

VARIANT



Washington and the politics of drugs

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Those struggling to solve America's drug problems are accustomed to talk of "demand side" and "supply side" solutions. This language reflects a bureaucratic perspective: it tends to project the problem, and focus alleged "solutions", on to others, often on to remote and deprived populations. On the supply side, eradication programs are designed for the mountains of Burma or the Andes. On the demand side, increasing funds are allocated for the arrest and imprisonment (and less often, the treatment) of the substance abusers, often ethnic and from the inner cities.

Increasingly, however, researchers are becoming aware of a third aspect to the problem: protected intelligence-drug connections. Within the U.S. governmental bureaucracy itself, intelligence agencies and special warfare elements have recurrently exploited drug traffickers and their corrupt political allies for anti-Communist and anti-subversive operations, often but not always covert, in other parts of the world. History suggests that this third aspect of the drug problem, the protected intelligence-drug connection, or what I call government-drug symbiosis, has been responsible for the biggest changes in the patterns and level of drug-trafficking. Thus, at least in theory, it also presents the most hopeful target for improvement.

No one now disputes that in the immediate post-war period CIA assistance to the Sicilian mafia in Italy, and the Corsican mafia in Marseille, helped consolidate and protect the vast upsurge of drug trafficking through those two areas. No one disputes either that a heroin epidemic in the U.S. surged and then subsided with our Vietnamese involvement and disengagement.

But the same upsurge of protected drug-trafficking was visible in the 1980s, when the United States received more than half of its heroin from a new area: the Afghan-Pakistan border, from drug-trafficking mujaheddin who were the backbone of the CIA's covert operations in Afghanistan. Published U.S. statistics estimate that heroin imports from the Afghan-Pakistan border, which had been insignificant before 1979, accounted for 52 percent of U.S. imported heroin by 1984.¹

In the same period, at least a fifth of America's cocaine, probably more, was imported via Honduras, where local drug-traffickers, and their allies in the corrupt Honduran armed forces, were the backbone of the infra-structure for Reagan's covert support of the contra forces in that country.²

These specific facts are not contested by historians, and even CIA veterans have conceded their agency's role in the genesis of the post-war problem. Nevertheless, there is an on-going and steadfast denial on the part of U.S. administrations, the press, and the public. The public's denial is psychologically understandable: it is disconcerting to contemplate that our government, which we expect to protect us from such a grave social crisis, is actually contributing to it.

This denial is sustained by the general silence, and the occasional uncritical transmission of government lies, in our most responsible newspapers of record.³

It is further reinforced by a small army of propagandists, who hasten to assure us that today "the CIA's part in the world drug trade seems irrelevant"; and that to argue otherwise is "absurd."⁴

Because of such resolute denial, this most seri-

ous of public crises is barely talked about. Yet the problem of a U.S.-protected drug traffic endures. Today the United States, in the name of fighting drugs, has entered into alliances with the police and armed forces of Colombia and Peru, forces conspicuous by their alliances with drug-traffickers in counterinsurgency operations. It is now clear that at least some of the U.S. military efforts and assistance to these countries has been deflected into counterinsurgency campaigns, where the biggest drug traffickers are not the enemy, but allies.

Realists object that it is not the business of the U.S. to reform drug-corrupted regimes in other countries, such as Pakistan or Peru. Unfortunately U.S. overt and covert programs in such countries are usually large enough to change these societies anyway, if only to reinforce and harden the status quo. At the same time they affect the size and structure of the drug traffic itself. In the post-war years, when the drug-financed China Lobby was strong in Washington, and the U.S. shipped arms and Chinese Nationalist troops into eastern Burma, opium production in that remote region increased almost fivefold in fifteen years, from less than 80 to 300-400 tons a year. Production doubled again in the 1960s, the heyday of the Kuomintang-CIA alliance in Southeast Asia.⁵

Drug alliances confer protection upon designated traffickers, and such conferred protection centralizes, rationalizes, and further empowers the traffic. When one American representative of the CIA-linked Cali cartel was arrested in 1992, the DEA said that this man alone had been responsible for from 70 to 80% of U.S. cocaine imports (an estimate probably exaggerated but nonetheless instructive).⁶

It is true that this man, like many others, was ultimately arrested by the U.S. Government. But in many if not most such cases, key men like General Noriega are only arrested after U.S. policy priorities have changed, and *de facto* alliances made with new drug figures. In short, up to now the U.S. Government, along with other governments, has done far more to increase the global drug traffic, than it has to diminish it.

The U.S., Drug-Trafficking and Counterinsurgency in Peru

Today one of the most glaring and dangerous examples of a CIA-drug alliance is in Peru. Behind Peru's president, Alberto Fujimori, is his chief adviser Vladimiro Montesinos, the effective head of the National Intelligence Service or SIN, an agency created and trained by the CIA in the 1960s.⁷

Through the SIN, Montesinos played a central role in Fujimori's "auto-coup", or suspension of the constitution, in April 1992, an event which (according to *Knight-Ridder* correspondent Sam Dillon) raised "the specter of drug cartels exercising powerful influence at the top of Peru's government."⁸

Recently Montesinos has been accused of arranging for the bombing of an opposition television station, while in August 1996 an accused drug trafficker claimed that Montesinos had accepted tens of thousands of dollars in payoffs.⁹

In the *New York Review of Books*, Mr. Gorriti spelled out this CIA-drug collaboration more fully.



Alberto Fujimori with the Peruvian Government

"In late 1990, Montesinos also began close co-operation with the CIA, and in 1991 the National Intelligence Service began to organize a secret anti-drug outfit with funding, training, and equipment provided by the CIA. This, by the way, made the DEA...furious. Montesinos apparently suspected that the DEA had been investigating his connection to the most important Peruvian drug cartel in the 1980s, the Rodríguez-López organization, and also links to some Colombian traffickers. Perhaps not coincidentally, Fujimori made a point of denouncing the DEA as corrupt at least twice, once in Peru in 1991, and the second time at the Presidential summit in San Antonio, Texas, in February [1992]. As far as I know, the secret intelligence outfit never carried out anti-drug operations. It was used for other things, such as my arrest."

New York Review of Books, June 25, 1992, 20.

Others have pointed to the drug corruption of Peru's government, naming not only Montesinos, but the military establishment receiving U.S. anti-drug funding.¹⁰

Charges that the Peruvian army and security forces were continuing to take payoffs, to protect the cocaine traffickers that they were supposed to be fighting, have led at times to a withholding of U.S. aid.¹¹

Such charges against Fujimori, Montesinos, and the Peruvian military are completely in line with what we know about Peru over the last two decades. In the 1980s the same Peruvian drug-trafficking organization, that of Reynaldo Rodríguez L'opez, incorporated into itself several generals of the Peruvian Investigative Police (PIP), at whose headquarters Rodríguez L'opez maintained an office, and also the private secretary to the Peruvian Minister of the Interior.¹²

Before that senior PIP officials and Army generals were controlled by the Paredes family organization, described by a DEA analyst as then "the biggest smuggling organization in Peru and possibly in the world."¹³

In the words of James Mills, the Paredes were part of the established Peruvian oligarchy that goes back to the Spanish vice-royalty, an oligarchy which "controlled not only the roots of the cocaine industry but, to a large extent, the country itself."¹⁴

Other observers have given a much more marginal account of cocaine's role in Peruvian society. Patrick Clawson and Rensselaer Lee estimated that "nearly all Peruvian cocaine base and hydrochloride is sold to Colombians who fly in payments and fly out product." In their words, "As a \$1.3 billion industry, coca accounted for 3.9% of the 1992 \$33 billion GNP"; and furthermore was "of shrinking importance."¹⁵

But at about the time this book was published, it was reported that Peruvian police had seized a single shipment of 3.5 tons of pure cocaine belonging to the Lopez-Paredes branch of the family. This single shipment was worth \$600 million; and members of this cartel later admitted to having shipped more than ten tons (worth about \$1.8 billion) to Mexico in the previous year.¹⁶

The *San Francisco Chronicle* also reported from Mexican officials that "Vladimiro Montesinos... and Santiago Fujimori, the president's brother, were responsible for covering up connections between the Mexican and Peruvian drug mafias."¹⁷

It is evident that Clawson and Lee had seriously underestimated the role of cocaine in the Peruvian economy and polity.

The response of many Americans to the CIA's drug-symbiosis in Peru is to object that the alternative power base, the revolutionary Sendero Luminoso, is even more ruthless and bloodthirsty. Such would-be realists should listen to the arguments of Goruriti and others that what the U.S. is doing now in Peru, as earlier in China, Laos, and Vietnam, only plays into the revolutionaries' hands.¹⁸

The CIA-Government-Drug Symbiosis in Mexico, Colombia, and Elsewhere

It is important to stress that the CIA-drug symbiosis described by Gustavo Gorriti is not anomalous, but paradigmatic of the way the U.S. is consolidating its power and its allies in parts of the Third World where drugs are a part of the *de facto* political power structure. In the name of law and freedom, alliances have been made for decades with criminals and dictators. Now, in the name of fighting drugs, U.S. funds are channelled to those whose political fates are allied with those of the drug traffickers. These funds will, paradoxically, strengthen the status both of these traffickers and of the social systems in which they form a constituent element.

In Mexico, for example, the CIA's closest government allies were for years in the DFS or Direcci'on Federal de Seguridad, whose badges, handed out to top-level Mexican drug-traffickers, have been labelled by DEA agents a virtual "license to traffic."¹⁹

Like the SIN in Peru, the DFS was in part a CIA creation; and the CIA presence in the DFS became so dominant that some of its intelligence, according to the famous Mexican journalist Manuel Buend'ia, was seen only by American eyes.²⁰

The Guadalajara Cartel, Mexico's most powerful drug-trafficking network in the early 1980s, prospered largely because it enjoyed the protection of the DFS, under its chief Miguel Nassar (or Nazar) Haro, a CIA asset.²¹

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that members of the Guadalajara Cartel became prominent among the drug-trafficking supporters of the CIA's Contra operation.²²

Throughout Central America, and most notoriously in Panama, Honduras, and Guatemala, the CIA recruited assets from the local Army G-2 intelligence apparatus, who recurrently were also involved in drug-trafficking. Manuel Noriega, the most famous example, was already a CIA asset when he was promoted to become Panama G-2 Chief, as the result of a military coup assisted by the U.S. Army.²³

Later, when Noriega became Panama's effective ruler, his drug networks doubled as Contra

support operations, while Noriega himself was shielded for years by the CIA from DEA investigations.²⁴

In Honduras in 1981, the CIA similarly exploited the drug contacts of the Honduran G-2 Chief, Leonidas Torres Arias. (The most notorious of these, the Honduran Juan Ramon Matta Ballesteros, was simultaneously a member of Mexico's Guadalajara Cartel. His airline SETCO, under investigation by DEA and Customs for drug-trafficking, was chartered by first CIA and then the State Department to fly supplies to the main Contra camps in Honduras.)²⁵

The CIA was able to recruit both assets and Contra supporters from the drug-tainted Guatemalan G-2 as well.²⁶

One sees elsewhere this recurring pattern of CIA collaboration with intelligence and security networks who are allied with the biggest drug-traffickers, not opposed to them. In Colombia, U.S. funds have gone to the Colombian Army and National Police, both of which forces have collaborated with paramilitary death squads financed by the drug cartels, against their mutual enemy, the left-wing guerrillas.²⁷

In Colombia and in Guatemala as in Peru and Mexico, U.S.-assisted campaigns of repression, nominally against drugs, have in fact been deflected into counterinsurgency operations, mis-named as anti-drug operations to secure the support of the U.S. Congress.

In Colombia, according to authors Andrew and Leslie Cockburn, "U.S. officials...knew that millions of dollars of U.S. aid money, earmarked for the war on drugs, was being used instead to fight leftist guerrillas and their supporters. When [drug] cartel-financed paramilitary forces entered the town of Segovia in November 1988, the military stood by and watched. As Colombian Professor Alejandro Reyes remembered, "They killed forty-three people, just at the center of town. Anybody who was close to that place was shot. They were defenceless people, common people of the town....[I]t was a kind of sanction against the whole town for their political vote..." Forty-three people had been killed for voting the wrong way....In 1989...the U.S. shipped \$65 million of military equipment to Colombia. The Colombian chief of police politely pointed out that the items received were totally unsuitable for a war against the traffickers. They were, however, suitable for counterinsurgency. U.S. military equipment turned up in...Puerto Boyaca. [This was a region irrelevant to the drug traffic, but where the drug cartels' death squads were being trained].... U.S. helicopters were used in anti-guerrilla bombing campaigns, where, unfortunately, many of the victims were civilians. The State Department knew that too."²⁸

This hypocrisy of "anti-drug campaigns" dates back to 1974, the year when Congress cut back U.S. aid programs to repressive Latin American police forces, and then beefed up so-called anti-narcotics aid to the same forces by about the same amount.²⁹

To keep the aid coming, corrupt Latin American politicians helped to invent the spectre of the drug-financed "narco-guerrilla", a myth discounted by careful and dispassionate researchers like Rensselaer Lee.³⁰

U.S. military officers were equally cynical. Col.

John D. Waghelstein, writing in the *Military Review*, argued that the way to counter "those church and academic groups that have slavishly supported insurgency in Latin America" was to put them "on the wrong side of the moral issue", by creating "a melding in the American public's mind and in Congress" of the alleged narco-guerrilla connection.³¹

The actual result of such propagandizing is to sanction the role of drug traffickers and their allies in U.S. counterinsurgency efforts, and thus further to strengthen the status of the drug cartels in the countries they terrorize.

Two recent indictments by the U.S. Department of Justice reinforce the general paradigm of CIA-created intelligence networks that reinforce their local power and influence by major involvement in drug trafficking. In March 1997 Michel-Joseph Francois, the CIA-backed police chief in Haiti, was indicted in Miami for having helped to smuggle 33 tons of Colombian cocaine and heroin into the United States. The Haitian National Intelligence Service (SIN), which the CIA helped to create, was also a target of the Justice Department investigation which led to the indictment.³²

A few months earlier, General Ramon Guillen Davila, chief of a CIA-created anti-drug unit in Venezuela, was indicted in Miami for smuggling a ton of cocaine into the United States. According to the *New York Times*, "The CIA, over the objections of the Drug Enforcement Administration, approved the shipment of at least one ton of pure cocaine to Miami International Airport as a way of gathering information about the Colombian drug cartels." One official said that the total amount might have been much more than one ton.³³

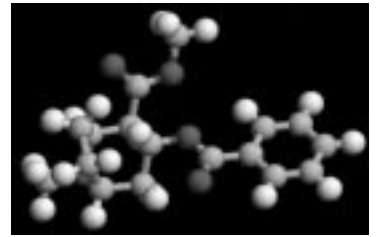
The information about the drug activities of Guillen Davila and Francois had been published in the U.S. press years before the indictments. It is possible that, had it not been for the controversy aroused by the Contra-cocaine stories in the August 1996 *San Jose Mercury*, these two men and their networks might have been as untouchable as Miguel Nassar Haro and the DFS in Mexico, or Montesinos and the Peruvian SIN in Peru.

The U.S. and Drug Traffickers in Asia: Washington, Afghanistan, and BCCI

The same U.S.-right wing-drug symbiosis has prevailed for decades in Asia. Former top DEA investigator in the Middle East, Dennis Dayle, told an anti-drug conference that "in my 30-year history in the Drug Enforcement Administration and related agencies, the major targets of my investigations almost invariably turned out to be working for the CIA."³⁴

The biggest recent CIA-drug story in Asia has centered on the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, or BCCI. The President until 1993 of America's traditional ally Pakistan, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, was the man who as finance minister granted special tax status for the CIA and drug-linked BCCI, the bank of his close friend Agha Hasan Abedi. Ghulam Ishaq Khan also served as Chairman of Abedi's BCCI Foundation, an ostensible charity that in fact fronted for BCCI's concerted efforts to make Pakistan a nuclear power.³⁵

BCCI's involvement in drug money-laundering, drug-trafficking, and related arms deals is now common knowledge; but the U.S. Government has yet to admit and explain why BCCI's owner Abedi met repeatedly, as reported by *Time* and NBC,



with CIA officials William Casey and Robert Gates.³⁶

BCCI became close to the CIA through its deep involvement in the CIA-Pakistan operation in Afghanistan.³⁷

This in itself was a drug story: by their aid in the 1980s Pakistan and the CIA built up their previously insignificant client, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, to a position where he could become, "with the full support of ISI [Pakistani intelligence] and the tacit tolerance of the CIA...Afghanistan's leading drug lord."³⁸

BCCI was in a position to launder much of the drug proceeds.³⁹

Inside Pakistan in the 1980s, the CIA's man for the Afghan arms-and-drugs support operation, banked and even staffed through BCCI, was the North-West Frontier Provincial Governor, General Fazle el-Haq (or Huq), who continued to run the local drug trade with ISI.⁴⁰

Haq and BCCI President Abedi met regularly with the then President of Pakistan, General Zia; Zia and Abedi in turn would meet regularly to discuss Afghanistan with CIA Chief William Casey.⁴¹

BCCI corruption was not confined to Asia. It extended also to the notorious CIA-Noriega alliance in Panama, and in the 1990s to the drug-corrupted military leaders in Guatemala that the U.S. turned to lead the war on drugs in that country.⁴²

BCCI, along with the United States Government's Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), even played a role in the supply of arms and trainers to the Colombian drug cartels' death squads in Puerto Boyaca, mentioned above.⁴³

It would be wrong to blame this pervasive drug corruption on BCCI alone, or to expect that the exposure in 1991 of BCCI, which was only achieved after great opposition and obstruction in Washington, will make the problem go away. BCCI was just one major player in a complex multinational intelligence game of drug-trafficking, arms sales, banking, and corruption. Other CIA-linked and drug-linked banks, to which BCCI can be connected, such as the Castle Bank in the Bahamas, the World Finance Corporation in Miami, and the Nugan Hand Bank in Australia, have

risen and fallen before BCCI's spectacular demise, and we should expect more such scandals in the future.⁴⁴

It is the same with the drug traffic itself. As long as we do not address the root problem of governmental drug connections that make and break the kingpins, traditional law enforcement will continue to be ineffective. The kingpin is dead; long live the kingpin.

Protection for Drug Traffickers in the United States

These gray alliances between law enforcement and criminal elements lead to protection for drug-traffickers, not just abroad, but at home. Drug-traffickers who are used as covert assets abroad also are likely to be recruited as informants or other assets in the U.S. Thus for example, a syndicate headed by Bay of Pigs veteran Guillermo Tabraue was able to earn \$80 million from marijuana and cocaine trafficking from 1976 to 1987, while Tabraue simultaneously earned up to \$1,400 a week as a DEA informant.

Vastly under-reported in the U.S. press are the number of cases where indicted drug-traffickers, because of their intelligence connections, are

allowed to escape trial in U.S. courts, or else have their charges or sentences reduced. Usually the public learns of these cases only by accident. In one case a U.S. Attorney in San Diego protested publicly when he was ordered by the CIA to drop charges against a drug-trafficking CIA client in Mexico (the head of the corrupt DFS mentioned earlier), who had been indicted for his role in what was described as America's largest stolen-car ring. Despite public support for his honesty, the U.S. Attorney was fired.⁴⁵

After a DEA undercover agent retired and went public, he revealed that in 1980 a top Bolivian trafficker arrested by him was almost immediately released by the Miami U.S. Attorney's office, without the case being presented to the grand jury. This was two weeks before the infamous Cocaine Coup in Bolivia, financed by the trafficker's family and organization, which briefly installed the drug-traffickers themselves in charge of law enforcement in that country.⁴⁶

These anecdotal stories, which are numerous, are tiny when compared to the U.S. governmental protection and cover-up of BCCI's involvement in drug-trafficking and money-laundering.⁴⁷

To its credit, the CIA knew of BCCI's illegal activities as early as 1979, and started distributing information to the Justice Department and other agencies in 1983. After an unrelated investigation in Florida, two of BCCI's units pleaded guilty to drug money-laundering in 1990, and five of its executives went to jail. But a senior Justice Department official took the unusual step of requesting the Florida Banking Commissioner to allow BCCI to stay open.⁴⁸

For over three years between 1988 and 1991, the Justice Department "repeatedly requested delays or halts to action by the Senate concerning BCCI, refused to provide assistance to the [Kerry] Subcommittee concerning BCCI, and, on occasion, made misleading statements to the Subcommittee concerning the status of investigative efforts concerning BCCI."⁴⁹

New York District Attorney Robert Morgenthau in this period was also openly critical of the pointed lack of co-operation from the Justice Department.⁵⁰

BCCI's drug-related crimes cannot be separated from its other illegal activities, notably arms-trafficking and the corruption of public officials. For years the CIA has used corruption of foreign officials to further its aims; and this has fostered a climate of corruption by other entities, such as BCCI. The size of the BCCI scandal and cover-up raises questions as to whether (with or without CIA connivance) BCCI, having corrupted senior public figures in such countries as Argentina, Brazil, the Congo, Guatemala, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, and Peru (to name only a few), may not have also managed to corrupt major figures in the U.S. as well.

As noted by many observers, BCCI and its American allies have prospered through strong financial and other connections to Presidents Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton. Many of these were orchestrated for BCCI by the Arkansas investment banker Jackson Stephens, a backer in turn of Presidents Carter, Bush, and Clinton.⁵¹

The CIA's world-wide penchant for political influence may help explain why it "seems to have protected BCCI and its backers for well over a decade."⁵²

Since the demise of BCCI, such influential connections to Clinton have been continued by Stephens and his close investment allies Mochtar and James Riady. In addition the Riady's' Lippo Bank in Hong Kong was at one point scheduled to buy out the bankrupt BCCI branch in Hong Kong, where the Burma drug lord Khun Sa was



rumoured to have deposited hundreds of millions of dollars. The deal went sour, and the BCCI branch was bought instead by the Australian Alan Bond. After Bond in turn went bankrupt, the Lippo Bank bought from him the old Hong Kong BCCI bank building, which it now occupies.⁵³

The root problem however is the U.S. decision to play *Realpolitik* in regions where the reality of right-wing power is its grounding in the resources of the drug traffic. Alternatives to this easy route of drug traffic symbiosis and co-dependency are not easy, but they must be turned to. The government strategy of global *Realpolitik* has helped to expand the global drug traffic to the point where the strategy itself, strengthening the flow of drugs from one CIA-protected network to another around the world, has become a more genuine threat to the real security of the domestic United States, than the enemies it allegedly opposes. The United States certainly does not control these dangerous allies it has strengthened and in some cases invented. The problem of disengagement from such world-wide alliances is complex, and disengagement by itself will not bring an end to the traffic which U.S. policies have fostered. But it is clearly time, with a new Administration and a new post-Cold War global environment, for a decisive repudiation to drug alliances, and a move towards new global strategies.

What Can Be Done?

What can be done to stop this governmental protection of drug-traffickers? In the short run we need an explicit repudiation of former drug-linked strategies, and an admission that they have been counter-productive. This might take the form of an explicit directive from the Clinton Administration, that old strategies to shore up corrupt right-wing governments abroad, like Peru's, must be clearly subordinated to the new domestic priority of reducing this nation's drug problems.

More specifically, the misnamed "War on Drugs", a pernicious and misleading military metaphor, should be replaced by a medically and scientifically oriented campaign towards healing this country's drug sickness. The billions that have been wasted in military anti-drug campaigns, efforts which have ranged from the futile to the counter-productive, should be re-channelled into a public health paradigm, emphasizing prevention, maintenance, and rehabilitation programs. The experiments in controlled de-criminalization which have been initiated in Europe should be closely studied and emulated here.⁵⁴

The root cause of the governmental drug problem in this country is the National Security Act of 1947, and subsequent orders based on it. These in effect have exempted intelligence agencies and their personnel from the rule of law, an exemption which in the course of time has been extended from the agencies themselves to their drug-trafficking clients. This must cease. Either the President or Congress must proclaim that national security cannot be invoked to protect drug-traffickers. This must be accompanied by clarifying orders or legislation, discouraging the conscious collaboration with, or protection of, criminal drug-traffickers, by making it clear that such acts will themselves normally constitute grounds for prosecution.

