was unfortunate, because he was not in the position to say anything interesting or new about those cultural icons of 'logical' progress

3 What makes the recovery more difficult is that Deutsche Bank and the regional government of Mecklenburg Pommerania have been pursuing me and my colleques since then over an alleged personal surety for a bank loan the validity of which we are disputing in court and which, with interest, has now run up to £60,000 (UK) which each of us is supposed to owe the state

4 Tapio Mäkelä and Mare Tralla, programme chairs in Helsinki and Tallinn, and Amanda McDonald Crowley, executive producer of ISEA2004. The event was organised by m-cult, the Centre for New Media Culture in Helsinki, headed by Minna Tarkka, who was also co-organiser of ISEA 1994

5 ISEA 2004 was huge: 755 people participated in the cruise, 110 of whom were presenters/artists; in Tallinn and Helsinki at least four different talks or panels were running in parallel. With 130 artists/presenters in Tallinn and 220 in Helsinki there were several main

On Sunday 15 August 2004 at around lunchtime people start to gather at the Silja Line Terminal in Helsinki. The ISEA cruise on the commercial cruise ship Silja Opera is soon to begin.**1** While many people still queue for their tickets, a group called Abflug plays music from a laptop in the departure lounge. On this art cruise it is not enough, of course, to just sit around and wait, the waiting has to be embellished with art. The 'Wireless Experience' has started already.**2** I open my laptop and begin to write this report. Because of my personal history my anticipation is tinged with discomfort.

From 1991 to 1994 I was involved with getting the project Stubnitz Art-Space-Ship going. A small group of artists, we had bought an 80 metre long East German fishing trawler and converted it into an interdisciplinary laboratory for art, science and technology. Stubnitz was linked into the emerging networks of electronic culture, but the main point of the project was autonomy, creating a self-sufficient and self-defined structure. In summer 1994, during our Baltic Tour, Stubnitz made a splash in St Petersburg, Malmö and Hamburg. We were expected to bring the Stubnitz to Helsinki that year, where ISEA 1994 took place, but we did not

make it, our financial resources were already exhausted. In autumn 1994 the project went bankrupt. My heart broke and probably never fully recovered.**3**

We have boarded the ship, found the way to our cabins, discovered with whom we are sharing. Now we are waiting for the cruise to begin on the 'Riviera Pool' deck – the one with the swimming pool, jacuzzi, potted palm trees and removable glass roof. There is a buzz of expectation, the joy of people coming together from different parts of the world and recognising each other with shouts and hugs and kisses. Tapio, Mare and Amanda make short speeches and get warm applause, then DJ Mukul starts to drop some beats.**4** Quite a few people are already drinking, and the atmosphere is thick with chatter, cigarette smoke and heavy basslines. But the weather is not good, it has started raining and the rain is pouring down harder and harder as the Silja Opera leaves the port of Helsinki. The glass roof leaking, water is coming down so heavily that the buckets provided to collect it cut a helpless figure. A sense of gloom sets in. But then, just an hour outside Helsinki, the sky clears up, we sail westwards under full steam and all is good again.

It is possible to think about this ship as a great occasion, an opportunity for 800-plus people from almost all over the world to come together for two days and nights to play and listen to music, watch digital videos, explore installations and locative media art work, and above all, to talk, to network, discuss ideas, breed projects, enter a great multi-threaded discussion between shifting group configurations and in the process, clarify things, move the discourse further, evolve a critical group consciousness which will inform and inspire others.[5] In this sense these annual or biannual 'class meetings' do probably work. What is less clear is which inclusion/exclusion mechanisms are at work, not so much via the 'curating' of the event but in the self-selection of those who would want to or can afford to participate: Putting everyone together on a boat can only heighten that sense of insider-/outsider-ishness, the demarcation line between the imaginary 'we' and others.[6]

As the white and blue hull of the proud Silja Opera divides the waves with confidence, the 'touristic situation' makes me inevitably think of other types of ships in other places and at other times: the European ships that started exploring the oceans of the world and discovered 'new' continents – new to us, Europeans – and started to conquer, kill, steal, a process that will later be called globalisation and the stealing officially sanctioned as free trade, something that is very much still going on and which, by its very nature, makes the poor countries poorer, so desperately poor that many inhabitants of those countries try to travel to the rich countries, risking their lives on small dinghies or crammed onto rusty freighters. While the victims of European border defence are 'polluting' the waters of the Mediterranean how can I not take offence at the fancy decorations of the Silja Opera, its many mirrors on which elegant ladies in 1920s robes have been painted. The Metropolis bar is a Las Vegas style entertainment lounge, the walls of the restaurants adorned by paintings of 1920s decadence showing black women dancing before the eyes of an elegant white crowd, an age when the fruits of imperialism were consumed maybe more unashamedly than today, or were they?

