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# variant



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## Editorial

There is a plaque on the wall of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary which states that it was here from 1861 to 1869 that Joseph Lister initiated his anti-septic procedure for performing operations. Eight years is a long time to initiate anything. What it took him so long to convince the ruling bodies of was that doctors washing their hands between operations with carbolic soap and the use of anti-septic sprays to kill germs would greatly decrease the death rate in hospitals. It took him so long not because of the difficulty people had in grasping what he was on about, but because of resistance to his claims. Resistance from within. Doctors would find it hard to admit that the blood was on their hands. They found it hard to admit that they were the cause of death. The established procedures were defended by those who had established them as the basis of their careers. This should be regarded as an advance.

"There was one Italian who possessed the scientific spirit, that was Leonardo da Vinci. But he confided his thoughts to diaries and remained unknown and useless in his time."

Lord Acton, *The Renaissance, Lectures on Modern History*.

This is a remarkable fact. During renaissances censorship. A clash between new learning and old. The blotting out of significant thought which questions the order of things.

For those who are in the ascendancy in a 'renaissance', but whose real methods of exerting power are hidden, for the infamous, a historical inversion occurs:

"Lorenzo de' Medici once said that his buildings were the only works that would outlast him; and it is common in the secular characters of that epoch, unlike the priesthood, not to believe in those things that are abiding, and not to regard organisations that are humble and obscure at first and bloom by slow degrees for the use of another age."

His crimes were not useless to the nation. Acton is saying that Medici's—the Borgias—reputation lies now in the way they did things, not in the monuments and cultural artefacts they ordered constructed as a monument, as a facade.

With the case of Dr. Ismail Besikci the scientific spirit was not kept to diaries or notebooks: his work "Socio-Economic and Ethnic Foundations of the Structure of eastern Anatolia" was rewarded by a 12 year sentence. Besikci was also one of the first Turkish intellectuals to support and defend the armed national struggle led by the Kurdistan Workers party (the PKK) which began in 1984. As he said to his prosecutors:

"One of the most important prerequisites of modern civilisation is the creation of an environment in which different voices can be heard, different views can develop. I am not the defendant...I defend science ...I defend the universal values of my time ...What they want to try is thought, science ...they are endeavouring to try me—but history will try them."

As we go to press we have been informed of a fire-bomb attack on the Kurdish Community Centre in Haringay, North London. The centre serves more than 4,000 Kurdish refugees.

**This edition of Variant contains two supplements, from Hull Time Based Arts and Streetlevel Photoworks.**

**We are open to future collaborations with other organisations. For details contact the editors.**

### Editorial & Advertising address

1a Shamrock Street, Cowcaddens,  
Glasgow G4 9JZ

**Tel/Fax +44 (0)141 333 9522**

**email variant@ndirect.co.uk**

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# Back to the old school

## John Beagles

There's a crisis in contemporary art. The jump into the laissez faire joys of the popular and profane, propelled by a surge of deceitful anti-intellectualism and pap travelogue art criticism, has left a vacuum where once there was a proud reflective heart. As the homogeneous products of years of economic selection and pruning in art schools stumble forward, bereft of an understanding of what exactly the conceptualism of neo is all about, those with memories long enough to remember effective political action, critical discourse and radical art sharpen their collective knives ready for the innocent chipmunks of British Art.

A backlash is under way.

The powerful combination of boredom, irritation and anger at the inane, self satisfied, distended head of British Art has seen to that. The vapid marketing of an art purporting to celebrate the popular, the everyday, has exhausted itself and its audience. This rediscovery of the joys of nestling next to the glory of popular culture has been marketed as conveniently side-stepping the traditional image of art as elitist and socially exclusive. However the self serving belief that deep rooted political, economic and social gulfs can be magically vanished by popular gestures—'some techno music in a gallery'—is once again crumbling. That we've been here before is perhaps all the more frightening. Such transparent moves towards the popular were the easy crutch of many a second rate curator and artist during those 'halcyon days of the sixties'. As Robert Garnet has written, this tourist infatuation with the pleasures of the popular is "the easiest and oldest move in the book".<sup>1</sup>

Similarly while reports of their demise are no doubt over exaggerated, the architects of much of this hogwash, the international super curators, are also finally starting to get some flack. Bloated on the easy pickings of "a generation of artists, who have largely disavowed their claims to authorship, who create a

deliberately dumb art that refuses to answer back, that can, therefore neatly be slotted into any theme or group exhibition 'authored by a big name curator'<sup>2</sup>, their time is finally up. When artists renowned for whoring after any authority start complaining about the stupidity of curators, you know something is rotten in the belly of the beast. However, accepting the reality and need for some kind of developed critique of what passes as British Art is one thing, but my troubling suspicion is that in the rush to expose the phantasm of success this critique is slowly turning into a crusade to roll back the advances that have been made. Separating out the strands of interest from a morass of hype and confusion is obviously difficult. Yes much 'yba' is laddish, puerile, ignorant and numbingly celebratory of 'popular culture', but equally within this murky nebula much is of genuine interest. My worry about the domino effect of a backlash is that in the ferment of its reactionary zeal, it loses sight of facets of artists' work which exist outside the hype. One aspect of the backlash against the gravy train of young British art has centred on its perceived laddishness. With the media frenzy for art there has increasingly appeared to be a confluence between the new lad, loaded with hedonistic virility, and the art word doppelganger, pissed on Becks.