Clearly a campaign to restore sanity to our prevailing drug policies will remain utopian, if it does not contemplate a struggle to realign the power priorities of our political system. Such a struggle will be difficult and painful. For those who believe in an open and decent America, the results will also be rewarding.

Notes

1. U.S., General Accounting Office, *Drug Control: U.S. Supported Efforts in Burma, Pakistan, and Thailand*, GAO/NSIAD-88-94, February 1988, 12; cited in Peter Dale Scott, "Cocaine, the Contras, and the United States: How the U.S. government has augmented America's drug crisis", *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 16 (1991), 97-131 (98). (In 1979, the first year of the CIA's Afghan operation, the number of drug-related deaths in New York City rose by 77 percent.) *New York Times*, May 22, 1980; Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 437.
2. Scott, "Cocaine", 99.
3. Discussion, with examples of such lies, in Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 172-85, especially at 177-78; cf. 179-81; see also Joel Millman, "Narco-Terrorism: A Tale of Two Stories", *Columbia Journalism Review*, (September-October 1986), 50-51; Rolling Stone, September 10, 1987; Mark Hertsgaard, *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988), 314-15, etc.
4. Michael Massing, *New York Review of Books*, December 3, 1992, 10; *Nation*, December 2, 1991.
5. Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 162; Alfred W. McCoy, with Cathleen B. Read and Leonard P. Adams II, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 12 H6; both citing *New York Times*, September 17, 1963, 45.
6. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 29, 1993, A14. For the links between the Cali cartel, the Colombian, and the U.S. Government, see Scott and Marshall, 79-103, especially 81-94.
7. *Wall Street Journal*, January 28, 1997 (Montesinos); James Mills, *The Underground Empire* (New York: Dell, 1986), 809 (CIA).
8. *San Jose Mercury News*, April 19, 1992.
9. *Wall Street Journal*, January 28, 1997. The trafficker, detained in prison, later recanted his story. According to an Op-ed in the *New York Times* by Gustavo Gorriti, a leader among the Peruvian intellectuals forced into exile, "Mr. Montesinos built a power base and fortune mainly as a legal strategist for drug traffickers. He has had a close relationship with the C.I.A., and controls the intelligence services, and, through them, the military." *New York Times*, December 27, 1992.
10. *Washington Post*, May 10, 1992, A32 (Montesinos); Jonathan Marshall, *Drug Wars* (Berkeley: Eclipse Books, 1991), 24-26; *Wall Street Journal*, November 29, 1991; *Washington Post*, February 28, 1993 (military).
11. *New York Times*, November 11, 1991, A6; September 28, 1993.
12. Scott and Marshall, 191.
13. Mills, *The Underground Empire*, 877.
14. Mills, *The Underground Empire*, 585; Scott and Marshall, 83-84.
15. Patrick L. Clawson and Rensselaer W. Lee III, *The Andean Cocaine Industry* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 31, 181.
16. *Economist*, May 13, 1995, 44; *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 17, 1996; cf. Mills, 877-79.
17. *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 17, 1996.
18. *New York Times*, December 27, 1992. See also *Progressive*, May 1992, 25; *Nation*, March 30, 1992, 401.
19. Scott and Marshall, 34-39, quoting Elaine Shannon, *Desperados*, 179.
20. Manuel Buend'ia, *La CIA en Mexico* (Mexico City: Oceano, 1983), 24.
21. Scott and Marshall, *Cocaine Politics*, 35-41.
22. Scott and Marshall, 41; Peter Dale Scott, "Letter to the ARRB [Assassination Records Review Board]." *Prevailing Winds* (Santa Barbara, CA), 3 [Spring 1996], 40-43.
23. Scott and Marshall, 65.
24. Scott and Marshall, 68-72.
25. Scott and Marshall, 55-58.
26. Celerino Castillo, *Powderburns: Cocaine, Contras, and the Drug War* (Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press, 1994), 126, etc.
27. Peter Dale Scott, "Colombia: America's Dirtiest War on Drugs", *Tikkun* (May/June 1997), 27-31; Jonathan Marshall, *Drug Wars* (Forestville, CA: Cohan and Cohen, 1991), 17-21; Scott and Marshall, 89; Rensselaer Lee, *White Labyrinth*, 117-18.
28. Andrew and Leslie Cockburn, *Dangerous Liaison: The Inside Story of the U.S.-Israeli Covert Relationship* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 268-69. See also Marshall, 17-21. For the covert assistance of the Israel and U.S. governments, see Cockburn and Cockburn, 212-13, 264-79.
29. Michael Klare and Cynthia Arnson, *Supplying Repression* (Washington: Institute for Policy Studies, 1981), 23; Marshall, 13-15.
30. Scott and Marshall, 83-84, 95-98; Rensselaer Lee, *The White Labyrinth*, 106, 172-77, 218, and *passim*. One passionate advocate of the "narco-guerrilla" hypothesis, the Peruvian Minister of the Interior in 1985, had a private secretary who was a member of the Rodriguez-Lopez cartel.
31. Col. John D. Waghelstein, *Military Review*, February 1987, 46-47; quoted in Scott and Marshall, 198n; Marshall, 13.
32. *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 8, 1997, A10. Francois allegedly controlled the capital, Port-au-Prince, with a network of hirelings who profited on the side from drug-trafficking.
33. *New York Times*, November 23, 1996; see also *Wall Street Journal*, November 22, 1996. The total amount of drugs smuggled by Gen. Guillen may have been more than 22 tons.
34. Scott and Marshall (paperback edition), x-xi.
35. Jonathan Beaty and S.C. Gwynne, *The Outlaw Bank* (New York: Random House, 1993), 287-91; U.S. Cong., Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The BCCI Affair*, Report to the Committee by Senator John Kerry and Senator Hank Brown, December 1992; 102nd Cong., 2nd Sess., Senate Print 102-140 (Washington: GPO, 1993; henceforth cited as Kerry-Brown Report), 67, 104-07.
36. Beaty and Gwynne, 306-08, 315-17, etc.; Kerry-Brown Report, 306-08.
37. Peter Truell and Larry Gurwin, *False Profits: The Inside Story of BCCI, the World's Most Corrupt Financial Empire* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 131-34, 159-60, 430-31.
38. Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 449-50, etc. See also *Wall Street Journal*, May 1, 1992; Marshall, 47-53.
39. Truell and Gurwin, *False Profits*, 160.
40. Beaty and Gwynne, 48-52, 294-95, 313-17. See also Marshall, 51-52.
41. Truell and Gurwin, *False Profits*, 133-34, 160.
42. Beaty and Gwynne, 208; Scott and Marshall, 188; see also *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1991, A22.
43. Kerry-Brown Report, 69-70; Cockburn and Cockburn, 271-73.
44. For some of the links between Castle, WFC, Nugan Hand, and BCCI, too complex to explore here, see Scott and Marshall, 92-93 (Castle/Nugan Hand); Pete Brewton, *The Mafia, CIA, and George Bush*, 185 (WFC/BCCI); Kerry-Brown Report, 127-31; Alan A. Block, *Masters of Paradise* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1991), 171, 191; Penny Lernoux, *In Banks We Trust* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984), 87; James Ring Adams and Douglas Frantz, *The Full Service Bank* (New York: Pocket Books, 1992), 55 (Castle/Mercantile Bank and Trust/ International Bank/ BCCI).
45. Scott and Marshall, 36. Other drug-traffickers who were also linked to international smuggling of stolen cars include Norwin Meneses in Nicaragua and Carlos Lehder in Colombia.
46. Michael Levine, *Deep Cover* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1990; Scott and Marshall, 219).
47. Beaty and Gwynne, 323-44; Kerry-Brown Report, 185-239.
48. Beaty and Gwynne, 336-37; Kerry-Brown Report, 216-17; cf. 235.
49. Kerry-Brown Report, 237.
50. Beaty and Gwynne, 338.
51. Truell and Gurwin, *False Profits*, 365-67, 427-29; Beaty and Gwynne, 148-53 (Carter), 227-30 (Reagan-Bush). See also James Ring Adams and Douglas Frantz, *A Full Service Bank* (New York: Pocket Books, 1992), 55-59 (for BCCI's involvement with a major Clinton supporter). BCCI also had links to the family of one Clinton Cabinet member, and the law firm of another (Beaty and Gwynne, 227, 73).
52. Truell and Gurwin, 429.
53. Truell and Gurwin, 210, 365-66.
54. Eva Bertram, Morris Blachman, Kenneth Sharpe, Peter Andreas, *Drug War Politics: The Price of Denial* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 204-27. See also Marshall, 63-67.



Albert Ayler in a kilt

The Assassination Weapon

Edinburgh, 1966/7

Robin Ramsay

Looking back on it, the hippies, dopers and beats in Edinburgh in the Summer of Love, 1967 got a shitty deal. Where their equivalents in London got to sit and get blasted in front of light-shows accompanied by early versions of the Soft Machine and Pink Floyd at UFO, their Scots cousins' first exposure to light-shows was accompanied by a rambling avant-garde jazz band called the Assassination Weapon which must have sounded like a bad Albert Ayler out-take.

The name came from the band's drummer, Jamie Muir, and was taken from a J.G. Ballard short story. (Ballard was very hip at the time.) Jamie and I started the band; and though I have no recollection of how that happened, it was probably through Jackie in Cairns Brothers Bookshop near the University. Jackie ran the record-shop in the basement and began importing the first ESP records and I used to walk the three miles or so up from Leith where I lived to buy coffee and listen to his latest acquisitions. One day he played Albert Ayler's *Spiritual Unity*—and I walked back down Leith Walk in a trance. What an amazing sound! And to play this stuff you didn't have to learn all those damned, complicated, be-bop chord sequences. Which was good news to me: I could play the trumpet, but though I loved jazz, had been listening to it on things like the *Voice of America* and Barry Aldis' jazz programme on Radio Luxembourg since I was in my early teens, and could do a fair impersonation of mid-period Miles Davis, I knew next to fuck-all about playing the stuff.

The core of the band was Muir, me on trumpet and a sax player called Bernie Greenwood—a doctor, whose claim to fame was having once played with Chris Farlowe's band. Other local musicians would turn up just to try this stuff out. A very good trombonist called Brian Keddie, for example, a bass player called Ian Croall, who later went into jazz administration and was running something in Manchester, and a young tenor player called Gordon Cruikshank, I remember. (Cruikshank is a now very fine tenor player in the Coltrane mould and was still gigging, last I heard, based in York.)

We began playing in a pub and, amazingly enough, an audience turned up. More amazingly, they liked it. We outgrew that pub and moved to a bigger one where a friend of a friend called Adrian, who had been down to UFO, bought a couple of projectors and began doing wet slides on the wall behind the band. Suddenly the place is packed with every shade of underground/alternative people and there was this funny smell in the room. 18 years old at the time, I didn't smoke fags and had no idea what dope smelled like. But dope it was and after half a dozen? ten? nights in the place the police came along and leaned on the landlord and we were expelled from the room. 'For inducing a drug-like atmosphere', we were told. It

must have been the light-shows: the music would only have induced a headache. Somewhere along the way a group of art students, Alan Johnson, Graeme Murray and Ken Duffy—friends of Muir who was an art school drop-out—adopted the band. (Johnson did the artwork for the first Evan Parker LP on Incus, *The Topography of the Lungs*.) They got some money from the Art College and brought up from London the Spontaneous Music Ensemble—at the time just a name I saw occasionally in articles in the *Melody Maker*. My memory says that the late John Stevens, Kenny Wheeler and Trevor Watts came up from London—no small trip up the A1 in those days—in a Mini, for £50. They blew us away: goodbye Albert Ayler and Pharoah Sanders. The SME's sound was the one in my head from then on.

Expelled from the pub the band began to change. Adrian the light-show guy went off—to do Scientology?—and the band shrank. The SME showed us that bands could be any size or line-up and the Assassination Weapon changed its name, became the Free Association Quartet—Or was it Ensemble? And did the name change happen then or later that year?—and moved to a basement bar in one of the roads leading off Princess Street. Some nights it was just me and Jamie Muir, drums and trumpet, thrashing away in front of the audience. I blush at the thought of how that must have sounded.

By now it was definitely 1967 and Jamie and Bernie decided to move to London to join the free music scene there, centred round the Little Theatre Club. I didn't fancy going to London with no money, went to University instead, lasted a term and dropped out and went to London. But there was no scene at the Little Theatre Club. Most nights the people on stage out-numbered the audience. Jamie and I played there once, I seem to remember, and John Stevens invited me to play with the SME after our set. So I got to stand amidst the Gods—Kenny Wheeler, Derek Bailey, Paul Rutherford, Evan Parker. An amazing experience. But I was living in Richmond, supporting myself working in Marks and Spencer's, playing opportunities were few and far between and after a miserable 7 or 8 months in bed-sitter land I went back to Edinburgh where I teamed up with a Norwegian clarinet player called Jon Christopherson and began playing as a duet, mostly; but occasionally as a trio with Ian Croall on bass.

Of that period I remember little. But one highlight remains in my memory. In 1968—or was it 69?—messers Murray, Johnson et al conned the Arts Council of Scotland into giving them some money to put on a concert of 'contemporary German music' and brought over Peter Brotzman on sax and Hann Bennink on percussion. The gig was in the Traverse Theatre, the old Traverse, which was about 25 foot square and seated about 40 people. A group of Scottish Arts Council people turned up in their evening suits and sat on the front row. Brotzman and Bennink walked on and proceeded to make the loudest and most ferocious acoustic music I have ever heard. Brotzman was blowing and chewing his tenor's reeds to shreds every few minutes and changing them while Bennink thundered along without him. At the end

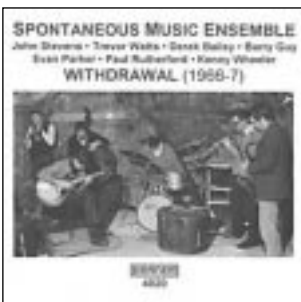


The Pink Floyd 1967

of the first piece the appalled Arts Council wallohs made a hasty exit to the bar.

Jamie Muir played quite a bit with Derek Bailey in London and joined King Crimson on one stage, part of the late seventies wonderful Crimson line-up with Bill Bruford—one of the greatest live rock bands I ever heard but whose recordings never lived up to the live version. I see the name Jamie Muir as producer of BBC TV programmes and it might be the same man. Bernie Greenwood I never heard of after 1967. I gave up playing at the age of 21—I had begun to hate the trumpet: it was so limited compared to the saxophone—and these days I could not sit through one side of the solitary Albert Ayler LP still in my collection.

About ten years ago, when I was about 40 and hadn't played for nearly 20 years, Evan Parker brought a band to Hull where I live. I went to see them. At the interval he came over and said hello to me and my partner, Sally. He said something like this to me: 'You were good. If you'd kept at it, you could be playing with me.' I said, 'Thanks a lot Evan. Pity you didn't tell me I was good in 1967, when I was a pimply, fucked-up, adolescent having a horrible time in London. I might have stuck at it longer.' But he didn't and I didn't. Life is full of what-ifs.



Dr. Future

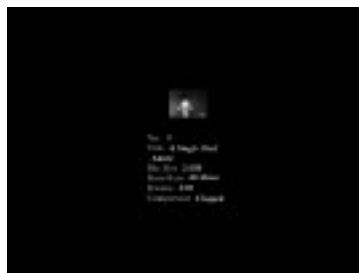
Artists as Workers and Technology as Artists

Critical Artists Devolve to Political Technologies

Critical Images II : DVolution!

The Lux Centre, 27th May, 2000

Apparently the artists at Andy Warhol's Factory spent most of their time doing celebrity portraits and promotional work just so they could pay the rent. At the end of the day Andy would assemble his staff around the table and say "Now, what are we going to do for Art? I can't think of anything today, does anyone have any ideas?" Artists that work with forms of mass media can be faced with the double edged sword of having to afford access to the relevant equipment and also the opportunity to pay for it by using their skills to accept commercial work. But balancing time spent working on paying jobs against time spent on "personal work" has led to unique conflicts in their roles as well as unique insights for media artists.



Images:
Lev Manovich

Critical Images II was a four day programme of events at the Lux Centre, London, culminating in a one day conference on strategies for moving image based arts in online and interactive contexts. Unlike the dismal performance of last year's Critical Images conference where panels of tasteful art house film makers and trendy 'Hoxtonite' multimedia designers engaged in an endless orgy of professional backslapping, the emphasis this time was on practitioners from further outside mainstream culture. In fact, nearly all the speakers present could have been described as "artists".

In the morning film maker Ana Kronschnabl showed examples of online movies from her Plugincinema site while artist Nick Crowe presented his web based movie *Discrete Packets* which showed how linear narratives could be stretched by using links to live real and fictional web sites. Then film maker Jon Jost moved the direction of the debate away from aesthetics as such by talking about the problems artists had in gaining access to the expertise that would enable them to pursue these more technologically sophisticated forms of movie making. Nick Crowe made the crucial point that artists must avoid relying too much on technical experts because they always work with reference to received notions of "quality"—technicians are not trained to exploit "bugs", only to erase them, and in doing so new avenues of exploration are missed. If the art world pursues these technical standards blindly then it would lead to the situation that Jon Jost described where art galleries would become cineplexes that just made people want to see more Hollywood films.

In the afternoon Kate Rich from the Bureau of Inverse Technology (BIT) showed several projects which involved the placement of video cameras in spy planes flying over the high security bunkers of silicon valley companies or planted in childrens toys to create films of the consumer landscape from the point-of-view of the technologies that created it. Jim Fetterley and Rich Bott of Animal Charm recycle footage from industrial documentary and corporate videos. In picking out the bits

inbetween moments of dramatic significance they create an eerie world made up of figures distractedly waiting or standing around with looks of misplaced concern. These are the minute things the camera records when it is being least influenced by the desires of its human operators. Chris Wilcha talked about his documentary *The Target Shoots First* which was composed out of camcorder footage shot while he worked as a marketing manager for Columbia House records, exposing a corporate culture which erases distinctions between personal values and marketing strategies.

The writer Chris Darke chaired the final session called Culture Jamming in which he vigorously championed the featured work as encouraging examples of "art re-engaging with social conditions." Animal Charm and Chris Wilcha both pointed out that in the US public arts funding has practically disappeared and this has generated a peculiar feeling of freedom and urgency. The need for these artists to pursue day jobs has given them a keener sense of the divisive values and limited visions of the corporate world, their work acquiring a politically oppositional motivation. Lev Manovich stated that commercial culture is now more formally innovative than the arts, which also suggested that artists must direct their arguments towards the level of the quality of lived experience instead. Kate Rich said that when corporations found out about their work what they most objected to was not the technological ingenuity of concealed surveillance but concern that they were being made fun of and their beliefs questioned. These artists seemed to be using their proximity to commercial media to recover from its technologies the remnants of alternative futures, or ambivalent energies that ignite other desires whose promises are not yet patented.

But then an odd thing happened. In a comment from the floor, the conference organiser Rhidian Davis questioned whether the debaters had assumed an outdated romantic role for the artist as a social outsider fighting against an impersonal corporate world. This comment had the effect of misrepresenting the practitioners as criticising from an arbitrary subjective position, as though they were grumbling about a mainstream culture that they had elevated themselves above. As if on cue, each of the panellists then denied one by one that they had ever claimed they were artists. This may have been intended to distance themselves from the implication that they were old fashioned elitists but it effectively silenced the debate, seemingly robbing the panellists of any basis on which to continue their discussion. It was as though either an objective social critique were not possible from the position of the privileged subject with their disorderly emotions and interests, or in contrast because of their romantic isolation from the cut and thrust of daily life. But the fact that artists at this conference had been forced to support themselves by working commercially had led to the direct personal motivation behind their strongest work. Perhaps it is this very familiarity with the unpalatable realities of corporate politics that is limiting the debate in the art world to presentations of formal innovations couched in soothing poetic terms or somehow trying to leave the responsibility for critique to internal conflicts articulated by the technology itself. Devolution indeed.

The complexity of this relationship between artistic intentions and the language of the technology itself had been made plain when Lev

Manovich showed his *Little Movies* project. He had taken some footage from the early cinema of the 1880s of characters involved in simple, gestural actions like circus performers posing and progressively reduced them down to single pixels to create an alternative movie aesthetic that preceded Hollywoods technical standards. However, the LUX Centre's internet connection proved unable even to cope with this as the sluggish playback stuttered to a halt during the presentation. But was this a technical "problem" or a further "feature" of Manovich's digital "aesthetic"? Perhaps this means we should not discount human intention entirely and not leave everything to the unfolding of the technology (or perhaps some technologies make bad "artists" just as some people do?). Technicians pursue "quality" and artists seek "meaning"—either may imply technical standards as well as other agendas.

The general tendency of the work shown at this event was to allow the technology to suggest its own internal potential or structures of meaning. This strategy works for a while but breaks down at the point where it comes up against how the technology is already being deployed by other parties for their own interests. The best you can then do is to expand your field of reference to include the social and political dimensions. At the moment when you find yourself in a world where standards, protocols and channels of communication are already in place then a space for technological neutrality and objective experimentation no longer exists. We are now in that world.

Web links

Anna Kronschnabl
<http://www.plugincinema.com>

Nick Crowe
<http://www.nickcrowe.net>

Lev Manovich
<http://visarts.ucsd.edu/~manovich>
<http://www.manovich.net/little-movies>

Hey, Jimmy

Peter Naylor

Over the years we have become accustomed to appalling bearded ex-teachers passing themselves off as the voice of the proletariat by penning supposedly realistic plays and films that only add to the embarrassment of Liverpool's long suffering populace. Inexplicably, even sane friends of mine have been known to treat Jimmy McGovern as a special case, some offering the opinion that he is somehow 'alright'. In my opinion he is the equivalent of John Prescott; he is the man people who don't want to admit the truth cling to. But, like the lovable deputy PM, he is deep down 'one more whore at the capitalist gangbang', as Bill Hicks put it. Let us examine McGovern's record.

That he started out at *Brookside* is probably enough to condemn him, but we can all make mistakes in our early years. He was involved in transforming Bobby Grant from a principled trade unionist into a misogynist caricature who cared for nobody but himself when his wife got raped. He also made that scab Billy Corkhill into a lovely feller who ended up snaffling Bobby's bird. None of this was anti trade union of course, Jimmy was only breaking new dramatic ground by questioning old certainties and challenging stereotypical caricatures. By painting the scab as a lovable family man and the trade unionist as uncaring and absorbed by the union. Very innovative I'm sure.

However it was during the highly praised *Cracker* that the first serious doubts about McGovern surfaced. As a series, its acclaim has always baffled me. Pseudo-psychiatry and a large girthed man being chased by an unfeasible number of gals couldn't disguise the fact that it was just one more cop show. What was more revealing was what it told us about the writer.

One story line involved a black man who was a rapist—never one to deal in stereotypes, Jimmy—who at one point tells the assembled white policemen that their worst nightmare is their wife being raped by a black man. This hit home with our white brethren who had clearly been troubled by just such a worry. Now, maybe I'm wrong or different but in ten years of marriage it has never occurred to me to entertain this notion. In McGovern speak, this sort of rubbish is known as confronting our demons. In reality it is just a regurgitation of hoary old myths and stereotypes. It reveals McGovern as a man who is wracked with guilt about his own bigotry, but has found a way of making a small fortune out of it. A recent interview in *Esquire* saw lovable Jimmy pissed and letting slip one or seven anti semitic remarks to a clearly frightened woman interviewer.