The environment on this ship invites us to consume, to consume more, and to consume again, creating circumstances which conspire to hide the existence of another ship, right under our feet and around us, the ship of the engineers and deckhands, the kitchen and bar staff and the cleaners who silently clean up our mess while we sleep off our hangovers.[7] On luxury liners like the Queen Elizabeth in a not too distant past staff had to use a special corridor so that they could move around the ship without their 'dirty' presence being noticed by the elegant society dining upstairs (people who are likely to have looked like those painted on the restaurants walls). This corridor was called the Burma Road because it was as hot as the South East Asian jungle. Has the Silja Opera also got its 'Burma Road'?

Ethics are not fashionable, not like wearable computers for instance

This separation of labour manifest in the spatial layout of the ship evokes the image of another ship, the one in Julio Cortazar's novel *The Winners*, where a group of people have won a luxury cruise. After the boat has left the harbour they find themselves held captive in a small subsection of it. Anxiety and bemusement soon turn to fear as they discover they are in fact prisoners on the ship, victims of a weird right-wing conspiracy.

Borrowing this metaphor, one could think of us as hostages of our governments who are waging war in the name of freedom. In the same way we are passengers, whether we like it or not, on board a vessel called 'Western Civilisation' whose progress contains a negative dialectic between the development of an idea of freedom, secularisation and techno-scientific discovery on one hand, and, on the other, the worst excesses of genocidal colonialism facilitating European geographic expansion.[8] This abuse of instrumental power, of the rational control of nature, is written into the geneology of the Scientific Revolution from its inception. Cartesianism, geometry, telescopes, nautical instruments, coordinates and the Mercator projection are inextricably linked with the global projection of

exhibitions plus other programmes spread all over the two cities

[6] Typically, at ISEA events all participants have to finance their own travel expenses which often leads to an overproportional representation of members of academia from Europe, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. It is understood that the organisers of ISEA 2004 went to some length to acquire additional funds and enable people from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa to participate

[7] A Finnish person told me that the Helsinki-Stockholm route on those ships was, in the '70s and '80s, travelled by Finnish workers who made a living in wealthier Sweden, and that the route between Helsinki and Tallinn is traditionally about cheap booze tourism. But the economic cartography of the Baltic Sea is shifting, and perhaps the ISEA cruise symbolised these shifts as well. It must be noted that part of the 'consumption' on board was electronic music of undoubtedly the highest quality, played by artists such as Scanner/Robin Rimbaud, Mutek, Felix Kubin, whereas the presentation of VJ Charles Kreil as headline act was a bit of a slip. The cruise was dedicated mainly to electronic/digital music and VJing, but also showed some art work and had a few panels and networking sessions; the main conference sessions and exhibitions were held later in Tallinn and Helsinki.

[8] This passage is inspired by the following quote from Donna Haraway: 'I remember that anti-Semitism and misogyny intensified in the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution of early modern Europe, that racism and colonialism flourished in the travelling habits of the cosmopolitan Enlightenment, and that the intensified misery of billions of men and women seems organically rooted in the freedoms of transnational capitalism and technoscience.' Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™*, pages 2-3, Routledge, 1997

[9] Mapping and Locative Media projects were discussed on a number of panels at ISEA2004. 'Locative media' seems to be a successful branding exercise but starts to look like a promise unkept. Headmap author Ben Russell's ideas about objects as embodiments of social relations, supported by anthropological research, sound interesting. Keynote speaker Jussi S Jauhiainen