Crime number two in *Cracker* was the story of the Hillsborough victim. Leaving aside the fact that Robert Carlyle should have been nominated for the Nerys Hughes services to the Liverpool accent award, this set of programmes was full of even more dangerous nonsense. Carlyle has been at Hillsborough and still suffers from the trauma. One day he's going home from work and an Asian shopkeeper won't let him off with ten pence till later. Carlyle does what everyone who survived Hillsborough would do, goes home, shaves his head, gets a knife and stabs the shopkeeper to death and makes it look like a racist murder. But it's not racist, cos Jimmy's not like that and so Carlyle tells the shopkeeper that he is being murdered because he's a capitalist. Carlyle then broods about Hillsborough, sings Liverpool songs to the wrong tune on top of buses and kills some more people. But because he's a good socialist he only kills people who deserve it. The whole series

finishes with the cheap payoff of a tabloid journalist who wrote lies about Hillsborough getting blown up by a letter bomb from Carlyle.

Again McGovern tells us more about himself than he intends. Instead of questioning why no Hillsborough survivors have turned into mass murderers, or what it is about socialists' view of humanity that seems to stop them becoming serial killers, Jimmy merely sees the absence of these things from society as a gap in the market, no-one till him was clever enough to think of it. His complete misunderstanding of the people he's writing about comes through more in this set of programmes than in any other. Hillsborough, the drama, played an important role in highlighting the issues around the continuing denial of justice to the families. But I don't think you would go far wrong if you saw the whole thing as a huge act of contrition for the *Cracker* fiasco.

Recently McGovern has collaborated with some ex-dockers and friends to write the minimalistically titled *Dockers*. Typically and arrogantly, Jimmy insisted that a scab had to be a central character and that he had to be 'lovable'. This news was delivered to the dockers by Jimmy with all the gravitas of Moses descending from that mountain with a few rules. But why does the scab have to be lovable? It's always possible that one or two scabs in history have been quite nice to their kids, but the vast majority are despicable twats. However Jimmy's a groundbreaker and an innovator, so the scab gets to be played by the only decent actor in the entire film—are there no actors who are actually from Liverpool?—and the trade unionist gets to treat his wife like shit. Haven't we heard this somewhere before? To suggest that the *Dockers* film would have been less of a drama without the addition of the already well overstated world view of the scab says a lot about McGovern's approach. And given that he is seen as radical it says even more about tv and film drama in general.

While it is relatively easy to pick holes in McGovern's films, he is often defended on the grounds that 'he gets things done' or that 'he raises issues nobody else will touch'. Both of these things are true as far as television is concerned, but surely that is a reason to condemn television rather than a feather in Jimmy's cap. And just because he tells stories that at least include a radical working class point of view, does that elevate him and his work above criticism? Are we to be grateful that the powers-that-be allow us a fleeting and shallow amount of exposure and not kick up a fuss?

Part of the problem arises from the fact that, while Jimmy may include radical subject matter in his scripts, they are contained within an entirely conventional framework. Thus he cannot tell a story from only one side for that is not 'drama'. This willingness of allegedly radical writers to accept that there are certain immutable principles to writing drama is profoundly depressing. It is also dangerous. It has been widely reported that McGovern's next project is to be a film based on the events of Bloody Sunday in Derry. Following on from his insistence on including a lovable scab in *Dockers*, will there have to be a lovable squaddie in the Bloody Sunday film? Will the logic run that it is not 'drama' if we do not see two worlds collide? I fear that the answer to both questions will be yes.

It is perfectly possible—I would say vital—to make a film entirely from within the Bogside. The debates and discussions within that community at

that time—against the backdrop of the Battle of the Bogside you had questions about the role of the state; the logistics of urban guerrilla warfare; self organisation of policing, welfare and social provision; links with other liberation movements etc etc carried on at a high level and leading to immediate practical action; as well there was the generational divide over rioting, the fact that we were only two years on from the troops being welcomed etc.—are more than sufficient as subject matter and as an audience we should be forced to face the actions of the British Army on the day with the same degree of bewilderment and unpreparedness as the people on the march did. There is no need to restate the Army's view of the day, and even if there was it is surely not the role of a radical dramatist working with families of the victims of Army terror to do so.

This debate is by no means confined to drama, the tyranny of balance pervades television and infects documentary making even more. But of course the balance demanded is selective. A documentary on victims of crime is not required to be balanced by an interview with a burglar or mugger; documentaries on the financial system are not required to present us with the human casualties of stock market fluctuations; a film on child sex abuse need not bother interviewing a paedophile. So if balance is optional and negotiable, what's wrong with us negotiating it from our side. What's wrong with excluding the viewpoints of the police, the judiciary, big business and other over-represented bodies from drama and documentary depictions of working class life and struggle?

Myself and others made a series last year for Granada television called *Tales From The Riverbank*. The first point we made in the treatment for that series was that there would be no balance, that it was unnecessary given the volume of negative, anti-working class coverage of Liverpool's history over the years. The series was essentially a working class history of Liverpool over the last forty years. It was an unashamedly rank and file, bottom up history that contained no balancing interviews on any issue; riots, rent strikes, strikes and council rebellions included. If a tiny independent company in Liverpool can do that, how much easier would it be for a bankable 'name' script writer? And how liberating would it be for others to have successful examples of unashamedly biased films to point to as precedents.

All film making, documentary and drama, is authored. All script writing is biased. Until film makers, screen writers and others consciously acknowledge this and start to question and experiment with the fundamentals of the grammar and narrative voice of film, along the lines of James Kelman's seismic shifts in literature, we will remain mired in the current situation where attempts to make 'balanced' films lead to the more or less conscious adoption of the prevailing ideology.

A version of this article originally appeared in *The Gutter-snipe* magazine.



Jimmy McGovern

Indeterminacy &

Tim Hodgkinson

Introduction

We usually think of order as confronting chaos, pitting structures and plans against random unpredictability. But another approach is to distinguish different types of order precisely in terms of how they interact with indeterminacy. A type of order that was in some way open to indeterminacy might learn to be more subtle and complex, with a wider range of possible responses to the unexpected. A type of order that never interacted with indeterminacy would, in contrast, stay fixed and closed. Whatever the advantages of openness however, the open type of order clearly has a problem which the closed type doesn't: how does the system ensure that the input of indeterminacy doesn't directly erode, and even finally dissolve, its own organisation?

Human cultures have, I suggest, adopted a specific solution to this problem: openings to the indeterminate occur only at specific places and times, or "phases", these being clearly distinguished from the other more widespread phases during which indeterminacy is immediately assimilated to determinate models. The cultural practices identified as religion and art provide the main contexts within which these special phases happen. However, religion and art also offer modes of retrospective integration of the indeterminate, with religion typically re-presenting it as an expression of universal order.

What they utilised of chance in divination practices was absolutely not considered as such but as a mysterious web of signs, sent by the divinities... (who were often contradictory but who knew what they wanted) and which could be read by elect soothsayers.

Iannis Xenakis Towards a Philosophy of Music in Formalised Music.

From amongst the many types of phases for the interaction of order and indeterminacy within human cultures, this article will single out shamanism. I will argue that the technique of the shamanic trance is a method for deliberately exposing the shaman to the aleatory within the human psyche as a model or equivalent for the larger indeterminacies of the natural environment.

Indeterminacy and Shamanism

My argument will partly build on, and partly depart from, what I consider to be the single most important work of modern ethnography on Siberian shamanism, Roberte Hamayon's *La Chasse l'Ame*. Towards the end of this work, Hamayon sums her account of the functioning of shamanism into the phrase *la gestion de l'atoire*. (roughly, *the management of indeterminacy*, although *gestion* has less administrative connotations in French than *management* in English). It is still possible within this perspective to read the shaman's relations of exchange with the spirits, expressed in alliance (for hunters), or filiation (for pastoralists), as an interaction between order and indeterminacy. But for Hamayon the act of shamanising, or conducting a shamanic seance, is no more nor less than the symbolic exchange itself. Only in her conclusion does she retreat from this unyieldingly semiological account of what happens in a shamanic trance, to remind us that, if the sociology of shamanism can now be

sketched in—perhaps more than sketched for cultures where information is adequate—the psychology of shamanism still waits to be written.

It is the hint of this opening left by Hamayon that I shall use to introduce a distinct but complementary reading of the data—a reading based on the notion that, although the indeterminacy which shamanism explicitly addresses may be in the external environment, in the form of uncertain food supplies (for hunters), or uncertain health (for pastoralists), the act of shamanising activates the potential indeterminacy of the human mind and is therefore not reducible to a symbolic exchange dependent on, and conducted by, a continuously present and responsible narrative self.

Indeterminacy and Self

I draw from the work of Daniel Dennett the idea that the continuity of the human conscious self is an illusion made necessary by a cultural need for the continuous narrative projection and interaction of all members of society. In fact, according to Dennett, in day to day life, consciousness constantly suffers micro-lapses which it then papers over, so to speak, to project to itself, and potentially to others, an appearance of ongoing control. Much of the time, says Dennett, experience just happens: the integral sense that is given to it is a retrospective construction, and the all-powerful all-active decision-maker seated at the centre of the human mind is simply an illusion.

The real matrix of experience is what he calls the parallel architecture brain, or PAB. This is not an integrated structure with a central decision-making core, but a cluster of many different kinds of modules, all with different yet flexible modes of functioning, all having evolved in different evolutionary epochs as responses to the changing demands of Darwinian evolution.

One implication of Dennett's account is that, if it is narrative that defines the sense of self and is the essence of the human psyche's auto-structuring process, then societies could, at least in theory, suggest not only other narratives but other kinds of narrative. I propose that types of symbolic exchange that putatively involve direct encounters with other worlds, such as those of the spirits, will require a local and temporary lapse in the normal social narrative. Dennett's unified narrative self, or UNS, is not only an actor in this kind of exchange, but the bearer of a symbolic value that is here given up and then returned. For this to be the case, the relation between the UNS and the parallel architecture brain has to be abnormal. The UNS has to enter a phase of temporary abeyance, allowing in a lot more from the PAB, and only later reconstructing the significance of the new material into a narrative. The micro-lapses of everyday living that are usually constantly reabsorbed into the continuum of the social narrative and its self, now become a continuous and prolonged lapse.

After the travel episode, the shaman sits down and starts telling stories about what he has seen on his journey, and at the same time the spirits repose who helped the shaman on his journey.

Triinn Ojamaa: The Shaman as the Zoomorphic Human

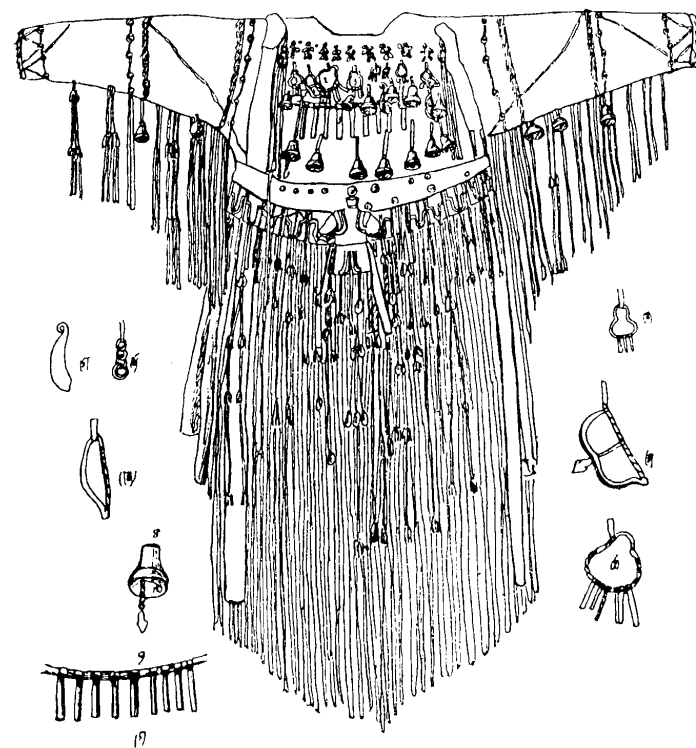


FIG. 2.

Shaman's ceremonial coats

Ritual

If this is so, then the problem of description shifts from the indeterminate element in shamanic practice to the determinate element. That is: in what way, and to what extent, is the information activated in the shamanic trance organised? It is important to understand this question as not being dissolved by the usual semiological or functionalist procedures which assume a fundamental continuity between all types of practice occurring in a culture. That is: the answer will be in terms of a type of articulation between determinacy and indeterminacy strongly different from that proposed for other types of social practice.

Even though a shamanic trance is an opening to indeterminacy, the trance is evidently set in motion and brought to a conclusion by the use of determinate ritual sequences that are carried over from one session to the next. This is what makes shamanising a method, and distinguishes the trance from an attack of madness. The elements of these sequences carry determinate meanings. That is: the ritual is not the indeterminacy itself, but the method for opening and closing a bounded zone of indeterminacy right inside the ordered cultural system.

In fact I define ritual as a technique for separating out phases that are normally intertwined and in mutual dynamic balance. On a psychological level ritual reorganises the rhythm of experience, and, where it is used for shamanic trance, this leads to episodes during which the narrative of the self is postponed. Right now, however, I want to apply this definition of ritual to the macro-level of the culture as an informational system. On this level, ritual frames or separates out different phases in the total informational process of the culture. It is not a completely different category of actions but a set of formal changes in the informational aspect of whatever objects, words or actions are brought into its sphere. These formal changes have long been identified in anthropological literature as exaggeration, stereotyping, and repetition. They represent a disruption of the formal surface of functional communicative modes, and this corresponds to an important shift in the

shamanism

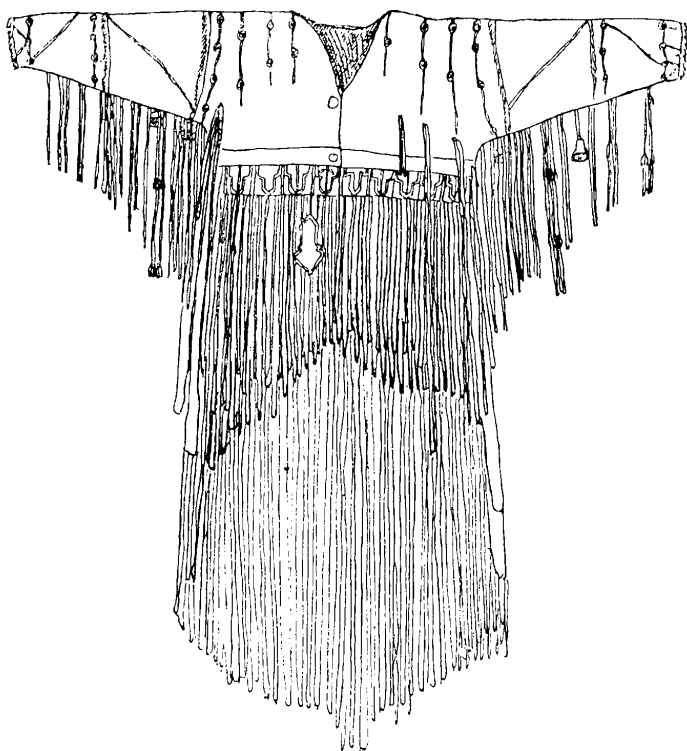


FIG. 1.

relation between signifier and signified.

The terms “symbol” and “sign” can be used to define the limits of the range of possible relations between signifier and signified. The symbol is defined as having a highly present signifier, tending to split into many parallel repetitive redundant intrances: singly or together, these indicate a signified that remains fluid, absent, and relatively undefined. Within the communicative field of the culture, the symbol then allows certain limited operations involving a meaning that remains ambiguous and indeterminate.

The sign, in contrast, has a signifier detached from any one manifestation in time and space; its signifier is that aspect of the concrete thing that can be abstracted, generalised, exchanged with another one similar. Meanwhile the signified becomes less fluid, more fixed. So the sign spans less of the possible distance between presence and absence than the symbol. But it spans it more functionally because it enables the absent signified to be configured as a distinct and determinate idea, and at the same time one concrete situation to be compared with another.

It is not surprising then that there is a very concrete side to the way in which ritual frames the shamanic trance. The ritual situates and frames the trance in the now and the here. There is always the aspect of an attentive re-situation and restitution of the participant(s) into the moment and place in which they are present. The participants are deliberately withdrawing from the mobility of the sign offered by the cultural system: they are re-embedding the sign in a conspicuous tension between presence and absence. And, as I suggest below, it may be a special concentration on the highly present that triggers the shaman's imaginary absence or journey into the domain of the spirits.

Symbols rather than signs also characterise the transmission of information from older shamans to novices during training. This knowledge does not explain how something works but involves familiarity with all the specific occurrences of a phenomenon. Ritual activity requires repeating a procedure until all the concrete intrances in a set have been exhausted. In

some forms of shamanic training every individual part of the initiate's body must be individually “consecrated” by a spirit if the shaman is not to risk death during healing seances.

The Training of a Siberian Shaman - Leonid Lar

And, as every ethnographer knows, interviews with shamans usually start with the shaman displaying her or his knowledge in list form even if the question was intended to avoid just that. Again what is important here is not the “content” of the lists, the fact that each item can be allocated a cultural meaning to be decoded or not decoded by the ethnographer, but the repetitive parallelism of the form.

This distinct organisational character of ritual and symbolic information shows that the nature of the determinate elements in shamanic practice is such as to preclude their recuperation into the semiotic totality of the culture. Such a recuperation is reductive because, judged as a sign, a symbol is inefficient, ambiguous, and polyvalent, so that semiological interpretation leaves out the main thing that symbols do, which is to herald, activate, or refer back to, zones or phases of indeterminacy.

In some episodes of the shamanic trance we see the shaman acting out memorised ritual sequences, whereas in others he or she appears physically disorganised, or at least differently organised, and so incapable of intentional action, and perhaps dependent on help from an assistant. If shamanising is nothing else but symbolic exchange, this lack of control must be a theatrical effect geared to a symbolic and communicative function. Are shamans then just actors? Is the shamanic trance in fact a theatrical performance in which the shaman pretends to communicate with spirits—presented as autonomous and volatile—whilst actually enacting a symbolic exchange according to the rules of that exchange so as to arrive at a predetermined or otherwise determined result—the verdict, diagnosis, or healing?

Hypnosis

There are parallels here with the current debate about hypnosis; do hypnotised subjects just simulate being hypnotised or do they really enter a different state of mind? The psychologist John Gruzelier identifies two main characteristics of mental behaviour under hypnosis that indicate what can legitimately be called a different state of mind. The first of these is that the brain “turns in on itself”, losing interest in sensations from the external world and paying more attention to products of the imagination. The second is that the brain stops testing, criticising, and verifying perceptions; therefore products of the imagination become more credible.

I suggest that the shaman engages in partial self-hypnosis and that the lapse in the UNS and opening towards the PAB is achieved via the inhibition of both attention to the outer world and criticism and verification of perceptua. Furthermore, the shaman's withdrawal of attention from the outer world seems often to be achieved by the intermediary step of focusing the entire attention on a highly present object to the exclusion of everything else, just as it is in hypnosis with the focus on the hypnotist's voice. The shaman's personal equipment (in which I include not only actual objects and their ritual uses but also mental images and sensations acquired by training) contains one or more element that func-

Images: Siberian landscape Photos: Tim Hodgkinson



tions as the equivalent of the hypnotist's voice: that is, it is an object towards which the shaman has built up the mental habit of exclusive attention. It triggers the characteristic state of mind of the shaman during the trance.

I have found that, when questioned about what happens during trances and rituals, shamans emphasise seeing—meaning inner seeing. This is consistent with the observation that where attention is withdrawn from the external world, brain areas normally occupied in processing sensory information begin to present experience on the basis of random fluctuations and feedback within the sensory system. For visual centres this tends to produce a raw material of symmetrical and geometrical shapes, which are then interpreted as substitute visual impressions of things that they resemble, with their appropriate emotional and contextual connotation filling in the image, fleshing out, so to speak, the geometrical bones. At the same time, the shaman typically dances and drums, so that the visual information is dynamic. Physical movement dynamises and shapes the fluctuations in the sensory systems. Hence images appear and disappear, move, approach, lead away, fly, and so on. The state of mind of the shaman might be compared to that of a person manoeuvring a canoe down a fast-moving stream: the difference is that the stream is now inside the person and not in the outside world.

My conclusion is that shamans are not just actors. They do not maintain the continuous narrative self that an actor maintains when acting a role. In a particularly revealing interview with a Tuvan actor specialising in playing the part of shaman in touring theatre performances, the actor

described how he was sometimes mistaken for a real shaman and invited to heal people: the reason he did not do so was that "He did not see."

This is underscored by the fact that sometimes even real shamans fail to see. In Friedholm Brückner's documentary film *Boo Nar* on the shamans of Mongolia, at least one of the trances is abandoned quite early on as the shaman decides that it is not going to work on that occasion; this despite all the preparations having been correctly made, an audience assembled, and so on.

Provisional Conclusions

Evidently religion and ritual have long been identified as distinct objects or fields of academic study. The types of explanation or analysis offered for these objects have tended nevertheless to see them either as results of the general social structure and social process or as the cause of effects required by that structure and process. Whatever can't be explained this way is allocated either to the transcendent itself, for those who "believe", or to psychology, for those who don't. In the case of shamanism studies, the political history of this territorial division is particularly evident. Thus the terms "ecstasy" and "trance" were applied early on and reflected a Christian horror of illegitimate and pathological forms of transcendence.

(Ironically enough, by divorcing shamanic practice from its social background this later made shamanism highly exportable to post-Christian western societies.) Furthermore, anyone involved in shamanism studies still has to reckon with the enduring charisma of Mircea Eliade and his fascistic idea of a transcendent cosmic imperative: this alone provides a strong incentive to explicate religious experience exclusively in terms of social structure and social meaning. This is the background against which we must understand Hamayon's assertion (1993) that:

According to the symbolic representations of shamanic societies, the shaman's ritual behaviour is the mode of his direct contact with his spirits; hence it is functional behaviour that follows a prescribed pattern.

My answer to this is that if the shaman's ritual behaviour is the mode of contact with the spirits, then ritual behaviour must be understood in the broad sense of everything that happens to, or is done by, the shaman. In this case the shaman whose behaviour literally and exclusively follows a prescribed pattern is either doing a small ritual which does not require a trance as such, or is not a very good shaman. There may well be prescribed patterns which the shaman learns during training, but in an actual trance the shaman will mentally grapple with spirits with their own highly unpredictable behaviours. It is not that symbolic exchange with the spirits does not take place, but that the transactions, negotiations, and dialogues with the spirits are open, left open by the rituals, and that their openness is precisely why they take place at all. This, in turn, is why these exchanges must be represented specifically by symbols and groups of symbols, that is to say, by using the particular open relation between signifier and signified that we find in symbols, to mediate between indeterminacy and determinate meaning.

Although ritual as we know it in ethnography may be rendered obsolete by certain types of historical change, no unifying historical project, such as that of socialism or of market-based democracy, can substitute itself for the discontinuity of cultural phase structures responding to the objective demands of human complexity. Cultures simply cannot be considered as continuous entities. Nor can their special phases be considered as functional on the level of the culture itself, only on the level of the total context inhabited by the human

being. Considered sociologically, therefore, ritual is social only in that it arises out of the problematic of a social being, but it does not express a given social logic, only how that logic engages with what is intractable to it.

Notes

1. For reasons of brevity, this article is absolutely not exhaustive in terms of covering even the main headings under which shamanism is normally considered: in particular I have had to refrain from situating my analysis in relation to other analyses in the literature. In a general way I have drawn on my own field notes and recordings made in Siberia during several extremely informal study trips made since 1990.
2. The idea of linking shamanism to hypnosis is absolutely not original, the classic version being the adaptation made of Shor's work by Siikala (see bibliography).

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Ian Brotherhood

Tales of The Great Unwashed

-Any chance of a late lunch?

-How?

-I'm away down the town to see Muhammad Ali.

Marty just laughs, but he doesn't know the man's in town for the book signing. If he knew he'd be wanting to go as well. But I only just got the call from my brother to say that the man's definitely showing, so I've says we'll meet down The Shoe.

He lets me go at one on the dot cos the place is pretty dead. The cellar's organised and the deliveries are all checked and stacked, so I'm offsky. I know Marty'll likely have a right go at me for not telling him what's what. But he did ask, and I did say, so no comebacks as far as I can see. Maybe I can get a picture took with the big man to prove it.

It's pure bitter outside, and I never took a proper jacket out. If Mark would've called me earlier I could have nipped home and grabbed the bunnet and gloves and that, but no chance now. So it's only the wee thin cagoule I've got and the trainers are totally dodgy, big wide mouths at all sides and much coldness coming in.

Thank god it's not wet. The sun's out good-style, but it's the likes of that winter sun with no heat in it. It's dead bright, and it's coming at you from a dead low angle so you think you're a wee microscopic beastie getting examined, and every hair on your head, every crease on your clothes, every movement you make is like dead obvious and clear to everyone, and even the folk you pass in the Sauchie, they're all dead bright and feel really close, like you can see all their pores and that, every bit of them, and the likes of the lassies with the make-up, you can see where the make-up's on their skin and where it isn't.

So I make it fast down Sauchie, and it's dead busy what with it being like office lunch-time, and all these punters from the lawyers and accountants and call centre offices and all that are all sort of running about giving it shop and grub and dash and panic, back before they're late and all that, and I know I'm rushing as well but it's nice to think that I just work in a bar and I don't have all this big hassle about clocking in and out and all that.

Marty's great about a wee ten minutes here and there, but it's fair enough cos I'm always in dead early. I really am, every day. I'm in there first thing, when the rolls and pies and that are getting delivered, and that's usually half-seven. So I slow down a bit and try to look cool, or cooler than the panicky office types anyway. I'm just having a wee walk. I'm walking brisk-style to combat the cold. That's it. I'm a student. I'm studying Chinese medicine or, aye, I'm into ancient languages and that and I'm having a wee lunch-time stroll to ponder what I got at the lectures this morning. That's it. Maybe one of these office babes will stop me and ask the time, and I'll tell her, well, I'll tell her a guess cos I don't have a watch, but she'll be smiling anyway and ask me if I fancy grabbing a quick coffee somewhere but I'll be like that, sorry doll, I'm off to meet Muhammad Ali and I'll walk on as cool as you like, and she'll stand watching me heading off round the corner into Buchie, and she'll wonder if she'll ever see me again.

By the time I reach The Shoe I'm totally freez-

ing, and I know my nose is starting to go that way it does. My ears are nipping something desperate, but I don't rub them cos that just makes them worse. No sign of Mark. He says he would be right outside, likely cos he's no cash as usual. But he maybe nipped in to use the bog, so I go in.

The place is packed. The Shoe has one of those like really old fashioned insides, with a massive great bar that runs right round the place in a big circle. It's stacked with yet more office types, all these guys with cracking long coats on and smart breeks and brilliant white shirts and mad ties of all colours and patterns, and they're all laughing and smoking, and the box is showing some football on like about twenty different screens of all sizes, and it's so packed I have to squeeze my way past a few of these guys and the smell of the booze is a bit boaky when you're not drinking yourself. Don't get me wrong, I like a few pints, but when you're working with it all the time and then suddenly you're on the other side of the bar, it's a bit weird sometimes.

So I go round the whole place, check the bogs, no joy, so back outside. The lane's quiet compared to The Shoe. I stay in the doorway, cos it's big enough that you can stand there and folk can still come and go and that, and I make a smoke. That takes ages right enough cos my fingers are sort of stiff and like frozen, but making the smoke is good cos it loosens them up a wee bit and they get tingly and I get some heat back in them and I start smoking the thing and that's when Mark turns up, standing at the end of the lane looking down. He doesn't see me at first, so I raise my arm.

He looks even colder than I feel. Mark's the same size as me, looks the same about the face and that. He's five years younger. He doesn't really remember Ali like me. He knows all about him right enough, all the stats and that, dates, opponents, he's better than me at all that type of thing, I'll give him that. But he can't remember the Thrilla and the Rumble. He's tried, but he just can't. He even got the old self-hypnosis tapes to see if he could get back to it, but he was just too wee, and when I tell him he was definitely there with us in the room for the Foreman fight, that really gets him mad. I can still remember he was a right pain that day, getting in the road and jumping about on his space hopper thing and causing chaos till eventually the old man slapped his arse and put him in the room so we could watch it in peace.

Have you seen that queue? he asks, like it's my fault or something.

I've no even been there yet I say, and he gabs on about how the old man wouldn't tap him the bus fare so he had to hoof it, and that was an hour, so odds-on he'll be trying to get into me for a fiver, or at least his fare home, so that puts me on 'a downer just waiting for it to happen.

We plod round to the book-shop, and right enough there's this almighty queue from the door of the shop, round the corner, and then down to the next corner, and there's this wee cobbled lane running down the back and the queue's away down there as well. And it's a right tight queue too, like the folk maybe think they'll get in faster if they squash up, but maybe they're wanting each other's heat as well. The punters in the queue sort of look at us as we cross the road heading for the

main door, as if we're going to try and jump ahead and they're just dying for an excuse to pounce us and give us a doing, just cos they've got the fifteen sovs for the book and we don't.

There's two security guys on the door, and they look like they want to run away. One of them's gabbing into his walkie talkie, and the other one's just pure scared looking. But it's not like the crowd's going mad or that. Inside, there's so many bodies that you can't make out anything through the legs and coats and heads, but you can hear wee like waves of applause coming out over them, so it's a cert he's in there somewhere.'

It's only half-past says Mark, so the man must've got in early. Thing is, he's due in Edinburgh at half-three, so surely he'll not be hanging about that long. We should get to see him when he leaves.

So we're just kind of hanging about near the door, and you can see there's no way the security guys are shifting away from their patch, no chance, so I figure we're safe enough standing here, but the next thing you know there's two cops coming up Union Street along the pavement on our sides with their arms out and they're moving folk along and telling them to clear it, and the punters in the queue are like squashing against the window, and the ones with copies of the book are sort of half holding them up as if they're big tickets, so we shift away before we're asked, to the opposite corner of the junction where we can still sort of half-see in the windows over the heads of the punters in the queue.

It's good at this bit cos the sun's on us, but it's still so cold I can hardly move my face, and after about five minutes Mark's teeth are going.

Got any dosh? he says, and he rakes about in his pocket and I take ages getting my fingers into mine cos they're so frozen and stiff, and I take what change he has and put it with mine and it's like two-fifty we've got, not even enough for a pint each anyway, and if we go for a half-pint we might miss the man coming out, so Mark says what about a coffee then, and I give him the shrapnel and he heads round to the chippy and I'll give him a shout if the man shows.

The coffees last about twenty minutes. Inside the shop we see the crowd shift all the time, and now and then we get a glimpse of a bright white shirt with a black head, and that must be him. You can tell by the way all the bodies and heads are angled towards him, and whenever he moves they move too, and even when he's out of sight we can sort of guess where he is by looking at the folk pressed against the windows outside, cos they're on their tiptoes and telling each other they can see him.

What's happening boys? says this old guy right behind me, and a right fright I get too cos I didn't know he was there. He's wee-er than me, and he's got this like mad scab right down the side of his face, like he must've gone on his ear, and there's a line of black stitches and dried blood where half of an eyebrow should be, and right stinking he is too, even with it being so cold that you think smells like that would be frozen, and I step a wee bit away from him and tell him it's Muhammad, and he laughs then sort of growls and says Cassius, Cassius was his name, and they brain-washed him and used him and all that, and Mark

gets involved then and says how he's a hero and he never did anything against anyone and it's not right talking him down and you can see this old lad getting a bit sort of wound up and like mad about the eyes, then he calms down a bit and asks us if we've any spare change and Mark tells him where to go and starts loosing the rag a wee bit so I have to sort of step in halfway. So this old bloke kind of shuffles off, but he only goes so far as the corner by the shoe shop across from the book shop, and he stands there watching, same as us.

Two o'clock. That's me well late now, even if I head back. Mark's leaning against the lamp post, shaking. He doesn't want to go yet. Neither do I. There's a phone box on the other side of the street just by the entrance to Central, and I'll still have a view of the main doors, so I head over, call the work. Marty's on like a shot. Any chance of an extra half-hour? No way. He's in a right mood as well, says he's to meet the regional manager at that trade show at half-three, and if I'm not back Sharon'll tell him, and I'll have my balls in my hands. Half-two latest, or else. He wants me to sort the snacks order for next week and he's on about something else when this cracking big black limousine draws up outside the shop and the beeps start going so I hang up, and before the receiver hits the box I can hear Marty shout, half-two, half-two.

Another half hour later, the limo's away cos it got moved on by the cops. The queue doesn't seem to have moved at all. We see a couple of footballers knocking about, trying to get in, and a guy

who used to be a boxer but we can't remember his name, but no-one's bothered with them.

Mark gets another coffee, and we share it. The old guy comes back over. He's worse than us, totally freezing. Mark gives him the last of the coffee and I pass him my baccy to make a roolly. He must've managed to get some dosh off someone cos he's got a fresh can of dead strong cider, and he cracks it open and offers us a slug but we both say no thanks. He starts on about how he remembers when Ali was drafted and that, how he lost the best years, and Mark starts asking him stuff, like quizzing him about the early fights and that and you can tell this old lad knows his stuff. He gets some of the names and dates wrong, but Mark puts him right, and after ten minutes it's like they're having a competition, and I'm happy to listen cos I'm no use at all that stuff. And all the time we've got our eyes glued on the big windows.

The sun's shifted away behind Central. I can't feel my toes any more, and even jumping on the spot is just pure sore. The limo draws up again, but there's no reason to suppose he'll appear this time either. The punters in the queue in Edinburgh must be freezing as well.

Then, right across from us, one of the windows moves. Not the folk inside, the actual glass shifts and swings, and it turns out it's not a window, it's a door at the side of the shop. There's reflections, black and white on other glass, a kind of a metally scrape, and he's here. He's right there. Ali. Me and Mark move across the road. The old guy stays put.

So we're on the road, right at the kerb. Ali's

maybe come out for some fresh air. He's about ten feet away. He's huge. It's almost impossible, how big he is. He's on a wee step right enough, but it's the breadth of him, the size of his arms, his face. Maybe it's the light reflecting off the new shirt, but it's like he's glowing. Folk in the queue on either side of him shift and crane their necks and mutter, but none of them move cos they're not wanting to lose their places. No-one says anything. We all just stare. Ali stands there, dead still, and he smiles, just a wee tiny smile right enough, but his eyes are bright, looking down at the faces. Maybe he's glad of the cold air for a few seconds.

Mark's got my arm, and he's holding it so tight that he's nipping my skin. I want to say something, do something, but can't. All I can do is try to remember it, freeze it in my head. Ali scans everyone dead slow. From behind us, the old guy shouts, gaun yersel big man. Ali raises his arm to chest height, palm up, like a wee wave to everyone, then starts turning back towards the shop, so slow, still smiling. The door swings behind him, and the white shirt is swamped again, and that's him gone.

We go back over and see the old lad, and he's well chuffed, makes us takes a swally of his cider to celebrate. I saw Cassius, he says, I saw Cassius.

Mark walks me back up the road so I can see if I've still got a job. We horse about in the precinct, boxing the air as we jog up Sauchie. We saw him. No picture right enough, and no autograph. But we saw the man. So we did.

Degraded Capability

Phil England

Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis

Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman, eds £14.99
ISBN 0-7453-1631-X Pluto Press

"While the role of the journalist is to present the world in all its complexity, giving the public as much information as possible in order to facilitate a democratic debate, the propagandist simplifies the world in order to mobilise the public behind a common goal."¹

The conclusion to be drawn from *Degraded Capability* is that during NATO's 78-day bombing of Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro from March 24th-June 10th 1999 the media overwhelmingly acted in effect as a propaganda machine. As a collection of writings by a variety of experts, *Degraded Capability* provides a necessarily patchwork look at the coverage of the war and a good deal of cross-referencing is necessary. It is nevertheless a major contribution to understanding the truth behind the many fictions of the war and how these were maintained. In conjunction with a reading of Phillip Knightley's chapter on Kosovo (provocatively titled "The Military's Final Victory") in his classic history of the war correspondent, "The First Casualty",² a picture starts to emerge of the mechanics of media management: blanket coverage of NATO sourced news, lack of investigation and contextualisation, large scale omission and the plain old peddling of lies. Whilst Knightley provides a roller coaster of a ride through the British media's coverage of the war, Hammond and Herman provide the back-up detail and context in a way that is rigorously researched and referenced and also look at how the war was covered in the US, other NATO countries, Russia and India.

The illusion of saturation coverage

"The British Ministry of Defence has a manual, updated after every war, which serves to guide the way it will handle its relationship with the media in wartime... It follows basic principles: Appear open, transparent, and eager to help; never go in for summary repression or control; nullify rather than conceal undesirable news; control emphasis rather than facts; balance bad news with good; and lie directly only when certain that the lie will not be found out during the course of the war."³

The military's apparent openness is operated in conjunction with the principle of 'security at source'—exactly what information is released is strictly controlled.⁴ For the British media there were three main sources of news: NATO spokesman Jamie Shea in Brussels; Defence Secretary George Robertson and ministers such as Robin Cook; and Tony Blair's press secretary, Alistair Campbell.⁵

"It was vital to try to hold the public's interest on our terms," Campbell said reiterating one of the MoD's cornerstone principles.⁶ So when Newsnight's Kirsty Wark interviewed NATO Commander, General Wesley Clark on the day NATO attacked the train at Varvarin, for example, "(she) failed to ask a single question about civilian casualties. Instead she appeared to be egging him on to commit ground troops."⁷

When Campbell was called in to overhaul NATO's "Media Operations Centre" (MOC) three weeks into the war he insured that, "The reporting of every correspondent writing about Kosovo was monitored and if necessary instantly rebutted. NATO's line on every likely aspect of the war was developed, polished and rehearsed. There was

even a section of the MOC which spent its time dreaming up pithy phrases for Shea to insert into his briefings with the hope that they would appeal to the headline writers and to television producers looking for a good sound bite."⁸

It seemed to work. In a post-war assessment report Jamie Shea declared his pride at the way NATO was able to "occupy the media space", so that "nobody in the world who was a regular TV viewer could escape the NATO message."⁹

NATO proved to be one of the least reliable sources of information. Henry Porter in *The Observer* (4/7/99) described "an almost universal concern among editors about the level of accuracy of NATO briefings... It became clear about four weeks into the war that NATO high command was either concealing the truth or, despite its sophisticated intelligence gathering equipment, had little idea of what was happening on the ground... There seemed to be a pattern of obfuscation that was supported in moments of embarrassment by a flow of artfully drafted semi-admissions." Yet NATO continued to enjoy virtually blanket and predominantly uncritical exposure.

Editorial control—the myth of a liberal media

All the British newspapers except the *Independent on Sunday* (whose editor, Kim Fletcher, was replaced shortly after the war by Janet Street Porter—an ex-columnist and TV presenter/producer without any background in news reporting) took a pro-war stance in their editorial columns. As Hammond asserts, the fact that this included the liberal press is one of the things that distinguished Kosovo from previous military campaigns. Whilst the conservative papers supported the war, at least they voiced some doubts about the wisdom of the action. *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, on the other hand, seemed sold on the moral purpose of the devastating air campaign.¹⁰ This was in spite of the fact that throughout the war *The Guardian* received around 100 letters a day about the bombing campaign, the overwhelming majority of which were against it.¹¹

Evidently it was considered important to neutralise what might be a significant site of opposition. How was this achieved? John Pilger claims that at the beginning of the Kosovo campaign, "Editors were called to the Ministry of Defence [MoD] and handed their guidelines" though he gives no source or grounds for this remarkable assertion.¹² Even in the absence of such direct control, Knightley reasons that "in wartime (the media) considers its commercial and political interests lie in supporting the government of the day."¹³ Then there is the ongoing compromise brought about by the media's all-too-cosy relationship with power. Eve Ann Prentice of *The Times*, for example, says that foreign editors are too close to the Foreign Office, that they dine together etc.¹⁴

Guardian staff were certainly acting as NATO apologists through their control of emphasis. In an interview with BBC Radio Scotland, Hammond gave the following example of a report on the bombing of a bridge in Varvarin in Serbia. "The *Reuters* report from the scene was headlined 'NATO Bombing Wreaks Carnage on Serbian Town Bridge.' But by the time that same report appeared in the following day's *Guardian* newspaper the headline had subtly changed to 'Planes Buzzed Overhead and then Death Came.' *The*

Guardian had shifted from an active to a passive sentence construction and any sense of NATO bombing wreaking carnage had disappeared. Instead there were innocuously buzzing planes and death appearing somehow out of the blue."¹⁵

The fact that even John Pilger, a highly respected, award-winning journalist, had difficulty getting published during the war¹⁶ suggests that voices of opposition were being stifled. The day after he finally had a piece published in *The Guardian* his factually accurate work was rubbished by the paper's diplomatic editor, Ian Black.¹⁷

Broadcasters who failed to follow the NATO script were subject to personal attacks from politicians. BBC Radio 4's John Humphries, for example was criticised for asking awkward questions during the war. His suggestion that NATO had replaced one type of ethnic cleansing with another in February this year brought him up for criticism again. BBC governors upheld the complaint by NATO secretary general, Lord Robertson and concluded that "The tone of his questioning was inappropriate at times, and the frequency of interruption was ill-judged."¹⁸

Hammond, though, suggests that this is largely a ritual and that, in the words of the BBC's first Director General, Lord Reith, "they know that they can trust us not to be really impartial."¹⁹

Sheep, frothers, cheerleaders and veterans

Robert Fisk of the *Independent* identified two types of journalists during the war—the "sheep" and the "frothers." The sheep were in the main a flock of young, ambitious, and often freelance reporters who faithfully reproduced the NATO line. The frothers were more likely to be staff writers who often became "cheerleaders and advocates" for the war. Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*, for example: "Every week you ravage Kosovo is another decade we will set your country back by pulverising you," Friedman said. "You want 1950, we can do 1950. You want 1389? We can do 1389 too."²⁰

Such emotive writing raises the disturbing question of to what extent the media coverage not only ensured domestic support for the war (and stifled opposition) but also influenced the course of the war itself? Disturbingly, a UN survey of officials with experience in the Yugoslav area found that 75% believed the media had played a part in determining the course of the war.²¹

News of the carnage, destruction and havoc wreaked by the NATO bombing—and celebrated by the frothers—was strictly unwelcome. Veterans that stayed in Belgrade to find out what was happening on the ground were criticised for being dupes for Serbian propaganda. The BBC's John Simpson was singled out for criticism by Clare Short. "I said what I bloody well wanted," he said in *The Guardian* by way of response. "I find it ludicrous and offensive to suggest that I was this glove puppet for Milosevic."²²

"We were aware that those pictures would come back and there would be an instinctive sympathy for the victims of the campaign," said Tony Blair explaining why NATO had bombed the Yugoslavian TV station, RTS killing 16 and wounding 16 more in an incident that Amnesty International has identified as a war crime.²³

"What was hidden was almost everything on the receiving end ... the hatred it inflamed in Kosovo, the fear and trauma of the civilians in

Serbian cities and towns, the despair and confusion, the destruction of people's jobs, hopes and future."²⁴

Atrocities

"Although all the right is seldom on one side, the media will present the war in stark terms of good and evil. The evil side will be demonised, its leader depicted as mad, bloodthirsty, and subhuman, a modern day Hitler."²⁵

Knightley's history of the war correspondent shows that demonisation of the enemy is common to all wars. It's a process which allows for critical debate to be silenced, awkward facts to be overlooked and provides a clear justification for military action.

Atrocity stories provided the rationale for NATO's massive scale military intervention in Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro. Seth Ackerman and Jim Naureckas of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) note how the conflict in Kosovo was characterised as being entirely one sided. Any discussion of Albanian nationalists' violence as early as 1982 or later KLA actions which provoked the repression by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was ignored by the press.²⁶

Edward Herman and David Peterson cast doubt on one of the key events that prompted the "international community" into action—the Racak massacre in January 1999. The head of the OSCE verification team in Kosovo (whose history brings his objectivity seriously into question) described it as "a massacre ... a crime against humanity" and his report went via CNN around the world. But forensic studies revealed that the dead were more likely to have been KLA—rather than civilians killed—in "exchanges of small-arms fire and 'savagely fighting'" which were in fact filmed by an invited Associated Press film crew.²⁷

During the war Knightley says: "The pressure on the media in NATO countries to produce atrocity stories was intense." Yet many such reports turned out to be false. Up to 700 bodies were said to have been buried in a mass grave at the Trepca mine. "Trepca—the name will live alongside those of Belsen, Auschwitz and Treblinka," said *The Mirror* in June 1999. One month later the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) announced that investigations had revealed that there were no bodies in the mines.²⁸

Widely reported claims by American Defence Secretary William Cohen (CBS, 16/5/00) that over 100,000 "may have been murdered" turned out to be unfounded. By November 1999 the number of bodies exhumed by the twenty forensic teams who were brought in to provide body counts had reached 2,108 including KLA as well as civilians.²⁹ Massacres after the bombing campaign by the KLA were downplayed by the media.

Democracy, justice and NATO War Crimes

Another example of "omission on a grand scale" is the unreported fact that the NATO bombing campaign against Kosovo was illegal. This is now widely recognised (again, even the British government's own Foreign Affairs Select Committee has found this to be the case³⁰). It broke numerous international laws and agreements including the Geneva Conventions, the UN Charter and NATO's own constitution, and flagrantly over-rode the authority of the UN. Furthermore it was undemocratic in that, for example, Tony Blair did not consult Parliament before committing Britain to the NATO action.³¹

There is uncertainty about the final number of people that NATO killed. NATO officials have said that Human Rights Watch's (and the Yugoslavian government's) estimates of around 500 civilians

killed by NATO were reasonable.³² However General Joseph W. Ralston, Vice Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff has said that the estimate of civilians dead was "less than 1,500."³³ The FRY government estimates a total of 1,002 army and police killed or missing³⁴ and the UN says that another 10-15,000 civilians were wounded.³⁵

General Wesley Clark admitted to the BBC's Mark Urban that NATO was targeting civilians. In a campaign which involved over 38,000 combat sorties and 10,484 strike sorties, NATO deliberately destroyed infrastructure (bridges, roads, railways, water lines, communication facilities, factories, industry), health care, education, agriculture and the environment, as well as sites of historic and cultural importance.

The use of Depleted Uranium has left an enduring legacy of environmental contamination along with that wreaked by the destruction of oil refineries, petrochemical plants, chemical fertilizer factories, fuel storage tanks and power plants.³⁶

Shortly after the war a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees study of the situation in Kosovo found that "forty per cent of Kosovo's water supply is of poor quality—'polluted by a range of materials including human, as well as animal corpses.' Only 12 per cent of the health facilities that existed before the NATO bombing still exist, and 60 per cent of the schools have been damaged or destroyed."³⁷

Despite NATO withholding information necessary to make a full assessment, Amnesty International has recently issued a report accusing NATO of war crimes. It recommends that the victims should be given adequate redress and that those responsible should be brought to justice.³⁸

There have also been a number of independent legal actions which have gone almost entirely unreported in the press. These include a comprehensive indictment prepared by US Former Attorney General, Ramsey Clark, for the Independent Action Center detailing 19 separate charges of war crimes, crimes against peace and crimes against humanity.³⁹ And in England the Cambridge-based Movement for the Advancement of International Criminal Law has presented a 150 page dossier based on 1,000 eyewitness testimonies to the United Nations' International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and asked for Tony Blair, Robin Cook and George Robertson to be indicted for war crimes. The report is currently being read by the ICTY Chief Prosecutor.⁴⁰

The ICTY comes under the microscope in a chapter by Mirjana Skoco and William Woodger, which allows Hammond and Herman to conclude that in its funding, choice of personnel and actions the ICTY has served as an arm of NATO.⁴¹ The ICTY relies on NATO for its evidence so that NATO's own war crimes and the massacres committed by the Croatian Army with the covert support of the US in Krajina and the KLA's subsequent massacre of Serbs, Romas and others are unlikely to be tried.