Is new media art complicit in carrying forward the techno-deterministic saga?
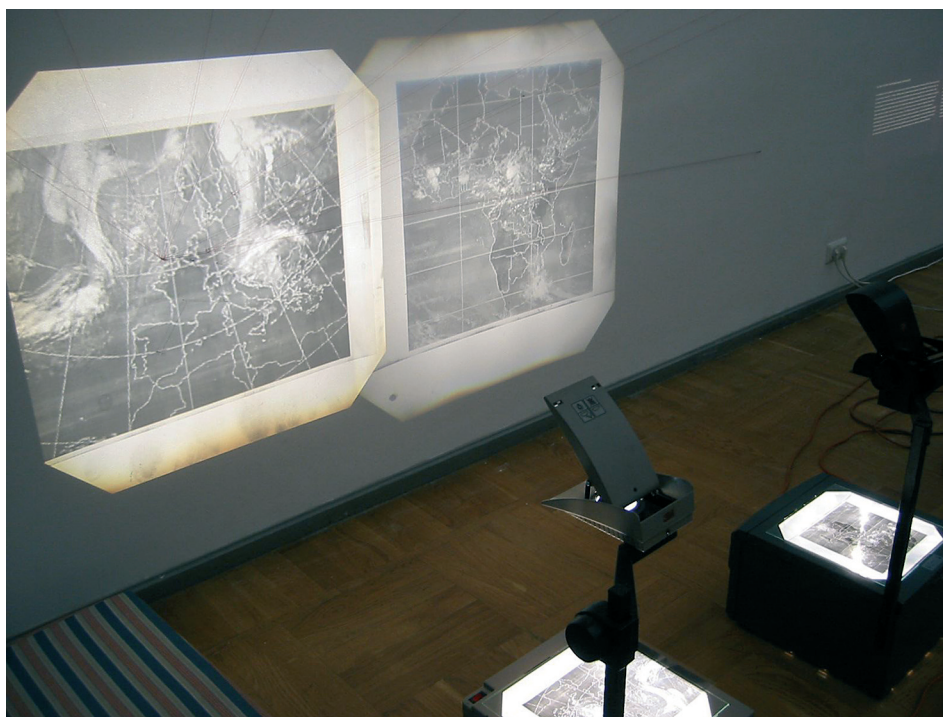
gave a good overview of current academic work on mapping and geography, but failed to formulate his own viewpoint
10 The 'unlimited expansion of rational mastery' is a central theme in Cornelius Castoriadis's critique of technoscience. See for example 'The Social Regime in Russia', pages 236-237, in *Castoriadis Reader*, ed. by David Ames Curtis, Blackwell. 1997
11 See for example *One-Dimensional Man* by Herbert Marcuse or 'Technik und Wissenschaft als Ideologie' by Jürgen Habermas
12 Wearables were a major theme in Tallinn, with a panel and an exhibition
13 Anne Nigten leads the arts and science programme of V2 Organisation. Also highly recommended is the theoretical work of María Fernández who presented a paper on 'The Crises of Representation' in Tallinn. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun's talk 'Control and Freedom: On Interactivity as a Software Effect', was reportedly very good (by then I was already on my way to the airport)
14 Media art is now mixing with high society, as was evident when in Helsinki the Unesco Media Art Awards were presented

force, with mercantile Empire building and Colonial map-making.**9** Following the trope of 'unlimited expansion of rational mastery', we have created, among other things, the atom bomb and the satellite, which provide a gigantic potential for death, destruction and social control.**10** Since at least the 1950s critical Cassandras have warned that technology has become autonomous, that its development cannot be influenced by anyone anymore, which inevitably leads to the question of the ethical dimension of techno-scientific progress.**11**

As the results of this process are the very tools of the trade for an electronic or media arts community like the one travelling on the ISEA Love Boat, it cannot shy away from dealing with these ethical questions. But ethics are not fashionable, not like wearable computers for instance.**12** ISEA 2004 offered bits and pieces of this discussion across a number of conference panels, but it was more of a subterranean thread. Some contributions, such as Anne Nigten of V2's inspiring, self-critical presentation, aimed at 'unravelling the tale' of global domination through scientific superiority.**13** Yet there is still a lot to do in unmasking the mystifications of the techno-determinism on which the media arts scene is hooked like a drug. Right now, when the world is swamped with new mobile phones and other gadgets, no one is talking about the ideological content of the things which insert themselves into the social fabric and, potentially, further the usurpation of the social by market forces. One wonders if this apolitical attitude is systemic, like a permanent viral infection, and if the field as a whole is not complicit in carrying forward the techno-deterministic saga, constructing discourses that aestheticise and romanticise the expansion of rational mastery and capitalist growth?

The self-constructed version of this tale, of course, is different. We, who are travelling on this ship, are trying to use the very same 'science' for the benefit of the people. We are here to conceive counter-strategies, form 'translocal networks of resistance' and transform the tools of projection of power into poetic engines of reflection. At least within our community we have overcome divisions of class, race and gender; alliances between intellectuals from Europe (East and West), Asia and Africa have been developing for quite a while and we are here to deepen and expand them. Among us are sharp feminist and Marxist criticists of technoscience who, following in the footsteps of Kuhn, Feyerabend and Haraway, are slicing up the big white whale of technoscience into mouthy pieces of science sashimi (served on satellite dishes, courtesy Makrolab). Both on this boat and more generally in our intellectual and artistic voyages, our journey is not without support from this society. We have been sent by the academic institutions of nation states and by arts funding institutions with fancy names and grand project titles. It is part and parcel of our job to study these things,

to enlighten and to explain. Our tactics, strategies, text collages and aesthetics are designed for intervention, mirroring, reflection, giving witness: it is not all black and white down there in the particle accelerator tunnel. This is the story that we bought into when we signed the cheques for this journey.