Context

One of the main things missing throughout the media coverage of the campaign was context. Here *Degraded Capability* excels by bringing this to light.

Diana Johnstone and Richard Keeble put Yugoslavia into the context of the United States' ongoing imperial 'globalisation' project, that is the expansion of free trade and the eradication of anything that stands in its way. Yugoslavia's transformation from "a medium-sized independent state, with a unique reputation in the region for resistance to foreign empires, into a series of ethnic statelets whose economic assets can be easily expropriated,"⁴² is, according to US foreign policy advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, just part of an ongo-

ing political strategy for the US. Johnstone writes that "This involves creating a 'geopolitical framework' around NATO that will initially include Ukraine and exclude Russia. This will establish the geostrategic basis for controlling conflict in what Brzezinski calls 'the Eurassian Balkans', the huge area between the Eastern shore of the Black Sea to China, which includes the Caspian Sea and its petroleum resources, a top priority for US foreign policy."⁴³

David Chandler lays out the history of Western intervention in Yugoslavia over the last decade. Up until 1989 the US actively supported Yugoslavia's "unity, independence and territorial integrity," because her "brand of market communism was an example to the rest of the Soviet Bloc to leave the constraints of the Soviet Union and open up to Western influence." But the tide of international relations turned with the so-called end of the Cold War when the credits for its IMF-friendly, economic reform programme stopped coming and Yugoslavia suddenly found itself isolated diplomatically within Europe.⁴⁴

Chandler's focus is the diplomatic context. By taking sides with the separatists, encouraging and prematurely recognising their independence, Europe and the United States have "undermined the democratic state institutions necessary to cohere and integrate society and maintain law and order," he argues. "The breakdown of inter-ethnic co-operation in Bosnia was a direct consequence of external pressures on the political mechanisms holding the republic together within a federal framework, as opposed to the product of external invasion or a resurgence of ethnic hatreds. With US encouragement, the Muslim-led government decided to seek international recognition for independence against the wishes of the Serb community."⁴⁵

He's best on Bosnia, but stops short of any discussion of the IMF's role prior to 1989; or any treatment of the West's funding and training of military groups in Yugoslavia.⁴⁶

NATO rising—the US in Europe

Whilst the US undertook 80% of the air strikes, 90% of the electronic warfare missions, firing over 80% of the guided air weapons and launched over 95% of the cruise missiles,⁴⁷ it was important that the operation was seen to be under the auspices of NATO. "After the collapse of communism, the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact and the break-up of the Soviet Union itself, the official reason for the existence of NATO no longer existed."⁴⁸ But recently, and almost un-noticed, NATO has undergone a period of expansion with Albania, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Finland, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Macedonia and Slovenia all becoming new members, something which the former US ambassador to Russia has called "the biggest political mistake of the post Cold-War period." The poor Eastern European members are expected to spend £22 billion on American and British military equipment to bring their arsenals up to required standards.

At a time when Chirac and other European leaders have been pushing for an independent defence force for the EU,⁴⁹ it was necessary to "assert United States domination over the still embryonic 'Foreign and Security Policy' of the European Union,"⁵⁰ "... testing US capacity to lead in European politics by maintaining cohesion of its subordinate allies."⁵¹ Johnstone and Peter Gowan argue that this was a major reason for the war. And what a blood-curdling irony to discover that at the height of the bombing NATO was celebrating its 50th birthday at a \$8 million party paid for by private US corporations.⁵²

DEGRADED CAPABILITY THE MEDIA AND THE KOSOVO CRISIS

Edited by Philip Hammond
and Edward S. Herman
Foreword by Harold Pinter



The next time

Even though the media glare has moved elsewhere, the campaign against Yugoslavia continues. NATO states have imposed economic sanctions against the country; opposition movements are being funded; and the Montenegrin leadership is being encouraged to threaten to break away.⁵³ Disturbing moves are now afoot to amend the principle of national sovereignty which underpins international law to legalise further such 'humanitarian interventions'.⁵⁴

If there are any lessons to be drawn from Knightley's study (other than his own bleak prediction that the media has lost and things can only get worse) it's that an identifiable pattern has emerged over the years for ensuring domestic compliance during wartime. In the future we must remain sceptical and not get drawn in by the media's emotive cheerleading and be prepared to dig a little deeper. Official sources must be challenged and investigative journalism encouraged. Ongoing situations outside the media glare must be monitored.

Degraded Capability opens a window on suppressed truths and the complex reality of a particular crisis. It suggests that we can't rely on the mass media to provide the "reasonably objective information that would contribute to public debate", and that therefore "the mainstream media of the 'democratic' West are failing to meet the informational needs of a genuinely democratic order."⁵⁵ If Kosovo was indeed the "most secret campaign in living memory" as historian Alistair Horne has commented⁵⁶ then *Degraded Capability* is an important milestone in the project to ascertain and assert the truth and to bring those responsible for NATO war crimes to justice.

Notes:

1. *Degraded Capability*, p.97
2. Philip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Kosovo* (London: Prion, 2000)
3. Knightley, p.484
4. *Degraded Capability*, p.83
5. More covert operations are hinted at. The US embassy in Britain offered newspapers pre-written stories on the war for free, "emphasising that although the US government owned the copyright to the articles, there was no need for the newspapers to tell their readers this." (Knightley pp.503-504). Richard Swift writing in *The New Internationalist* pointed out that The KLA, The Yugoslavian government and the state of Montenegro all had contracts with PR firms. (Richard Swift—Lies and the Laptop Bombardiers, *New Internationalist*, July 99. <<http://www.newint.org>>). Projects Censored (an alternative news project based at Sonoma State University, California) also noted the US government's use of private public relations consultants to "spin and distort stories" but more importantly claimed that the US government had set up the International Public Information Group to "squell or limit uncomplimentary stories regarding US activities and policies as reported in the foreign press ... that may reach the American public." (Knightley, p.504; <<http://www.projectsensored.org>>.
6. Knightley, p.513
7. *Degraded Capability*, p.133
8. Knightley, 512-513
9. *Degraded Capability*, p.85
10. *ibid*, p124
11. *The Media Guide 2000*, Edited by Paul Fisher and Steve Peak, Fourth Estate, London 1999
12. Introduction to Knightley, p.xii
13. Knightley, p.526
14. Prentice speaking at a Campaign for Peace in the Balkans conference, 10/6/00
15. Interview with Phillip Hammond, *Lesley Riddoch show*, BBC Radio Scotland, 17/7/00
16. *Degraded Capability*, p.134
17. *ibid*, p.138
18. *Guardian* 2/8/00
19. *Degraded Capability*, p.124
20. *ibid*, p.106
21. *ibid*, p.7
22. There were also a handful of journalists actually in Kosovo during the bombing. These included Eve Ann Prentice of *The Times* (who wrote a book about her experiences, *One Woman's War*, Duck Editions, London, 2000), Paul Watson, a Canadian reporter who was working for the *Los Angeles Times* and some Greek television crews.
23. Tony Blair interviewed for *Moral Combat—NATO at War*, BBC2, 12/3/00. Interesting to note also that Hammond, in an interview with BBC Radio Scotland, says that: "NATO initially issued an ultimatum to RTS saying that they must carry six hours a day of Western news or else be bombed. RTS said well, okay, we will carry the six hours if you carry six minutes of our programming, called their bluff in other words. So NATO went ahead and bombed them." *Lesley Riddoch show*, BBC Radio Scotland, 17/7/00
24. *Degraded Capability*, p.11
25. Phillip Knightley in a speech to the Freedom Forum, London 23/3/00
26. *Degraded Capability*, p 97-99
27. *ibid*, 117-119
28. Knightley, p.521-524; *Degraded Capability*, p.129-130
29. Knightley, p.523
30. Foreign Affairs Select Committee, Fourth Report: Kosovo "Report and Proceedings of the Committee" 7/6/00
31. Knightley, p.505
32. Amnesty International—"Collateral Damage" or Unlawful Killings—Violations of the Laws of War by NATO during Operation Allied Force, Amnesty International, June 2000; see also *NATO Crimes in Yugoslavia* (The White Book), published by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs which Amnesty International describes as the most detailed official account of the damage caused by the NATO bombing.
33. Quoted in Amnesty International, *ibid*.
34. *Reuters*, 23/3/00 quoted in AI, *ibid*
35. UNDP report quoted in Knightley, p.505
36. Independent Commission of Inquiry to Investigate US/ NATO War Crimes Against the People of Yugoslavia, International Action Center, <<http://www.iacenter.org/warcrime/research.htm>>; <<http://www.iacenter.org/warcrime/index.htm>>
37. Paul Watson, *San Francisco Chronicle* 14/5/99
38. Amnesty International, *ibid*
39. IAC—see note 36
40. <<http://ban.joh.cam.ac.uk/~maicl/>>
41. *Degraded Capability*, p.206
42. *ibid*, p.13
43. *ibid*, p.13
44. *ibid*, p.21
45. *ibid*, p.24
46. See for example Michel Chossudovsky "NATO's Reign of Terror in Kosovo" in *Variant* Vol 2, Number 10, Spring 2000
47. *Degraded Capability*, p.39
48. *ibid*, p.8
49. *ibid*, p.53
50. *ibid*, p.16
51. *ibid*, p.39
52. *ibid*, p.8
53. *ibid*, p.39
54. Foreign Affairs Select Committee, Fourth Report: Kosovo "Report and Proceedings of the Committee" 7/6/00
55. *Degraded Capability*, p.208
56. Knightley, p.501

“When the going gets weird the weird turn pro”

William Clark



This is an attempt to unravel some of the changes that have taken place within the Arts Council of England in the last few years and examine their roots. Part one concentrates on official statements (drawn mainly from the Council's web site) with part two aiming to look beneath the surface rhetoric by drawing on a range of source material. The article is intended to promote discussion and debate within this area. Please contact us with any corrections or criticisms of the points raised.

“Mr Tony Banks MP...has told this Committee of his personal dislike of the arm's length principle on more than one occasion: ‘...not a great supporter of the arm's length principle ... I have never understood why we go through the angst of going out, fighting elections and winning elections only to hand all the fun over to somebody else who is unelected and never had to go out there and who, in the end, is responsible for these things, when we then have to take all the collateral damage here when it goes wrong.’”

(Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport Sixth Report)

“We are an independent, non-political body working at arms length from government.” States the Arts Council of England's (ACE) website. A quarter of a billion is a lot of money to keep a mere arms length—or more accurately a short stroll round the corner—from the House of Commons.

“Labour yesterday appointed a man headhunted by Tony Blair to oversee the party's media operation—a role once filled by Peter Mandelson. Phil Murphy...was appointed...as assistant general secretary (communications). He will head the press operation and tour the lobby briefing journalists but, crucially, also help prepare for the next general election campaign. His salary was not disclosed but he is at present earning £70,000 a year at the Arts Council, where he is communications director...At the Arts Council, he was part of the team that oversaw 50 per cent staff cuts.”

(Guardian 27/1/99)

Political interference was something Phil was always on the lookout for:

“...such as his vigilant policing of the Council's e-mail system. Last month he issued a note to all staff informing them that an internal memo telling of a peace vigil for Iraq outside Parliament was not approved of. ‘Could I stress that the Arts Council system must not be used as a vehicle for advertising or encouraging political activity of any kind.’”

(Guardian 28/1/99)

So perhaps we are being misled when the ACE site communicates that “Changes in lottery legislation in early July 1998 meant the Arts Council could integrate its grant-in-aid and lottery spending.” Legislation is a plastic thing for such a lawyer dominated government—and that is a very quiet way to introduce the matter over which the previous chairman, Lord Gowrie, resigned (on October 1997) and about which questions remain unanswered at the highest level.

“I am bound to say that I share the suspicions of those who have said: ‘This is but the first step, and we shall find more and more money milked from the Lottery to provide money which should come from taxation.’”

(Lord Annan, Hansard: Col. 755 18/12/97)

The *Financial Times* reported the matter as a significant shift in capital, and as ‘Gowrie in dis-

agreement’ with ministers about the transfer of Lottery funds from ‘original good causes’. The timing coincided with a Labour conference announcement by Culture Secretary Chris Smith that millions originally agreed to be given to charities, the arts, heritage and sport would be collected for the government's New Opportunities Fund (NOF) before new Lottery legislation had been introduced in parliament. And before Lord Gowrie was told he would be going. The money is regarded by many as a kind of institutionalised slush fund.

The ACE website explains the origin of the government's “re-structuring” of the ACE as a spin-off from the “Re-branding of Britain” in the lead up to the millennium, which: “...builds on the much publicised “Cool Britannia” phenomenon, a phrase supposedly coined by John Major to characterise forward looking British culture, and the new Government's political alignment with the creative sector.”

After the election everyone got a little carried away with all that champagne at a No. 10 party with Liam or was it Noel? A “Re-Branding Britain” panel was chaired by Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, to help out business and tourism and to “engage Government departments and other bodies in promoting the same message in their overseas activities.” Further little committee meetings followed with the Department of Culture Media & Sport's (DCMS) Creative Industries Task Force and Creative Industries Unit with Lord Puttnam, who for a small consideration admires the government's line. Others—even the NME—thought of it all as another cynical PR exercise.

Then according to the ACE site:

“In July 1997 Tony Blair set out his vision for Britain: ‘The heart of all our work is one central theme: national renewal. Britain rebuilt as one nation, in which each citizen is valued and has a stake; in which no-one is excluded from opportunity and the chance to develop their potential; in which we make it, once more, our national purpose to tackle social division and inequality.’ To this end the Social Exclusion Unit has been set up to ensure that Government policy across all ministries takes on board the need to tackle poverty and promote social inclusion.”



Before we go on, compare the BBC's response—the DCMS are also bureaucratically responsible for broadcasting, film, press freedom and regulation—to the adoption of the government rhetoric within the ACE's site. Following the DCMS Select Committee report into the BBC's future funding, Director of Corporate Affairs, Colin Browne issued the following statement:

“We are disappointed that the main report from the Committee fails to engage with the vision for public service broadcasting in the digital age put forward by the BBC. This is very different from the market-driven approach which seems to guide the thinking of the majority of the Committee. As a result, it has reached

very different conclusions from those of the independent panel chaired by Gavyn Davies, which considered these issues in depth over several months. We wish the Committee had looked in more depth at how the interests of viewers and listeners in the United Kingdom can best be served in a future likely to be dominated by pay television from global operators, and how the UK can build on its strengths in this area.”

And that's obviously couched in polite terms. With the ACE website the government changes suborned a statement ostensibly contradicting and condemning past policy, but in essence reinforcing a lumpen framework for every arts organisation:

“The Arts Council has made a firm commitment to diversity and inclusion, naming this as one of its five strategic priorities over the coming period. It recognises that there are many communities which have not, in the past, had any direct access to its funding—either in terms of the grants it gives or the organisations which it funds...it is the Council's view that every arts organisation, as well as the Arts Council itself, must work towards that objective. Advocating the role that the arts can play in addressing social exclusion is, however, a new departure for the Arts Council...The PAT 10 report has helped to highlight the range of cultural activity taking place within communities and among groups who can be defined as excluded. That is: the arts have often played a vital role in community development—delivering tangible social and economic benefits such as jobs, improved skills, and learning opportunities. The Arts Council is now committed to redressing the historic imbalance in its support for work of this kind.”



New Opportunities Fund

Forcing a political project on every organisation—or using government schemes as a template—perpetuates this historic failure to address central cultural issues: namely, freedom of expression. This admission of failure moves not to support the redress of racism or class prejudice directly. It defines a mass to which politically contrived cultural propaganda projects will be administrated via the NOF with the ACE following the ideological trend of these projects. Exclusions will continue to operate within a very hierarchical and secretive system, but they will operate using a rhetoric which says they do not. The odd grant for a temporary publicity campaign is obviously not going to solve any long-term economic problems. The government do not seek to establish the legitimacy of forms of expression which directly and politically engage with race and class, these are still thought to be a challenge to the government.

As misconceived ideas about what the government was trying to do filtered down through the Arts Council system they tended to cause a broadly regressive political limitation and control of the arts—with the more mindless arts officers bolstering their inadequacies by paranoid adherence, while artists wondered what was happening. Perhaps purely for bureaucratic ease we saw a rise in the level of unnecessary prescriptive conditions on funding allocations, which have always existed to some extent; but, when taken together with no

real appeals or independent inspection procedure within the Arts Councils—the ‘rules’ become merely vague guidelines when they are traduced from within—made for a belligerent intolerance of difference. This boosted acceptance towards projects which do not challenge pre-conceived notions and ignoring the specific reality, the dynamic of art—locally and nationally—in favour of the imposture of the PAT 10 report as a model.

Sadly this Policy Action Team’s report to the Social Exclusion Unit was a process which could be described as one government advisor from the ‘think tank’ Comedia reporting his findings to another government advisor from the think tank Demos.

It was a *fait accompli*: an aid to the government helping themselves to Lottery money via sleight of hand. Previously the share of Lottery funds was: 16% each for arts, sport, heritage and charities; 20% for millennium; and 13% for health, education and the environment. The ‘temporary adjustment’ changed this to: 5% for arts, sport, heritage and charities; 20% for millennium; and 60% for government health, education and the environment projects. (PAT 10 Annex E 12)

Of the pilot projects listed, the reality is that some have no additional resources—such as ‘Better Government for Older People’. Many have no connection whatsoever with any community, their location is “to be decided”. All the projects represent additional funds to government offices, from the Lord Chancellor’s to the Cabinet and Home Offices who are running these projects. What remains centres on the New Deal or is dependent on Local Authorities. Here, years of downward pressure on finances have led to drastic reductions in not simply arts spending, but also the dismantling of the basic social services infrastructure. These ‘pilot projects’ are façades which cover this up. Unless there is an attempt to increase local government spending, severe problems will remain.

Credulity towards the government’s plans for the arts evaporated when Mark Fisher the DCMS minister, who wrote a great deal of it, was re-shuffled and ended up thoroughly denouncing the government’s whole approach and joining Peter Hall’s ‘Shadow Arts Council.’ (*Guardian* 25/3/99)

Yes, what if you do not believe the government’s rhetoric? What if you believe that the party which denied its constitutional basis concerning the redistribution of wealth will not engage in the redistribution of wealth. Or what if you actually believe that the government is incapable of forming worthwhile policy towards the arts?

Through changes to ACE and the Lottery, government control of two forms of economy within the arts has tightened and increased. The level of funds may well rival the market economy (excluding grey and black areas) at the level of the working artist, a perspective rarely taken into account.

Control of these funds have been concerted towards specific ends, one of which is simply to accumulate funds in the Treasury. The chief inconsistency within the fact that so little money goes to artists is that arts policy is supposedly based on consultation with artists. Who seem to have requested that they be ignored within all decision-making procedures and that these be held in secret. Government abuse of Lottery funds to hype their ideas, has the overarching illusion of ‘Social Inclusion,’ which masks the process of major policy shifts quietly abandoned days later; which are not the acts of a strong government. This policy was conceived to reflect the views of small influential groupings: the nexus of people who are paid to advise and consult.

Speaking at the Arts Marketing Association’s annual conference (Cardiff, 29 to 31/7/99), the new

minister for the Arts (Mark Fisher’s replacement) Alan Howarth and François Matarasso from Comedia and chair of the PAT 10 report “proposed that arts organisations need to rethink themselves at a fundamental level, looking outwards at their value and impact rather than seeking only to change what people think.” (*Dispatches* 2/8/99)

That pair have been going up and down the country promoting a very polite description of government control of the arts:

“The DCMS Review was also intended to usher in new, more strategic relationships between the Department and its quangos. The Department has sought to achieve greater alignment between its objectives and those of its quangos, sending clearer signals about overall direction, while at the same time seeking to disengage from day to day interventions. The Funding Agreements between the quangos and the Department are described by the Department as being ‘at the heart of the developing new relationship.’”

(*Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport Sixth Report*)

The “shared strategic objectives” of the government and its quangos set out the overall aims and objectives of the DCMS, any particular aims for the sector in question and the aims and objectives of the quango. They then set out what are viewed by the DCMS as “explicit and challenging statements of the outputs and levels of performance expected of sponsored bodies over the funding period”. The agreements are signed both by the Minister of the Department and by the Chairman of the quango concerned.

ACE welcomed the Funding Agreement, believing that “it provides much greater clarity than in the past about what is expected” of the ACE by DCMS. ACE argued that the Agreement “should be the central—and possibly sole—document governing the relationship between the Department and the Arts Council.” (*Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport Sixth Report*)

We do not live in a totalitarian regime however. In official documents, there is a “studied ambiguity” about the results of failure to meet the agreed standards. The ACE’s asserts that the Department “has the right to reallocate the ‘investment for reform’ if the Secretary of State is not satisfied with the progress achieved by the [ACE]”. At the same time, it seeks to provide reassurance that “indicators are not a crude on/off switch for” funding of ACE. The select Committee observed a slight incentive problem in all this quantification and compliance:

“For example, if a quango meets all its targets, this may mean there is a case for re-allocating resources to other areas where targets have not been met.”

They also found that Chris Smith “has not been open enough in his dealings with quangos...that he had ignored their earlier demands that all letters and dealings with the quangos—which include ACE—should be made public.”

Conservative Members of the Commons and Lords object in principle to the Lottery being used to fund what should be the responsibility of Government. They object too, to the introduction of the provision that effectively gives the Secretary of State power over the New Opportunities Fund.

“It is no wonder that the Secretary of State does not want to place any limit on the amount of money that he can divert to the new fund. We have sought and failed to secure protection for the existing good causes. That is a matter of shame, because the lack of protection undermines the confidence of the distribution bodies and of the recipients of the lottery money.”

(*Hansard* 30 April 1998)

According to them the Secretary of State and his successors will be able, without further reference to Parliament, to allow new causes to benefit from Lottery money. In response to questions by MPs in a select committee as to what criteria were used to evaluate Lottery Projects, Peter Hewitt, the Chief Executive of ACE replied:

“We look at the status and contacts of the board, which tend to be important.”

Which will come as little comfort to artists and groups who “never had any direct access to funding” and even may be from these communities which have been excluded and ignored—and we may even refer to our culture in our art.

The group which formulated the new shibboleth—the DCMS—fraudulently present it as the result of independent research and consultation: “The PAT 10 report has helped to highlight the range of cultural activity taking place within communities and among groups who can be defined as excluded. That is: the arts have often played a vital role in community development—delivering tangible social and economic benefits such as jobs, improved skills, and learning opportunities.”

(*ACE web site*)

The ACE’s trust in the government’s engineers of the soul is presented as adhering to the findings of an independent group which has ‘helped’ them. Yet scrutiny of the fundamental set-up of PAT 10 reveals a rigged jury. It contained 13 members of government out-numbering 11 supposedly independent individuals, mostly from government-funded organisations with a meagre involvement with the arts, whose common characteristics are that they have become inured to this sort of thing passing as democracy. Needless to say none of them are artists although in the sub-committees (much the same people) we see consultants such as François Matarasso (Comedia) masquerading as an artistic ‘practitioner.’

The lunacy abounds with the ACE site outlining how they will redress “the historic imbalance.” The basic problem with the following paragraphs are revealed by cutting out the abstract stuff:

“The following initiatives, taking place from April 2000, are intended to lay the foundations for long-term change... The majority of the Council’s funds are distributed to a relatively small number of Regularly Funded Organisations (RFO)... Most RFOs do not work specifically to address social exclusion.”

Astonishingly the web page states that:

“The PAT 10 report identified the lack of long-term arts evaluation studies as a key issue... Evaluation is taking place, but on an ad-hoc basis—there is a need for longitudinal studies and a coherent overview... Evaluation is too often seen by organisations as an add-on—a bureaucratic exercise in form-filling to trigger funds—rather than something which has a use and value in itself. The DCMS is committed, as part of its Action Plan for tackling Social Exclusion, to a programme of research into the impact of culture and leisure on individuals and communities and to ‘developing, monitoring and evaluating methodologies as standard elements of social inclusion work’”

We know we don’t know what we’re doing now, and we know it will all come down to justifying our own position of inventing policies so that we can continue inventing policies. So hire more consultants.

What exactly is on offer to the poor? Reading the sections on the New Deal is to witness the ACE walk down a very dark road. It is a blatant encouragement to organisations to make money out of the poorest sections of the community, parts of which read like the haggling of slave traders or more accurately a directive from the World Bank. It enforces an interpretation of the purpose of arts administrations as joining with the state in assum-



Chris Smith

DEMOS

ing power by implementing continual conditions as a form of control. Where administration becomes rationing.

It supposedly tackles a 'Lost Generation' and lumps truancy and school exclusion; street living; problem estates; begging and homelessness; lone parents and the disabled, all of whom will be going 'off welfare and into work'.

"ACE are drawing up plans for a research project looking at possible models by which arts organisations can map there [sic] 'social' achievements."

In the manner of Chico and Groucho tearing pieces off the "Sanity Clause" the writer relates that the 'New Dealer' "has five options". But then one option "is still being developed and is not yet described in the New Deal literature." The current four options are reduced by "the option summarised in the New Deal literature as 'work in the voluntary sector' is potentially misleading, and on it goes. The process for the 'New Dealer' is outlined with this friendly warning: "You cannot replace existing employees with New Dealers." Then it is noticed that most organisations will not be able to participate because they cannot offer any qualifications. Of course the fact is that a great deal of the people forced onto fictitious work will be artists. Perhaps we could all employ each other.

The website is being disingenuous in the extreme with its comments on the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education report by Ken Robinson, chairman of the Whitehall-commissioned inquiry. He has delivered an outspoken criticism of the Government's response. His request that summaries of the report, be sent to every school and arts organisation was rejected by school standards minister Jacqueline Smith. At first he was told the government 'don't have the resources to print summaries of the report.' Then when the National Union of Teachers offered to pay for it the issue became one of copyright, which the Government has so far refused to address. For Ken Robinson: "It isn't just about raising standards, it's about broadening our standards. The last government didn't get it and neither does this one." (*The Stage* 2/12/98)



Geoff Mulgan, posing outside the Dome

Part two

Policy entrepreneurs

Chris Smith: We now understand very clearly that a government cannot and should not create art, nor dictate what art does or can do. On the whole art that has been dictated by governments, however benevolent, has tended to end up being not particularly good. The thing about literature, painting, music and artistic creation of all kinds, is that it speaks to the imagination and soul of people....In Glasgow's City of Culture year, a ferment of activity transformed Glasgow's previous image to a new image which made people who lived and worked there feel a lot better about the place, gave them more things to do, put Glasgow on the map and generated a lot of extra economic activity for the city. So I see artistic value and economic value running hand in hand.

Ken Worpole: The problem with the Glasgow example is that there were writers in the city who thought that a specific and unique cultural tradition was actually marginalised by that commercialising process.

Chris Smith: I would contest that. Quite a number of them are still able to use that tradition to very great effect.

(<http://www.democraticleft.org.uk/newtimes/articles/issue7/nt00076.html>)

"It is the absence of direct responsibility for practical affairs and the consequent absence of first-hand knowledge of them which distinguishes the typical intellectual."

(*Friedrich Hayek*)

In 1986 Ken Worpole wrote *From arts to industry, new forms of cultural policy*, for Comedia with his friend Geoff Mulgan who worked at the GLC and organised pop concerts. With Martin Jacques, he oversaw the final transformation of the Communist Party of Great Britain's theoretical journal, *Marxism Today* (MT), into the think tank 'Demos'. MT worked to efface its connections with the Soviet Union, and sung the praises of Thatcherism in the eighties along with attacking the Labour left. With the launch of the *Demos Quarterly*, and a series of well-received reports (No Turning Back, Freedom's Children) signs of Demos' origins were hidden. Then (one day as Pinocchio was skipping to school...) Demos and Comedia steadily insinuated themselves towards an opportunity called New Labour.

Lecturer at University of Westminster (1988-90), consultant to European Commission and also member of Comedia, Mulgan is another proponent of the Third Way—which aids business and government in suborning local initiatives. Alongside David Miliband, he is an 'intellectual' in the Number 10 Policy Unit. He worked with John Prescott and Lord Rogers on the Government's 'Urban Task Force', integrating strategy towards 'social inclusion'. He will also help draft the next election manifesto. He argues that the role for new-style government should be to set moral agendas, to shape minds rather than change institutions. Mulgan's attack on the irrelevance of academics in the recent special MT issue is a virtual dismissal of theoretical argument itself.

Mulgan and Charles Landry (who runs Comedia) wrote *The Other Invisible Hand: Remaking Charity for the 21st Century* (Demos, New Statesman, 3/3/95). Building on this and other works in 1997 (most likely to coincide with the election victory) Mulgan and fellow Demos member Mark Leonard cobbled together, *Britain™*, which advanced the think tanks' most ludicrously superficial argument—that the UK could rebuild itself by rebranding itself. Just as the renaming of Doonray to Sellafield solved the problem of radioactive pollution. Mulgan proved

useless to Gordon Brown as an advisor—ridiculed in the debating chamber not just because of his 'Marxist' past but for the substance of his advice.

The ideas which influenced the Social Inclusion Unit's PAT reports and then the DCMS and thus ACE policy began in early '97 with Leonard pushing the 'rebranding Britain' notions outward for the Foreign Office—while Mulgan turned it inward for the Cabinet Office, working as 'special advisor to Tony in No.10 and on the Social Inclusion Unit itself. Leonard's role is promoting Britain abroad in a manner which will distract from its position as a major exporter of war industries and training—the boot boy of NATO. He also writes as an apologist promoting European Union legitimacy in the face of wholesale corruption with works such as 'Making Europe Popular'. Mulgan—through his position on the Social Inclusion Unit—advised Blair on the broad rhetoric around his themes of promoting art as a distraction from cutting public spending by 60%. The tough approach—compulsion towards single parents and the disabled to find work—having caused major disagreement and protest around the 'welfare roadshows', leading to the departure of Harriet Harman and Frank Field, in July 1998.

Mark Leonard is Director of the Foreign Policy Centre (FPC) which develops his Foreign Office work towards an MI6 front. Presumably Demos and Comedia are supposed to be objective and impartial. Leonard's new FPC co-publish with Demos (<http://www.fpc.org.uk/projects/>). One interesting board member is Baroness Ramsay who followed a career of over twenty years in HM Diplomatic Service in MI6. She now lies for the Foreign Office in the House of Lords. She was Foreign Policy Advisor for John Smith from 1992 until his death. She was part of a Glasgow University 60s clique which included Smith, Donald Dewar, Derry Irvine the Lord Chancellor, Menzies Campbell, Angus Grossart the merchant banker, Jean McFadden the ex-leader of Glasgow City Council and Lord Gordon, founder of Radio Clyde who holidayed with Ramsay and Dewar shortly before he had his heart attack. (*Sunday Times* 15/8/99)

The FPC organises conferences such as this in November: "The USA in the International Community: Creating Effective Strategies for Multilateralism with the British American Security Information Council". In the immediate aftermath of the US elections, this conference "will assess and debate how the new political landscape will affect America's participation in international governance. Bringing together key figures from government, politics, the media, NGOs and business from both Europe and the US, the conference will focus on how proponents of multilateral frameworks can seek to foster strategies for maintaining and enhancing multilateral co-operation."

The Conference is by invitation only. *The Guardian* blithely stated that: "The [FPC] will make foreign policy feel less like the preserve of an elite and more the topic of national conversation". It is funded from the following sources: BBC World Service, BP Ameco, Bruce Naughton Wade, Clifford Chance, Cluff Mining, Commonwealth Institute, Control Risk Group, Lord Gavron CBE, Paul Hamlyn, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Interbrand Newell and Sorrell, Rio Tinto and Royal Commonwealth Society. Control Risks (a 'private security firm') and its spin-offs has long had deep associations with (and gets its work through) MI5 and MI6, SAS and so forth. (*The Terrorism Industry*, Edward Herman and Gerry O'Sullivan, Pantheon, New York 1989)

Mulgan and Leonard's ideas were put forward in conferences such as: "Does Britain Need a New Identity?" (3/11/97, ICA London) an "invite only lunchtime event to present the findings of the



Baroness Ramsay

Demos report '*Britain™*'—commissioned by the Design Council—and to serve as a focal point for gathering ideas and exploring ways of taking the recommendations forward. Speakers: Peter Mandelson MP, Geoff Mulgan, Andrew Marr, David Potter, Sir Colin Marshall, John Sorrell."

One can picture them all in this secret huddle talking about social inclusion. Marshall is involved in political/business interfaces such as the CBI and The British American Business Council (and his financial interests are linked with tourism) he subsequently joined various hypocritical government panels on ecology and business. Potter is the founder and chairman of Psion Plc. Marr is a pro-government *Guardian* journalist.

The report (published with Marshall's British Tourist Authority) confuses the 'brand' Britain and Britain itself. Selective sources become equated with fact, failing to distinguish between 'actualities' and images of actualities. Demos still seem caught up in *Marxism Today's* bland acceptance of postmodernists such as Baudrillard. The re-branding has the ultimate aim of making Britain attractive to foreign, particularly German and American, investors. The target consumer of this rebranding is an economic consumer and the rhetoric of national identity has shifted to that of marketing. It envisages a number of interlocking themes to exploit; Britain as an international hub, a creative nation in arts and sciences, an ethnically mixed country, a nation predisposed to business and commerce, an innovator in government and organisation, and committed to fairness. A world pathetically reminiscent of Trumpton and Chigley. (<http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/hist/heritage/onenationsumm.htm>)

Even friendly commentators struggle to understand what Mulgan is on about in his books:

"Mulgan says he is interested in 'the ancient left idea of co-operation'. But within that ancient idea he charges about all over the intellectual china shop—now embracing the ideas of Amitai Etzioni, the avatar of US communitarianism; now reaching for the business management thinking of the Harvard scholar Mary Bet Kantor; now taking up the work on trust associated with Anthony Giddens, director of the London School of Economics, and Ulrich Beck the German sociologist." (*FT* 26/4/97)

Its the old 'End of Ideology' routine. As Mulgan puts it: "the limits of freedom may have been reached, and the sharp edges of freedoms must be smoothed down to ensure they are responsibly exercised." The inequalities produced by the free market and maintained by elites are redefined as the surrogate problem of social exclusion. The pretence is that private capital has cunningly rebranded itself as 'global' and is thus out of reach of government. The Third Way says that something must be done about this; the government should have a social policy, but the systemic connections between 'global' market forces and poverty should not be particularly identified. Bad for business.

But cheer up; strong trading relationships are beneficial in other ways. In the words of objective British policy analyst Geoff Mulgan:

"The world can be more easily unified through the peaceful activity of buying and selling than through international treaties or fantasies of world government... Trade breeds trust, and trust breeds trade."

(<http://www.alp.org.au/policy/pdpapec210699.html>)

So this then, is a pack of lies:

"When I met Geoff Mulgan back in Australia on his honeymoon in 1998 he advised me that the stakeholder idea had frightened the big end of town and so it had been dropped. Company directors were concerned that they would be made accountable to people other than shareholders and institutional investors were frightened

that it would destroy shareholder value."

(Shann Turnbull <http://cog.kent.edu/archives/ownership/msg00778.html>)

Because no other mechanism for criticism is in place (or wanted) there has been a lot of bitching. Speaking anonymously, one No. 10 policy aide said that:

"at one level, in specific areas, armies of academics are coming in and out as never before. Thatcher didn't do as much as we are doing, I am sure. For Blair's Beveridge lecture on welfare we had a large number of academics writing background papers—including some, like Ruth Lister, who have been highly critical. The Social Exclusion Unit's report drew on a lot of scholarly work. But in political philosophy it has been a failure. The Third Way debate was launched in the hope that intellectuals would get excited about it; but they have responded by saying it's pointless." (*Falling Out*, John Lloyd, *Prospect*, October 1999)

Lloyd adds:

"Mark Leonard...is seen (by foes of New Labour) as a stereotypical New Labour intellectual—brashly and ahistorically writing about 'rebranding Britain.' He says that "the problem for the big public intellectuals is that New Labour operates a pic 'n' mix approach. The disillusioned people like Will Hutton [editor-in-chief of the *Observer*] weren't comfortable with this because they wanted to be taken seriously. But people are dropped very quickly. And picked up very quickly" ...[T]he New Policy Network, run by Mark Leonard...is a networking of Third Way-ers across Europe; and, more concretely, a sustained effort within the Cabinet Office to apply evidence, research and analysis to policy-making and governance. The project, still in its early stages, is being overseen by Ronald Amann, formerly the director of the Economic and Social Research Council."

Lloyd—a former Moscow Bureau chief for the *Financial Times*—joined up with Leonard at the FPC, but who is that name he let slip: Ronald Amann?

Big Ron

David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, spoke to a meeting convened by the Economic and Social Research Council (chairman Ron Amann) on 2/2/00 observing that:

"Within Whitehall there has been a failure to develop the structures, techniques and skills needed to use and apply knowledge in a systematic and cumulative way in the policy making process—particularly a failure to anticipate and invest in strategic and cross-cutting information needs...More widely across government we are making a decisive break with the anti-intellectual outlook."

(<http://www.bera.ac.uk/ri/1071/ri71blunkett.html>)

Labour will continue the work of the Performance and Innovation Unit in the Cabinet Office and the Social Exclusion Unit and the Policy Action Teams by appointing Amann as Director of the Centre for Policy and Management Studies for the Cabinet Office where he will push the Government's need for a social sciences contribution to 'evidence-based policy.' He will also work on The Civil Service College (part of the Centre) and he has been put on the Civil service management committee.

Big Ron is also vice-chancellor of the University of Birmingham, Chairman of the Economic and Social Research Council, a member of the steering group for Research Programme on Soviet Foreign Policy; a member of the Society and Politics Group, Research Centres Board, Committee for Public Understanding of Science, Joint Executive Committee for the OST/Wellcome Infrastructure Fund and the Advisory Board for Research Councils. He was also retained in the New Labour purge of the elite think tank the Foresight Steering Group.

Big Ron also oversaw the formation of

Leonard's think tank and like Leonard and the gang there is an old Soviet connection. Ron edited or wrote: *Industrial Innovation in the Soviet Union*, Yale University (82), *Technical Progress and Soviet Economic Development*, New York (86), *Searching for an Appropriate Concept of Soviet Politics* (86) and *Soviet Politics in the Gorbachev Era* (90). Now who in the USA at that time would be interested in dry stuff like that?

The samizdat writers noted in '85 that Sovietologists never discussed a possible transition to capitalism in the USSR, or anywhere else in the Communist world, before it actually started. Most of the evidence contemporary thinkers rely on relates to the period of 1987-91 and is drawn from the accounts of the Soviet insiders Ellman and Kontorovich (E&K). But Ron's knowledge of the Glasnost routine will come in handy. The actual course of market reform was characterised by arbitrary and inconsistent policies, the incompetence and irresponsibility of advisors and general chaos. The leaders with ambitious goals had no idea how to accomplish them (Mozhin in E&K p. 121). They consulted the official economists who had no idea either, but nevertheless advised bold action (Zoteev in E&K p. 142; Yasin in E&K p. 144). Once the rulers were sold on the proposal, it was pushed through without a discussion, virtually overnight. Objections of other experts were ignored, as had been the case with the radical reform (Yun in E&K p. 140). Gosplan...was powerless against the arbitrary actions of politicians and the onslaught of dilettante economists with their miraculous prescriptions. (Zoteev in E&K p. 142). It was not just the public debate that was severely constrained. We now know that internal discussions were hardly any more free.

(http://www.haverford.edu/economics/kontorovich/papers/reforms.html#_ftnref23)

Comedia

"Britain has seen an increasing use of arts initiatives to address socio-economic problems in recent years, ranging from major capital schemes to local participatory projects. While the economic value of these has been researched, there has been no large scale study of their social benefits."

(*The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*, François Matarasso <http://www.fwwcp.mcmail.com/fedmag12.htm>)

And few have reaped more socio-economic benefits than Comedia. Matarasso's book promotes Comedia's research, is published by Comedia (which he runs) and is written by, shall we say, a Comedian who went on to report to the Government's (and Mulgan's) Social Inclusion Unit as a member of the PAT 10 team and several sub-groups which formed policy which said we need consultants to...let me pick a random example:

The total cost of the Cardiff Bay opera house feasibility study was £105,225.72, broken down as follows :

Comedia	£21,824 (20.7%)
Ahrends Burton and Koralek	£2,460 (2.3%)
Veryard and Partners	£7,550 (7.2%)
KPMG Management Consulting	£31,244 (29.7%)
AEA	£37,297 (35.4%)

(<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199293/cmhansrd/1992-11-12/Writtens-3.html>)

Matarasso's work constitutes an attack on freedom of expression because it seeks to limit its parameters. His work is academically flawed because its outcome was predetermined: "The research was



Ron Amann



Charles Landry



The Design Council

designed to add a dimension to existing economic and aesthetic rationales for the arts by looking at their role in social development and cohesion." His studies ignore the principle aspects which make indigenous culture relevant. They do not address economic impacts and undermine the contribution to local economies made by 'invisible' voluntary labour—the people who make participation in the arts possible. He perceives that child care, social services, health promotion and crime prevention, are often paid for (where there is a financial transaction) out of the communities' existing resources, with marginal support from the state and he now aids the government in keeping it that way. Meanwhile they can manipulate a few small token organisations, erecting a framework for developing the role of 'participatory arts initiatives' in public policy to produce "social change which can be seen, evaluated and planned for." (<http://www.fwwcp.mcmail.com/fed-mag12.htm>)

And how they plan: Lord Puttnam who runs the NOF's NESTA (more on which later) meets up with Charles Landry (Comedia) and with Julia Middleton (Demos) in the well-named think tank 'Common Purpose' another member of which is... (drum roll) Chris Smith. (<http://www.common-purpose.org.uk/biogs.htm#sheilaadam>)

Puttnam and Mulgan both have connections with the NATO led '21st Century Trust' (<http://www.21stcenturytrust.org/speakers.html>). Comedia is run by just four people: Landry, Liz Greenhalgh, François Matarasso and Ken Worpole who has co-directed a number of their projects (<http://www.comedia.org.uk/people.htm>).

Currently Landry is helping the World Bank to devise a strategy to incorporate a cultural dimension to development while they create poverty. His past National evaluations include cultural tourism in Bulgaria, Croatia and Bosnia on behalf of the Council of Europe. (<http://www.common-purpose.org.uk/biogs.htm#charleslandry>).

But the guardians of Lottery funds must get other advice, what about those other consults AEA also on 20%?

A fright at the opera

It is a long story, but something of a power vacuum was created back in 97 with the ACE's trouble with the Royal Opera House (ROH). Lord Chadlington (a long-suffering board member) began secret consultations with Ms Allen, the Secretary General of the ACE, but not that organisation's lead assessor of the ROH. Given her experience of public office, Ms Allen's conduct "fell seriously below the standards to be expected of the principal officer of a public body" (House of Commons Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport First Report).

Chris Smith had been Culture Secretary for only four days when this meeting took place. The Permanent Secretary had also just taken up his position. There was no one in control with any knowledge or experience of what was going on either in the ACE or the ROH. As the new government came in and Lord Gowrie went out, instead of focusing on the plight of its clients, a number of whom were going out of business because their grants had been cut or withdrawn, those left at the top of the Council concentrated on their own survival. Graham Devlin was Deputy Chief Executive of the ACE and became Acting Secretary-general in 1997 when Mary Allen as a member of the selection committee which decided on the new director of the ROH inadvertently selected herself for the job.

"A plan drawn up by acting secretary general Graham

Devlin, pandering to Chris (Jonah) Smith's People's Culture prejudices, sees the council abandon the high art of theatre, opera and ballet, and embrace 'cool Britannia'. It proposes amending its royal charter, to enable it to offer financial assistance to would be fashion designers and pop singers, at the expense of the so called 'old arts.'"

(*TheatreNet: News Archive*
<http://www.theatrenet.com/archives/130298.html>)

Ironically eventually Devlin quit, apparently because the new management structure, with three top-level directors, gave him no effective role. A further irony is that the DCMS's Quality, Efficiency and Standards Team (Quest) Advisory Board which will oversee the Government's new plans includes Graham Devlin. Quest was described as "a complete waste of time" by the present ACE chair Gerry Robinson. (Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport Sixth Report). But it will prove a useful position for Mr. Devlin who also works for AEA Consultancy Services who share the spoils along with Comedia.

AEA are: Chris Foy (Chairman) said to have "extensive board member and leadership experience in Unilever". Adrian Ellis Executive Director of the Conran Foundation, responsible for planning and managing the Design Museum. Prior to that, he worked on privatisation and monetary policy at the UK Treasury and the Cabinet Office. Of the Senior Consultants: David Hall spent six years at the Association for Business Sponsorship for the Arts (ABSA), establishing ABSA Consulting Ltd. Keiler Snow is a research associate in Corporate Planning at Exxon Company, Magnus von Wistinghausen was at S.G. Warburg as an international economist and in corporate finance. AEA Associates "all of whom have long-standing professional relationships with AEA" include Robert Cogo-Fawcett, an arts consultant whose clients include the ACE; Maddy Morton, previously Marketing & Market Research Manager and Touring Advisor to the ACE and Jenny Waldman who worked for three years at the ACE. (<http://www.aeaconsulting.com/consultancy-service.s.htm>)

This lucrative intermingling (arrangements about which we know to be conducted in secret) of former employees, whose record is one of failure has not achieved much for artists and the public. It is at odds with the very concept of the Arts Council giving money to the arts. Similarly the trade in 'intellectual arbitrage' brought back from the USA has yielded nothing for the government to base its decisions on. How many consultation exercises can come back with the findings that no figures exist and that another consultation should be commissioned. The government's Social Inclusion report states they need "information about information" and that everyone is "hoarding" it.

What in-depth reports and accurate information which does exist undermine the fundamental principles which were used to govern and administer funding.

Leverage

A main example here was the October 1998, National Audit Office report on the monitoring of 15 major Lottery funded capital projects which found only eight of the projects had been, or were scheduled to be, completed on time. Twelve were over budget, and eight had applied for, and been granted, additional funding.

David Davis MP, the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee said;

"Almost all the projects are over-budget and half are running late, some by more than a year. It appears all too easy for grant recipients to go back to [ACE] for top-up grants when they find they run short of cash."

He added that ACE's weak monitoring of pro-

jects meant much of the money had been wasted. "I am extremely concerned about the financial sustainability of some projects. There is a real risk that ultimately Lottery funds may have been used to no long-term effect at all. They may end up with some nice buildings, but if the arts bodies cannot sustain themselves, their buildings will sit empty."

(*Independent 14/5/98* The NAO press release may be found on: www.open.gov.uk/nao/pn.htm)

ACE issued a statement immediately after publication of the report which said nothing. Reactions in the press were very hostile to Gerry Robinson (because of the resignations of the entire drama panel at the ACE) who was not there when decisions on this took place. This also ignores the slight complexities of the core problem of leverage.