As the ship leaves Stockholm towards Tallinn I am sitting on deck five at the rear end of the ship, officially called the 'open deck' sound system. DJ Mukul is playing some exquisitely tasty tunes like that cover version of the Pink Panther theme song which perfectly suits the situation. I watch with some amazement the outbreak of libido amongst hardened techno-intellectuals frolicking in the jacuzzis and drinking champagne. I would not want to be seen as a moralist or a hypocrite (I am holding a vodka sea breeze in my left hand and a cigarette in the right and I am enjoying it) but as more guests join the jacuzzi fun, encouraged by Sara Diamond's Martini cocktail party, I walk away disapprovingly.

What is this media arts scene about then? Escapism? Are we going anywhere, or are we just drifting? Is there anyone still at the helm of this ship? The well known accusations about the self-reflexive nature of media arts discourse, of media art living in its own ghetto, in a comfortable sort of bubble, are not going away.**14** The suspicion grows, watching the circus travel from station to station, from Transmediale to Futuresonica to ISEA, that the notion of 'new' in new media allows us to continue in some state of historical amnesia, hopping from one theme to the next. What comes after the wireless-generative-locative hyperventilation? It appears to me that the real developments are dictated by successive commercial and technical 'revolutions' and media art just surfs on those waves. It is all the more important that specific histories are unearthed,**15** and that media art gets its relation to the ICT sector and the 'creative industries' sorted out.**16** Many things are fine as long as they are clearly labelled and seen as design, scientific study, experiment maybe, but not necessarily as Art, which is often difficult to find among the screens and monitors.**17** The more organised ignorance on the institutional level allows all this to continue and in the process facilitates the growth of a market of media arts festivals, academic courses, residencies, commissions. A little bit of Luhmann's social system science would not hurt and might help to explain how the content of a festival is often the result of institutional relationships and the structure of funding programmes rather than the critical engagement of 'curators' or event organisers with issues of our times.**18**

Some voices then go to the other extreme and say that media arts have failed to create any solid foundations and that this is the cause of the apparent lack in progress. I think it is necessary to remain sceptical about such claims. It is true that the wheel gets reinvented all the time, that we had better 'multimedia' in 1993 in some aspects than in 2004. At the same time actual

The notion of 'new' in new media allows us to continue in some state of historical amnesia, hopping from one theme to the next

change can be noticed as we have to respond to different challenges all the time – contextually, socially, politically. Making good work is hard and requires, besides imagination, craft, skill and endurance. Maybe we are going through a phase of preparation, of building up some stock, a time of 'breathing in' rather than creating terrific 'art'.**19** Once this grassroots development of decentralised knowledge production in a copyleft framework gathers enough momentum, with tools, libraries, procedures and associated forms sorted out, exciting new work will emerge and we can leave the 'imaginary futures' of the past behind once and for all.**20**

I am about to catch a cold (and a depression) if I stay much longer on the 'open sound' deck. Moving away from the wet bodies in the bathtub, I retreat to my cabin. My sleep is filled with weird dreams and anxieties: ships crashing into each other; sunken Soviet submarines on the Baltic seabed with the corpses of dead seamen and nuclear missiles still inside. I get up early and see the medieval towers of Tallinn rising from the mist. The hardcore party revellers are sleeping on the tables of the restaurant, next to the lavish buffets which are constantly refilled.

by the Finnish president to the prize winners, Sarai, Makrolab and the Radio Astronomy project

15 Darko Fritz presented computer art of the New Tendencies movement of the 1960s and '70s which showed some striking resemblences to much more recent strands of 'software art'. 'Histories of the New' was a topic for many sessions in Helsinki, including Shuddhabrata Sengupta's keynote 'The Remains of Tomorrow's Past' which speculated on the antiquity of new media practice in South Asia

16 The big Scandinavian mobile phone companies, Nokia and Sony-Ericsson, were notably absent as sponsors at ISEA 2004. However, I know from well placed sources that two Nokia spies were on the boat whose mission was to get information how to market their products better and maybe also pick up a few new ideas concerning features and services

17 Art has been declared dead many times, but now, with its grave being dug happily by the creative industries, its position is precarious as never before. It needs to be spelled therefore with a capital 'A' so that at least a small part of it stays above ground

18 Niklas Luhmann (1927 – 1998) was a German sociologist, administration expert, and social systems theorist, as well as the founder of the sociological systems theory. (Wikipedia)

19 Graham Harwood in conversation with the author

20 Title of a talk given by Richard Barbrook in Helsinki. Another version appeared in *Mute* issue 28

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