On 24 May *Arts Business* carried a more pertinent editorial which read:

"The NAO has come out and said what many people have thought for a long time...a number of the very largest projects (mainly those regarded as being of 'national' significance) have still managed to go hopelessly out of kilter, generating vast overspends, project delays and 'partnership funding' under-achievements. [The] sheer level of capital available to arts organisations during the first four years of the programme (around £1 billion), and more importantly, that already earmarked for the next few years, is so vast in comparison with the total value of potential partnership funding (i.e. 25%) which would need to be raised to lever these sums, that further under-achievement in this area is not a 'risk' as the NAO describes it, but a racing certainty. Government and the various Arts Councils should acknowledge this once and for all, and start to fund such capital projects outright on the basis of their strategic value—not on the basis of the wishful thinking and guesstimates of boards, managers and consultants."

So the insistence on private sector funding is detrimental to these projects—there is no need for it, nor can it be raised.

Yet two months later ABSA, the 'independent' national association which promotes partnerships between the private sector and the arts, unreservedly welcomed the DCMS spending review announced by Chris Smith, to develop business support for the arts. The announcement included a commitment to a private public Pairing Scheme and for ABSA to undertake specific projects on behalf of the Department. Responsibility for funding the Pairing Scheme will move from DCMS to the ACE, but responsibility for managing the Pairing Scheme will remain with ABSA. But who had overall responsibility within the ACE for monitoring lottery projects?

NESTA

NESTA, the national endowment fund born out of the government changes is run by two men Lord Puttnam the rather dull film maker and the lesser known Jeremy Newton. They have been given £200m to play with.

"Chairman. Could you assure us that National Debt Commissioners, of whom I have never heard before, is not another name for the Treasury?"

(Mr Newton) No, I cannot.

It is actually the Treasury.

(Mr Newton) They are the Government's representatives in holding certain types of investment on behalf of both the Government and public bodies. I would need to check in more detail to give you absolute chapter and verse on their identity.

We shall not force words out that are on the record. We shall go by nods and winks and proceed.

(Mr Newton) You are very kind."

(*House of Commons—Committee on Science and Technology Minutes of Evidence 26/5/99*)

David Puttnam



Democracy in action! This conceals the fact that billions of Lottery money is simply stashed away by the government:

“as at October 31 1998, the balance of funds in the NLDF sat at £3.6bn. This money is held in Treasury bonds, where it serves no function other than to reduce the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement for the government.”

(The fifth year, Richard McGowan The Lottery Promotion Company 1998)

Back at that select committee we see the tight scrutiny that goes into allocating precious resources.

“[Question] Would I be right in assuming that your financial relationship with the National Lottery may well be ongoing in the sense that they may give you another £200 million at some time, but that you are not beholden to them, you do not have to answer to them, you are an independent trust which has been set up to paddle your own canoe?”

(Lord Puttnam) Very much so.”

(House of Commons Committee on Science and Technology Minutes of Evidence 26/5/99)

role that NESTA can play between the public sector driven research world and the venture capital private sector world. That is what NESTA is designed in some senses to do.”

So they handed most of their first lot of money to The Wellcome Trust which has an asset base of £13bn and an estimated expenditure in 1999/2000 of some £600 million, and is the world's largest research charity. This after the 1998 £600m fund which was to transform the scientific research environment within UK universities. The Joint Infrastructure Fund (JIF) was set up by the DTI and the Wellcome Trust whose members dominate the board. Prof. Ronald Amann is an influential member. (<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/en/1/awtpre-rela98n93.html>)

Wellcome of course now commission ‘art’. (Hey! who needs an Arts Council...) Following the success of their ‘sciart’ awards in 1997 and 1998, a consortium comprising the ACE, the British Council, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Scottish Arts Council and the Wellcome Trust was formed in 1999 to continue the sciart initiative and to extend its remit. The consortium is also sponsored by NESTA.

“The House of Commons select committee on science and technology has recommended that [NESTA] must take risks in funding to succeed overall. The committee said that the government should not scrutinise short term operational cost efficiency, but look for its long term output and value for money.”

(‘Spin’, Science Policy Information news, 2 August 1999, No. 415)

If you’re itching for a scratch card you may like to know that 20% of ‘their’ money will go on staff. Jeremy Newton the NESTA Chief Executive was technically appointed on 1 November 1998, although previously he was ‘the interim chief executive on secondment’ with NESTA for months while he simultaneously ran the Arts Lottery Fund at the ACE, where he had worked since its inception shaping the direction of the fund. With NESTA he “will work hard to avoid waste—and cut down on red tape,” he says.

To do this you could say Jeremy took the very first part of the ACE’s Lottery ‘guidelines’: “...the need to ensure that money is distributed...for projects which promote the public good or charitable purposes and which are not intended primarily for private gain...” Decided that the stuff in between was unnecessary: so ditched it, and then tagged on the bit at the very end which says: “The Council may encourage applications of particular types...It may also draw the attention of potential applicants to the existence of funds and the possibility

of an application being eligible for consideration. Such actions do not constitute solicitation.”

Oh and that bit about private gain has also been snipped. And you get a National Endowment. The government enquiry which castigated the ROH fiasco found that:

“The lottery grant was a violation by the Arts Council of conditions which the Council itself had set. (Para 36)”

(http://www.ballet.co.uk/dec97/house_of_commons_roh_report.htm)

Newton left the ACE just as the NAO report came out thus avoiding any unnecessary questions and now gets £50,000 at NESTA. The rest are on £75 a day if it is ‘spent on NESTA business’, a running joke no doubt. The funds are unlimited: the £200m will give them £10m every year. You don’t have to be Carol Vorderman to work out that’s a lot of money but she’s on the NESTA Committee anyway. Well she’s everywhere else. (http://www.go-ne.gov.uk/Corporate/Business_Support/NESTA.htm)

We will draw this to a close with a little story. When NESTA rolled into town on a ‘public consultancy’ meeting, by invitation only and behind locked doors. When we phoned up to request them, telling them who we were, they said the meeting was full, sorry. We obtained tickets and one of us went along to the meeting (which was empty of artists—not even one film and video workshop had been invited) and afterwards asked Puttnam why they were doing nothing for the visual arts. He had no answer and mumbled that he’d have to speak to his press officer. He had nothing to say either.



Jeremy Newton

Just as with the Dome, because NESTA is a politically favoured project one sees the casual way that £200m gets allocated to an untested organisation while doubts remain as to whether it is a proper purpose for Lottery funds to make up for failures in the capital market its board are so enamoured of. NESTA was funded by tapping into money from the mid-week draw. It was part of the government’s NOF.

Puttnam described its purpose as making a few ‘fat cats’. Newton defined it as a merchant bank:

“One of the key things we do need to do and are beginning to do already is to work in very close partnership precisely with that venture capital industry. We are in very close conversation with... a number of the existing elements of the venture capital industry....They are extremely excited about working with NESTA to enable us to introduce to them new ideas, ideas with venture capital potential and to act as a kind of research and development arm for them. We have to make sure that we are not exploited in doing that, but if we can make that trick work, then there is a valuable bridging

The art of gove

The Artist Placement Group 1966-1989

Howard Slater

The upsurge in interest around late 60s conceptual art and its correlate the 'dematerialization of the art object' offers the chance to make potentially radical conjunctions with layers of history that have not been fully played out. This renewed interest, demonstrated by large attendances at the 'Live In Your Head' show held at the Whitechapel earlier this year, seems to be indicative of an attempt to re-inject some social combativeness into an art world that is full to surfeit with people willing to act as the "high priests of show business."¹

What is revealed by a glance at this history is that beyond homogenised categories and stylish mimicry there are practices that are always already heterogeneous. We discover that the 'dematerialization' of the art object was variously concerned with a rejection of morphology and aesthetic scopism, with the rise of a text-based practice and an accent on process rather than product. The submerged legacy of conceptualism is one which encourages a rejection of art's ideological role in society.

Through an examination of language, perception and the entrapment of desire in representation, the more radical proponents of conceptualism were part of an avant-garde trajectory that submitted the institutions of art to a critique. As with their precursors they were led towards actively pursuing their practice in the dynamics of a social field. That such a 'dematerialization' of the artist is now only a submerged legacy is, in part, a measure of how far the art institution has been engaged in a retro-projection that only benefits the econometrics of the 'yba'.

Historical associations have been separated and ransacked under the pressure to produce. There has been a recentering of the spectator upon the art object which, injected with a knowing style, has restrengthened the divide between artists and spectators and had the effect of re-privatising the means-of-expression. There has been the activity of 'nomination' wherein the artist's agency is only minimally drawn towards the despecialisation of his/her own role. There has been a submission to the 'popular' rather than a testing of the possibilities of what could be accepted as 'popular'.

Those artists who have unquestioningly acceded to their delegated role as the vanguard of an hyper-real image culture—and as such always eminently exchangeable—have not only been talked-up as the inheritors of the cowl of conceptualism, but have bemusedly become as popular as advertisements. What follows is a critical tracking of just one of the vectors that could be said to have emerged from the conceptual practice that was represented by the 'Live In Your Head Show'.

Maximum enthusiasm

Dematerialization of the art object can only presage a 'void' if the passing of the art object is mourned. The mourning itself, in substituting a mimetic trace for the lost object, is, in the case of conceptualism's adherents, refashioned many

times over from this trace to become fixated on, for instance, the 'pictorialism of a text based practice', or in the populist adventurism of indexing creative activity that has escaped the art institution.

For John Latham and Barbara Steveni of the Artist Placement Group (APG), the potential disappearance of the art object was not an occasion for mourning but an ongoing continuation of attempts to give art a purpose 'outside' its immediate and overly obvious remit in the art institutions of gallery and museum.

As a spur to the APG's formation in 1966, Latham's own practice as an artist and theorist can be seen as part of a wider context of engaged activity. Examining the boundaries of what constitutes visual art or language and becoming conscious of the social role allotted to creative workers as 'exports' for national cultures, he came to view the creation of art objects (be they novels or paintings) as similar to the creation of manufactured commodities.

He gained notoriety through his creation of Skoob Towers (sculptural constructs made from books and burnt in public places). This led to explorations in jettisoning an object-base for art and, as an outgrowth of his association with *Project Sigma* and *The Destruction In Art Symposium*, led to a desire to work directly with a "total context of people" via the APG², and to developing the 'time-based' conceptual means of resisting the mono-dimensionality of art as a commodity.

Aligning himself with developments in physics Latham came to view 'events' rather than the 'particles' as a more apt basis for a socially engaged artistic endeavour, events spanning micro-moments and cosmological durations that, it was hoped, could be communicable as spurs to action and participation rather than as objects of self-reflexive contemplation.

If the art object was coming to be dematerialized, similarly the concept of 'artist' was to be overturned and redefined and Latham eventually worked-up the term 'incidental person' as a description of the intentions of artists engaging in the social field.

This can be seen as relating to one of conceptualism's 'advances' in terms of the artists' own 'individuality' becoming the subject of art. But rather than produce a static subjectivity where the artist's person, commodified, becomes an institutional currency, the hope for the incidental person it seems, was that the performative aspect of work within industry and government departments would not be seen through the prism of the art institution. The conceptual activity of the incidental person, in becoming immersed in the unfurling dynamics of the workplace, in maintaining a fluid position of independence and 'affectivity', would come to "generate maximum public involvement and maximum enthusiasm" so as to "release the impulse to act."³

This impulse to act, which raises desire but leaves it unexpressed, could have become an area of concern and dissension within the APG, in that:



Image:
Derek Boshier
from *Live in
Your Head*

not foisting a 'brief' upon the potential placements, but nonetheless holding them to 'feasibility studies', leads to questions around the desires of the incidental persons themselves and of what it was the APG as an organisation wanted to act upon in order to change what?

That the incidental persons, free from having to make an art-object, could have been in a position to examine the flows of desire within the social relations of workplace and government departments is, in terms of the dematerialization of the art object, one of the most efficacious 'materials' there could be. But any 'success' in such a direction is not the nomination of desire in such an environment as a surrogate 'art piece'; but what that desire, as a material force "releasing the impulse to act", brings into being once it is conscious of itself as an active force in conjunctions with the desires of others. What it was that the APG, as facilitating administrators or as incidental persons, intended to change becomes crucial. Did they want to change society or did they want to change society's attitude to art?

'going public'

In constituting a move away from the art institution and in encouraging artists to "take determined control of their social function"⁴ the APG seemed to offer a radical direction. Their placements in industry (1968-1975) were only minimally negotiated through means of a funding body. Eschewing expectations about a resultant art work, they could be autonomous enough to develop lines of enquiry about social dynamics. The very 'aimlessness' of the APG's brief could swing a focus onto the aims of commodity producing industries; the incidental persons could also bypass that layer of administration and curatorial mediation that still censors social art today.

The APG were working around areas of dissolving the 'divide' between the artist and the public and moving further towards 'dematerialization'. The problems, much vaunted at the time, as to who or what constitutes the 'spectator' of conceptual art, could, with an APG practice that involved itself with submerged social dynamics, come to materialise desire and work-relations as the conceptual objects of group participation and person-

rnance

al responsibility that unfurls over time, rather than as the contemplative still-lives of an institutionally directed spectatorship that undifferentiatedly repeats the limits of its own confines.

A release of the "impulse to act", the materialisation of desire in the social field as a rhythm between restraint and possibility, is, so the APG thesis implies, no longer a matter of spectators being grouped by an institution but more a matter of bringing into rhythm the differential speeds of spectatorship, contemplation, self-expression and production, and pursuing the resultant activities without seeking their artistic legitimation.

Whether or not this is an idealistic projection onto the APG's industrial placements is maybe besides the point. If we take into account the strike wave creativity of the working class of this period or the potentiality of an 'imagined' APG then the actual outcomes of an APG placement will always pale.

However, as a concerted response to a still activated neurosis of artists to feel 'alienated' or 'outside' the wider society, the APG was one endeavour that sought to take conceptualism into a more engaged, inter-disciplinary, direction rather than take it towards its ever-impending 'individualised' canonisation. The resultant 'work' of an APG industrial placement could have been labour itself or, exoticization of the working classes, or desire and social relations, or a union meeting, but it was also a practice that insisted upon the de-specialisation of the artist's role and the transformation of the exhibition into a zone for social research.

This latter point seems to be the case with the 1971 show *Art & Economics* which the APG staged as a 'going public' with its activities to that date: a melange of displays, time-based documentation, the sound of steel manufacture and discussions with "artists, industrialists, trade union representatives, MPs and others."⁵

Bringing such people into the public sphere could have made-for an injection of accountability and democracy by extending the placement to utilise the art space as a forum. However, the previous quote attends to a case of the workers themselves becoming subject once more to dematerialization. The compromised nature of the APG endeavour which takes on a radical semblance when it is contrasted to the object-based aestheticism of the art institution, comes across as increasingly naive when it is a matter of articulating what it is that the APG sought to change.

In providing a space in which the 'incidental persons' could operate independently of government directives the APG was actively encouraging "context related concepts"⁶ which would in many circumstances be the autonomous province of the 'incidental persons' themselves. In this way much of APG's activity would rest with the personal testimony of the various 'incidental persons' and the people with whom they worked. In the absence of such information, where it seems that the 'micro-event', as a means of registering desire, can come into fruition as the apt subject of discussion as to APG's efficacy on a smaller, intimate scale, we are left, in this piece, with the retrospective views of Latham and Steveni and with the visibility of APG's move towards Governmental Department Placements after 1975. This demarcation point, coming roughly at a time of growing working class militancy, and with the retrospective subsumption of worker-participants by their trade union representatives is, perhaps, illustrative of the artist-as-professional and hints that, underlying the

open-ended application of an incidental person's transversal and intuitive knowledge, there is, in the organisational 'unconscious' of the APG, a mindset that seeks legitimation for an art practice not from the art institutions themselves but from industrial and government professionals.

Time-based theories

Latham's keenness to reference Rauschenberg's blank canvas as a 'turning point' in the shift from an object-based art brings forth two other works of the 50s that were similarly intended to make art reflect upon its social purpose: John Cage's *4'33"* and Guy Debord's *Howlings in favour of Sade*. These two precursors of 'dematerialization' highlight potential areas of radical conjunction for conceptual art: music as eminently 'dematerialized', communicating in a "counter-literal" way, and after Debord's filmic experiments, revolutionary politics as the very process of combined work in the social field to effect wide-reaching change. Both these pieces raise the notion of duration.

In contradistinction to Cage and Debord, Latham's 'time-based' theories, whilst functioning to illustrate the dematerialization of the art object and leading to the "micro-event of desire and the "impulse to act", come, perhaps, to be satisfied with finding a new status for art as that which, when the theories are extended to a cosmological level, forms the basis of a Grand Universal Theory or a 'meaning of the world'. Latham's time-based theories, being content with the fixity of a specific turning point, a conjunction between art and physics through the Einsteinian auspices of 'all matter being at a dimensionless point', falter quite considerably when we sense that what is being removed from the 'time-based' approach is the notion of history as the social continuum we are actually living.

Whilst such an approach may allow for the effects of an APG placement to be seen over a longer duration of time than is normally allotted an artist-in-residence, whilst it admits to process and reflexive reassessment, it does not appear to take account of what occurs prior to the placement, the very history that the incidental person would bring into a situation and the very history of that situation itself. If Debord and Cage looked elsewhere for their legitimation, if they raised the concept of duration and, in leaving it empty, gave it political overtones by inferring into the silence and blankness that it was necessary for its recipients to take action to define time in a space-time continuum, then, perhaps Latham's error, with half an eye turned towards eternity, was to show duration and attempt to fill it with an overarching theory that may have functioned as a 'brief' to which the incidental persons were encouraged to adhere.⁷

When it is a matter of groups seeking common objectives and directions for action, it is perhaps such over-arching theories, with their undertow of disciple-inducing didacticism, that have the negative effect of one group member waiting for others to get up to 'speed'. Furthermore, to what extent do such theories, in their channelling of multiform desires in the direction of the theorist as 'expert', give rise to a situation in which the "impulse to action" is fettered by considerations of 'correct' adherence? Such problems could be seen to have been operative not only with the APG but with Debord and his Situationist comrades.

This hum of contradictions is probably the fate

which would befall anyone who attempted to sell a 'situation' to the government. Indeed, in terms of those situationist ideas disseminated in the early 60s by *Project Sigma*⁸, Latham's time-based move towards what he calls 'event structure' is synchronous but fundamentally divergent from the Situationist International's notion of 'creating situations'. However, it is just such a concept that Rolf Sachsse informs us that the APG deliberately adopted and adapted: the lack of a contract between incidental person and the host agency, the de-materialised nature of the work with social relations and the impassioning of the participants towards a "release of the impulse to act" could all combine to bring about a situation.

In some ways then there is an APG alignment with one extrapolation of 'creating situations' which Guy Debord made in 1957:

"If we take for example the simple gathering of a group of individuals for a given time, it would be desirable, while taking into account the knowledge and material means we have at our disposal, to study what organisation of the place, what selection of participants and what provocation of events produce the desired ambiance."⁹

On inspection, the APG's 'situation' is more closely confined than that of Debord's open-ended description. If we bring in Debord's later comparison of a constructed situation as a means of making our own history¹⁰, our own times, then the APG construct a situation whose ambiance is professional. Bringing together people from various disciplines (civil servants, industrialists, architects etc.) whilst still orbiting such terms as 'contract' and 'art-object' did not amount to an active pursuit of de-specialisation but brought forth the 'incidental person' as a specialist in his/her own right.

For Debord the ultimate situation would be a revolution, an insurrectionary event. For such 'situations' to come about means that its participants must be passionate enough to desire a change of social structure. A passion which becomes an "impulse to act" precisely because it is de-specialised and seeks not to be allotted a professional role but the polymath role of remaking a society. The starting point for Debord was that participation is essentially open to the degree that it becomes creativity in the social field regardless of its being defined as an 'art' activity. What remains unrecorded is how the ramifications of this latter speed of endeavour, the releasing of passions and their inevitable confrontation with authority, were overlooked or strategically omitted from the overall approach of the APG.

'independent interest'

On record as renouncing a "Frankfurt School orthodoxy of apartheid between artists and government",¹¹ Latham's disgruntlement with what appears to be a continual criticism of the APG's tack is worthy of sympathy to the extent that 'leftist purity', in refusing the testing practice of contradiction, can often remain at a level of ineffectual idealism akin to the ghettos it lambasts.

Latham, speaking before the time-based theories took a firmer grip on him, referred to knowledge as being for experts and as that which renders thought unnecessary.¹² In many ways this encapsulates the success and failure of the APG endeavour in that he was prepared to uproot himself, almost make himself blank, and enter a situa-

tion knowing nothing about it at all. As a blueprint for the incidental person it may not have been realistic but it was a means of charging a situation with Kafkaesque inquisitiveness:

"They certainly had no wish to listen to my questions, but it was precisely because I asked these questions that they had no wish to drive me away."¹³

The conscientious bureaucrats of a Governmental Department could, by means of an APG placement come to gain some 'outside' knowledge about their operations and the social relations they were concerned with managing. An APG placement was not one-sided: just as the danger of bringing about the release of a "latent public impulse"¹⁴ can be steered back on course by a combination of 'specialists', a wilful ignorance can not only be welcomed as a surface to project upon, but can be exploited.

The APG intended to "promote a public interest independent of the interests of the parties involved."¹⁵ The blank space necessary for such an endeavour makes the competing definitions of what constitutes the public interest too simple. With this promotion of an 'independent interest' the incidental person becomes, once again, the transcendental artist rising above politics. Paying next to no attention to the historical make-up of the State as that body which seeks to maintain sectional class interest as the public interest, is as idealistic as the leftist purity that recoils from the often invigorating contamination of contradiction. When married to other ex post facto assertions such as the claim made that art should be a work "complementary to rather than as opposed to that of governing bodies... the source of a new equilibrium",¹⁶ it is tantamount to seriously underestimating the connection between capitalism and governments and making such linkage invisible.

Such an operation, then, reveals that the APG was not seeking to change society but society's idea of art:

"Artist placement was intended to serve art... assuming that art does have a contribution to make to society at the centre."¹⁷

Serving art as if to serve some article of faith and assuming, perhaps through wilful ignorance, that power lies at the 'centre' in the offices of government is to re-collapse the advances made by the 'dematerialization' of the art object in the direction of a work in the social field and is to deny the power of a government's subjects to change their situation. As such it touches upon the problems of the APG approach in that the incidental person is turned back into an artist by means of their 'professionalisation'.

This makes for an accord between APG and the Government Departments in that the incidental person as a 'salaried' rather than a 'waged' employee becomes identifiable as a management representative involved in the 'decision making' concerns of the government department. If this perhaps removes the contradictions of the industrial placements between 'shop floor' and 'top office'—in that outcomes emanating from the incidental person's presence are more of a policy making kind—it does not remove the sense that the APG were seeking legitimation from the authorities by ultimately proving their responsibility to the aims of that authority: "a new component necessary to parliamentary democracy."¹⁸

Spooft work

Given this compatibility between the APG and the left-liberal strands of Government Departments, it is telling that after lengthy negotiations and the legitimating assurances of the "civil service memorandum", it took Steveni and Latham years to get the placements up and running.

Prepared to sacrifice their own careers, they

put themselves through the machinations of a capitalist democracy intent on keeping control over cultural activities through the auspices of the Arts Council. They were witness to having their projects filched and their input erased from the historical record. The overtone of the APG is such that its most socially effective work seems to be submerged either in the desiring effects of a placement's 'micro-effects' or in what Sir Roy Shaw (then General Secretary of the Arts Council) dubbed as a 'spooft work': the exposure of a state-controlled culture, extensively documented through correspondence by Latham and Steveni. This 'spooft work' began in the unprecedented situation of an art initiative, that of the APG, being brought to fruition in the governmental placements without the financial assistance or political backing of the Arts Council.

By the early 80s, when the term of the governmental placements had ended, the APG doggedly persisted in seeking representations to the Arts Council and other government departments to continue their work. The Arts Council continually rebuffed their approaches, cutting not only their access to funds but cutting the APG out of the historical record, refuting the existence of correspondence that was in the APG's possession and becoming increasingly obstructive to the APG's appeal for funds from other bodies. This situation led Latham and Steveni to appeal and reappeal against decisions, to consult their MP and eventually to meet with the Shadow Arts Minister. At all turns their dogged persistence, after some ministerial support, met with a brick wall. In 'Report Of A Surveyor', Latham paraphrases a letter from Sir Roy Shaw, to the then shadow Arts Minister in which the APG is misrepresented and maligned to the degree that, it is inferred by Latham's paraphrasing, the Shadow Arts Minister reconsider his supportive interest in the group. This letter, under special protection of the Art Council's Royal Charter and consequently, Latham informs us, to take effect unchallenged leads Latham, not unduly, into detecting the whiff of a conspiracy: "it may have been the assumed threat to administrator's own careers that is the chief factor, or it may be that some internal state security is believed, or imagined, to be threatened."¹⁹

The "public interest" which the APG hoped to serve independently is, in this 'spooft work', revealed, at the first turn, to be the site of an inevitable conflict that even the most informed and combative of artists could not compete with alone. Whether this unchallengeable edict from on high was informed by a wariness as to the perceived challenge of APG placements to the APG-inspired Arts Council 'residency' scheme or whether it was a fear of the subversive potential of the incidental person strategy is not a choice to be made; it is both at the same time and maybe more. This 'spooft work' reveals—unhealthily for those who believe the state is run by the half-wits who front it, that the threat implied by the incidental person was being taken more seriously by others than it was by the APG themselves:

"If there is thought to have been a thread of intent in APG activity in any way suggesting plots to undermine the system, then may it be brought into the open."²⁰

official secrets

The ramifications of this 'spooft work' may be seen to be pessimistic and to offer no further strategies of continuation for a radical 'event'-based practice that seeks to release the "impulse to change" by tracking the desires in social situations. But maybe such pessimism is itself strategic.

The governmental route has perhaps been tried and tested and seen to be a route that is hopelessly compromised; not least by the fact that

the APG through the 'spooft work' reveal, in the space of their practice, the presence of other 'incidental persons' who do not have the encumbrance of an artistic identity to shake-off but who, as functionaries, personifications of their job description, would presumably make sure that such a re-occurrence of the APG route would meet with short shrift.

The APG work in the social field, whilst compromised by an inchoate belief in democratic capitalism and by a professionalisation rather than a de-specialisation of artists, has, nonetheless continued to keep open a concern to effect social institutions other than art institutions. Their escape from the self-referentiality of art may have been successful in terms of a refutation of the art object, but it has been won at the expense of reconvening the art object as governmental reports which, in the case of Ian Breakwell's placement for the DHSS in the area of mental health, has been and perhaps still is, subject to the official secrets act.

This tangible outcome of Breakwell's placement as a 'textual work', in perhaps revealing the ultimate sanction that a Governmental Department could wield over a placement in order to make sure desire didn't break out in the social field in unmanageable proportions, does not therefore undermine the slow seepage of effect that the placement had for those who participated in it and, who knows, led to a growing distrust of those institutions where social control and governance is practised like an art.

Such exposure is the APG's legacy and this is where Latham's time-based theories work at their most efficaciously. As he says:

"perhaps we have to consider that all action is potentially, if not directly linked to what happens on the subsequent enactment."²¹

For subsequent enactments to keep occurring there needs to be a variety of follow-throughs which would include the testimony of the incidental persons and other APG members through to an embracing of the political potential of desire as a material force in the examination of social relations. Such a desiring presence of people who neither identify as revolutionary initiates or artist-professionals, is crucial in widening the scope of "subsequent enactment" if such enactment is to escape from reifying its experience in predetermined categories such as 'art' or 'government' and, as a result, limiting the range even of its own ghettos.

Such a 'revolutionizing' of daily life, a process much concerned with making social relations visible, needs the continuing uprooting of the 'experts' rather than their continuing attempts at lead-weight coherence, an uprooting that enables those who feel they have access to the means of expression to give encouragement to those who are coming-to-expression. An improvisatory element, in which all begin from 'zero', could be one ramification of a conceptual art practice as could be the lent-momentum made possible through those 'dematerialized' forms that carry along with them the "rejection of any a priori identity of the artwork."²²

With no prescriptions in place, that activity could escape the purview of any and all institutions and in immersing itself in a socio-historical continuum in which desire can come to be 'materially' visible as 'radiant energy' is perhaps where dematerialized artists meet with imaginative revolutionaries: desires outstrip their confinement within institutions and build their own. Practice becomes invisible but ever-present.

Notes

1. Joseph Kosuth: Introductory Note by the American Editor, *Art & Language* No.2 in Lucy Lippard: *Six Years—The Dematerialization of the Art Object*, Studio Vista, 1973, p148.
2. Jeremy Blank: Unpublished Interview With Latham, London, 17/12/91 (courtesy of Matt Hale).
3. Latham: *Report Of A Surveyor*, Tate Gallery, 1986, p59.
4. Barbara Steveni: *Will Art Influence History?*, 'And' Journal of Art No.9, 1986, p18.
5. *ibid*, p19.
6. *ibid*.
7. Rolf Sachsse reports that a great deal of disension arose within APG members over the issue of adherence to these time-based theories which have been further developed by Latham and Steveni in the late 80s and coincide with the APG's being renamed O+I. See Sachsse, *ibid*, p49.
8. For Project Sigma and its dynamo, the 'novelist' Alexander Trocchi, see the reprints in *Break/Flow* No.1 or Andrew Murray Scott (ed), *Invisible Insurrection*, Polygon, 1992.
9. Guy Debord: Report On The Construction Of Situations in *Situationist Anthology*, p25, Bureau Of Public Secrets, 1981.
10. Guy Debord: Critique Of Separation, *ibid*, p35.
11. Latham, *ibid*, p49.
12. Latham in Terry Measham: Latham, p14, Tate Gallery, 1976.
13. Franz Kafka: *The Great Wall Of China And Other Short Works*, p152, Penguin 1991.
14. Latham: *Report Of A Surveyor*, *ibid*, p59.
15. Latham, *ibid*, p40.
16. Latham, *ibid*, p35.
17. Steveni, *ibid*, p18.
18. Latham, *ibid*, covertext.
19. Latham, *ibid*, p60.
20. Latham, *ibid*, p52.
21. Latham quoted by Ina Conzen-Meairs: *Art After Physics*, *ibid*, p29.
22. John Roberts: *The Impossible Document*, p12, Camerawords, 1997.

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Jim Ferguson

That is all my Bum

Thoughts on Contemporary Irish Fiction

"It was stated that while the novel and the play were both pleasing intellectual exercises, the novel was inferior to the play inasmuch as it lacked the outward accidents of illusion, frequently inducing the reader to be outwitted in a shabby fashion and caused to experience a real concern for the fortunes of illusory characters. The play was consumed in wholesome fashion by large masses in places of public resort; the novel was self administered in private. The novel, in the hands of an unscrupulous writer, could be despotic. In reply to an inquiry, it was explained that a satisfactory novel should be a self-evident sham to which the reader could regulate at will the degree of his credulity. It was undemocratic to compel characters to be uniformly good or bad or poor or rich. Each should be allowed a private life, self-determination and a decent standard of living. This would make for self-respect, contentment and better service. It would be incorrect to say that it would lead to chaos. Characters should be interchangeable as between one book and another. The entire corpus of existing literature should be regarded as a limbo from which discerning authors could draw their characters as required, creating only when they failed to find a suitable existing puppet. The modern novel should be largely a work of reference. Most authors spend their time saying what has been said before—usually said much better. A wealth of references to existing works would acquaint the reader instantaneously with the nature of each character, would obviate tiresome explanations and would effectively preclude mountebanks, upstarts, thimblegriggers and persons of inferior education from an understanding of contemporary literature. Conclusion of explanation. That is all my bum, said Brinsley."

At Swim-Two-Birds, Flann O'Brien

One: In relation to the works of Joyce, Yeats and Beckett the obsessive, petty and often futile Literary Criticism Industry, which has grown to surround these writers with so many theses from academics makes some folk sick to the point of brain fever and hospitalisation for the nervous disorder of paranoid exasperation. However, only the truly simple-minded would reject all history as useless.

Two: The Southern Tiger and the Peace Process. Revisionist Criticism and the All Male School of Macho Celtic Writing. The economic and political developments taking place in the 32 counties are deeply significant. They change so much of the ideological and social landscape. All kinds of hope and ways of thinking are possible. The position of women, the influence of the Catholic church, whithersoever Unionism? all manner of historically entrenched positions are open to question. This is why contemporary Irish fiction has an extra dimension of interest in addition to the purely artistic/ aesthetic considerations of novel writing.

Three: Fluctuations concerning the sense of identity of the inhabitants of the Island of Ireland. There is the theory of multiplicity of identity, that people have layers of it, the auld onion simile would indeed be a handy illustrator, aye. "I am a Glaswegian and a Scot." "I am an Ulsterman and British." Of course the onion falls to pieces with the "Citizen of the World." Only to reassert itself in astronomical terms. Suffice to say there are shifts and differences in sense of identity from place to place, and varying within one place according to social status, historical tradition, systems of religion, political beliefs and so on. Not



Dermot Healy Photo: Steve Pike

unconnected to this is the language question on the Island with reference to the status of Gaelic. Is Irish writing in English really Irish writing?¹

The African-American novelist Alice Walker uses the metaphor of quilt making to describe the relationships between the characters in her novel *The Colour Purple*. This metaphor can be extended usefully to Ireland with regard to the patchwork of existing Irish identities; it could be argued that there are differences in the practice of literary art corresponding to the sense of identity of individual authors. "Autobiographical angles on history seem as inescapable in Irish criticism as in Irish literature."²

Four: The problem of gender. This is highlighted in no uncertain terms by the *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, edited by Seamus Deane, published Derry 1991. This one hell of a book. Three volumes covering centuries of literary output. All kinds of stuff; religious, political, poetic, dramatic, novelistic. Mammoth is its range but it contains not one single, solitary, poor auld cunt of a hoor's daughter of womanhood. Not one single wee lassie or mammy. Ah the boys would never be so patronising as to add a token girlie. In this regard Edna Longley's *The Living Stream*, provides some excellent insights. Ms Longley travels a hard critical road, particularly in relation to Seamus Deane and the *Field Day* project. She is somewhat soft on Unionism and hard on unreconstructed republicans. There are interesting ideas in there though, and folk really ought to wonder in amazement how and why the *Field Day Anthology* forgot about the existence of women.

One might say that Flann O'Brien was taking the piss (somewhat ironically) out of ideas in literary theory which would later come to the foreground in the work of Jacques Derrida and other post-modernists. While literary theory is enlightening and informs us greatly about the theory of theory, there is much to be said for taking a step back from this position; which is largely academic and institutional, and engaging straight-forwardly with the text. "Irish literature presents an inter-disciplinary

challenge to which vulgar theory can be insensitive."³

Indeed, the character Brinsley in O'Brien's novel has a good point with his utterance "That is all my bum." At the same time it is important to be aware that there are deeper levels and ways of looking at things imbedded in a text which may not be placed there intentionally by the author.

As with multiplicity of identity, a multiplicity of readings of a text may also exist. There lies the quandary and the space for argument. Such a space is a good one; it is the *space* between the empirical data (in the case of literary criticism this data being the text) and talking about the text discursively. Who knows exactly what this space is? possibly the moment of cognition; possibly the moment of imagining; possibly the moment of realising the possibilities of what a text suggests as you read it; possibly the pleasure in the process of discovery; all of what the human imagination is capable of must be considered. And yet, such is an impossibility for any one individual, and this is what I think Flann O'Brien was driving at in the above quote.

Nevertheless, the ability of literature itself to create such a space cannot be denied. This is the space where art lives. Where the emotions are stirred, where the language is made to connect with feeling, with being alive; where it reveals both its social and individual nature, its ability to transform and stimulate, to give pleasure, annoyance and pain, to shock and pacify. This, my friend, is the nature of the fucker. That which cannot be precisely pinned down but leaves a gap for important question about the way people live on the ball of atoms called planet Earth.

The foregoing outpouring came into being as a result of thinking about three novels written by Irish men in the 1990s. Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*, Dermot Healy's *Sudden Times* and Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*.

Seamus Deane: born Derry 1940. Educated at Queen's University, Belfast and at Cambridge. He is the author of *Celtic Revivals: Essays In Modern Irish Literature 1880-1980*, *A Short History Of Irish Literature and The French Revolution and Enlightenment In English Literature 1789-1832*. He has also published four collections of poetry.

Dermot Healy: Born Finea 1947, currently living by the sea in Co. Sligo, is a playwright, poet and prose-writer. Published work includes, *Fighting with Shadows*, *A Goat's Song*, *The Bend for Home* and two collections of poetry. He has worked on building sites in England and this experience partly informs the fiction of *Sudden Times*.

Roddy Doyle: Born 1958, Dublin. Educated at University College, Dublin. Former school teacher, his six novels have been noted for their wit, honesty and lack of sentimentality.

Doyle's *A Star Called Henry: Volume One of The Last Roundup* is the first person narrative of Henry Smart, born at the turn of the century and brought up in the slums of Dublin. The story is related from the perspective of an elderly man looking back on his childhood. Doyle uses real historical events and characters as he sees fit to give voice to the character. James Connolly and Michael Collins appear as large as life. The 1916 Easter rising and subsequent civil war are the backdrop to much of the action. However, History, or historical accuracy, is not the question here. Henry is the "Glowing Baby pink and cream;

every little movement [of his] adorable fists or face seemed to predict a bright future.⁴ It is the life of Henry Smart that is the centre of the novel.

Henry's father is a one-legged, poorly-paid bouncer and assassin working for a brothel owner. His mother is ground down by ill-health, poverty, childbirth and miscarriages. His Granny is the only adult character he keeps in touch with over the course of the novel. Henry and his young brother Victor live as "Street Arabs" always on the look out for ways to scam money and food. They are at the arse end of society and the only thing that appears worse than life on the street is to end up in the orphanage. Victor dies of TB and this helps foster a rage in Henry which burns brightly until, in the end, he can do no more fighting:

"It was too late. I'd taken men up to the mountains over Dublin and shot them. I'd gone into their homes—because I'd been told to. I'd killed more men than I could account for and I'd trained other men to do the same. I'd been given names on pieces of paper and I'd sought them out them out and killed them. Just like my father, except he'd been paid for it."⁵

One of the most interesting characters in the book is Miss O'Shea, also known as "Our Lady of the Machine Gun." She is a woman prepared to pursue her own agenda, not satisfied with making the tea and griddle cakes while the boys get on with the action.

Doyle cleverly draws out the political and religious forces at work and the concomitant differences in perspective within the nationalist movement. He not afraid to show brutality, bravery and compassion. On the down side there is a certain cartoonish quality to some of the writing. One cannot help but smile wryly at Henry's precocious sexual talents, irresistible good looks, charm and superhuman strength; this makes for good entertainment but little of real impact. However, the depictions of poverty, work on the docks and the 1916 rising are enough to make up for these moments of weakness on the part of the author. Then again, Henry is narrating his own story and perhaps he likes to think of his youth as containing some romantic power to mitigate the brutality. In that sense it is difficult to be certain about the positioning of the narrative voice. How much is Henry Smart and how much is Roddy Doyle?

Often things appear to be what they are not. The use of a first person fictional narrator enhances this sense of uncertainty and engenders in the reader the sense of a life really being lived.

Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* comes from a similar narrative stand-point, that of an adult looking back on childhood and trying to understand how things come to happen the way they do. The setting is Derry's Bogside and the time span is from 1945 to 1971, though the novel is chiefly concerned with the '40s and '50s. Again there is the same element of uncertainty, of some-

how not knowing why the world is the way it is. The struggle of a child to grow into and understand the world. There is also a mixture of mythology and 'real life' but Deane's young Catholic boy is rooted in the reality of his community and his family. Family ties and family life being investigated more deeply than in *A Star Called Henry*. The boy relates to his father and mother, to aunts and uncles, his brother and sister. Yet the book is haunted by characters who aren't there—"My father's mother, long dead, came to our house soon afterwards..."⁶

The most important of these absentee characters is uncle Eddie; the circumstances surrounding his mysterious disappearance in 1922 still haunt the adults of the family as well as the boy himself, firing his curiosity to separate fact from myth. There is a prevailing sense of sadness, death and being possessed by history; haunted by the past, both real and imagined. The memories of the family's IRA connections, stretching back to before the civil war, are impossible to escape. In some way the political conflict has scarred each generation of the family.

Deane does hit some lighter notes, especially in the section called "Maths Class" where the pupils are at the mercy of a tyrannical bam-pot teacher.

Reading in the Dark comes from a male perspective, the woman characters have less of importance to say. The mother is defined by her silences. Only aunt Katie has much to say, "Because Katie had no children to look after..."⁷ implying that women only have anything worth uttering where the matter concerns children.

Nevertheless, Katie has a fine repertoire of stories to entertain the boy and his siblings. In particular the story of two changeling children is right out there in the world of the occult. This story within the story is set "away down in the southern part of Donegal where they still [speak] Irish, but an Irish that [is] so old that many other Irish speakers couldn't follow it."⁸ The Gaelic language itself is like one of the missing characters. The language question still being part of an unsettled historical score.

This is a story of betrayal in a family, wrapped in a society in which history itself appears as a betrayal. Yet Seamus Deane faces this situation with clear-sighted compassion. In the end neither fact nor myth appear satisfactory: myth is not fact, fact itself is grim. And the reality of the beginning of the 'Troubles', where the novel ends, brings with it the need for such clear-sighted compassion, if ever the cycle of conflict and grievous suffering is to be broken.

Stylistically, Deane has a gentle, lyrical touch, his prose is both direct and beautiful. He also has amazing brevity which strengthens the novels impact.

In *Sudden Times* it appears Dermot Healy is in

about a whole different bag. Again though, there is the first person narrative stand-point giving a feeling of dislocation; of things not being what they appear to be on the surface. The concern with family, with identity and where one comes from is also important.

Ollie Ewing, Healy's narrator, is labouring under post-traumatic stress, trying like fuck to hang on to reality. To the everyday. Ollie would really like for things to make sense. For everything to be awright. For his father to love him. For his brother Redmond to be...

The novel is set in Sligo and London. London from Ollie's perspective is a very weird place. Folk are up to strange acts of violence and corruption. Reading this book is entering into somebody's dream Everything is like... like being drugged without your knowledge. The sense of rattled, raw nerves, the atmosphere of... ..the paranoia, but: Is it?

"After London it was serious.

I lay low.

I stayed with the mother a while, pottering in the garden, walking the beach with all these images in my wake. I dropped into Gerties pub the odd time, but people were wary of me at the beginning. Then I suppose they got used to me again. But in my mind's eye I kept seeing Redmond serving behind the bar. And I found it hard to talk to anyone with that constant argument in my head. Argument with the father.

Then would start the lament: *if I had done this, none of that would have happened. If I hadn't. If I hadn't. If I had.* It went on till I was sick of my own consciousness.

The guilt was stalking me.

I could not get by the first dream."⁹

The world is strange and surreal with few adjectives. It is there and not there. Ollie's head? Funny things with time and place?

"The top part of me was death. The bottom of me was life. My head was deathly cold. The upper part of my trunk had come free. And my groin was warm. If I could fit the two together I'd save myself. And if I didn't do it sudden I was dead."¹⁰

"I'll start again. I had been living in the hostel since myself and this lady Sara broke up, sharing rooms with travellers from all over the world, and that was fine.

One night we were in Australia, another night in the forests of Maine. I found it hard to sleep what with trying to put the pieces back together again.

The intimacy you once had with someone is hard to forget at the beginning. It returns stronger than ever before.

I would say I was not right in the head.

That's right."¹¹

Ollie is constantly trying to piece things back together but they never really fit right. The reader has to travel with him and let the thing unfold.

Time bends and shifts. Healy shows consummate narrative skill in his handling of time, in his structuring, his ordering of events of a disordered nature, keeping things in disordered order. It is reminiscent of Spinoza's *Ethics*: somehow accumulative, somehow mathematical, somehow a leap into proof.

Mister Healy has a wonderful black sense of humour. Ollie's experiences at the hands of the police and in court are extremely funny. But what about the evidence? The proof? The truth? Everything is so very slippery, as soon as it appears to be known it changes.

Sudden Times, in common with the other two novels, is driven by the violent death of people related to the main character. Driven by brutal trauma and how that comes to haunt the survivors. The grief and suffering. How to cope? How to hang on?

The reader is presented with an array of characters, some funny, some sad, some frightening. And in the course of Ollie's conversation with a German psychiatrist questions of religion and language pop up:

"Tell me this, I asked him, did your father ever surrender? No. And you tell me this, Ollie. Vot is it like to speak in the language of the conqueror? I had no answer to that."¹²

"To be is to sin"¹³

There is so much to be taking in in *Sudden Times*. It is the poetry of Ollie Ewing's mind;

"*National Front*

I don't know much about them. I'd say they were the dangerous bastards in the blue jumpers."¹⁴

It is difficult to understand clearly the affect social and political change may or may not have on individual literary artists. Some are more politically aware than others. But each of these books could be interpreted as being about something bigger than the story (or text) itself.

Each author presents a largely male world wherein certain aspects of maleness are to be regretted, accompanied by some attempt to understand women. Questions of sexuality, language and history are raised. In *Sudden Times* the underlying assumption that young people have to emigrate to make good is challenged: there is racism against Irish people in London and racism within the Irish community itself.

These novels have both overt and subtle political messages. They look for possible ways out of conflict and suffering at the individual and family level. This in turn must kick on into the overarching habits, attitudes and activities we call culture.

Quotes from recent critical essays concerning literature, Ireland et cetera:

"Time and place are central to all cultural experience. Regardless of how humans choose to measure time or chart place, the consciousness of the human perceives such things as being real. However or by whatever theories any culture devises to understand the basics of space and time; whether through myth or science or literature. This make western literature peculiar in that it embraces both the mythical and the scientific."¹⁵

"a terrorist is no psychopathic aberration, but produced by the codes, curriculum and pathology of a whole community."¹⁶

"Modernity in Ireland means a range of precious things

like feminism, pluralism, civic rights, secularisation. It can also mean being shamefaced and sarcastic about one's historical culture. Specific cultures in Ireland are acceptable in the eyes of most liberal pluralists when they are gay, but not when they are GAA."¹⁷

"The UK and the Republic find themselves guarantors of communities more Unionist and more Nationalist than themselves for whose neurotic pathologies their own incoherence is much to blame."¹⁸

"That is all my bum."¹⁹

Notes

1. See Seamus Deane's *Introduction to A Short History of Irish Literature* and Willy Maley's essay 'Varieties of nationalism: post revisionist Irish Studies', in *Reviewing Ireland*.
2. Edna Longley, *The Living Stream*, Bloodaxe, Newcastle, 1994, p.10.
3. *Ibid.* p.66.
4. Roddy Doyle, *A Star Called Henry*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1999, p.22.
5. *Ibid.* p.318
6. Seamus Deane, *Reading in the Dark*, Vintage paperback, London, 1997, p.51.
7. *Ibid.* p.60.
8. *Ibid.* p.61.
9. Dermot Healy, *Sudden Times*, Harvill, London, 1999. P.3.
10. *Ibid.* p.48.
11. *Ibid.* p.46.
12. *Ibid.* p.37
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.* p.199
15. Terry Eagleton, 'Crazy John and the Bishop', *Revisionism Revisited*, CUP/Field Day, Cork, 1998.
16. Edna Longley, *The Living Stream*, Bloodaxe, Newcastle, 1994, p.55.
17. Terry Eagleton, 'Crazy John and the Bishop', *Revisionism Revisited*, CUP/Field Day, Cork, 1998. p.312
18. Edna Longley, *The Living Stream*, Bloodaxe, Newcastle, 1994, p.186.
19. Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Penguin Modern Classic Edition, p.25.