In a culture cancerously consumed with misogynist contempt for women, over loaded with images of pubescent 'chicks' and where statistics of male violence are escalating, this celebration of a masculinity of social irresponsibility, stupidity and ignorance has none too surprisingly deeply angered many. For not only has the new lad been held up as a paradigm of nineties masculinity, but perhaps more troubling this cut-out has become the sanctioned template for 'successful' women artists. The spectre of the female lad shouting 'bollocks' and flashing her tits haunts much of the discussion about 'yba'.

In the recently published book 'Occupational Hazard' Heidi Reitmaier succinctly articulates her own hostility at this resurrected fake in a pointed critique of Sarah Lucas' work. For Reitmaier, Lucas' constructed persona and coverage are all too familiar. Granted the honorary position of being one of the boys, Lucas' transgressive acts are then arrogantly 'rubber stamped' by male critics. Her work far from being emancipatory, is for Reitmaier, all too easily assimilated, discussed and categorised. As Reitmaier writes, the consequence of all this is to "reduce the work to trite clichés which demand attention only because of how loud one is shouting rather than what one is shouting about".<sup>3</sup>

This scenario is depressingly familiar. From the Bloomsbury group to the abstract expressionists, artistic culture has always tokenistically welcomed the "mannish female artist". When, as Reitmaier writes, "Lucas is represented as a particular kind of person and then fostered on all and sundry as the *fait accompli* of feminism, feminist art and feminist art criticism"<sup>4</sup>, you can hear generations of woman artists/writers howl in despair.

Reitmaier's assessment of the highly restricted space created by the manufacture of a sanctioned template for 'transgressive' behaviour is spot on. Unfortunately I find her argument loses much of its persuasiveness when the work of Cathy de Monchaux is presented as a more expansive paradigm of what a nineties women artist could be. It's in Reitmaier's championing of de Monchaux that the dangers of a backlash against 'yba' become apparent. Far from critiquing the more ridiculous rhetoric of funky, vulgar British art, we instead are presented with what amounts to little more than a reactionary retreat.

In sighting de Monchaux as a corrective to Lucas and all the 'Bad Girls', Reitmaier proposes that de Monchaux's work "will purposefully disallow the reduction of the female and contemporary artistic femininity to an essential Bad Girl Stance"<sup>5</sup>. However, I find it more likely that one limiting essentialist conception of gender identity is simply replaced by another.

Fundamental to an appreciation of de Monchaux's work is a belief in gender polarity. Reitmaier writes that de Monchaux engages in a "subversion of spheres of male artistic technical facility [that brings] to the fore the hierarchy between male artisan and female crafts person"<sup>6</sup>. Now once upon a time this modernist hierarchy did exist, and lo it was omnipotent. The trashing of 'female' craft skills by the testosterone fueled mythology of 'masculine' technical prowess ruled the roost in many a sculpture and painting department. Now, although they linger on in some art school departments, such dinosaurs are nearly extinct. Artists today simply don't share a belief in the kind of sex role theory<sup>7</sup> that undermines the perceived success and frisson of de Monchaux's work. Incompetence and technical mastery are traits which can be more



uniformly found across the artistic sphere. To repeat this idea only goes to further entrench such essentialist gender positions. Questions of skill and competence are important in the construction of value in art, but I think what Reitmaier misses is that in partly rejecting the titillation and shock tactics she sees in Lucas' work, she ignores the formalist conservatism central to de Monchaux's success. If in Reitmaier's argument assimilation is equated with failure, then I think she has to acknowledge that de Monchaux, like Rachel Whiteread, is also capable of being

securely slotted into a dominant paradigm for the very reason that in playing off 'masculine' technical skills against 'feminine' craft skills, she keeps faith with a division that maintains gender polarity in the art world.

I think Reitmaier has mistaken de Monchaux's conservatism for radical resistance because, justifiably angered and bored by the hyperbole of 'yba', she has jumped from a backlash position, capable of critique, to a reactionary, knee jerk one. 'yba' is a spectacle of consumption, market driven, over saturated (the use of the catch-all brand name 'yba' tells you as much), and inevitably it is flatulent with inane pronouncements and incestuous bed hopping. But Reitmaier, in offering de Monchaux as an alternative to the excesses of contemporary British Art, seems guilty of hankering after the kind of scrupulous shiny package of ethical moral and artistic tidiness that was thrown up in the eighties by critical postmodernists, then thrown out in the early nineties by the reactionary backlash of 'yba' anti-intellectualism.

"There's nothing wrong with me, I'm normal."<sup>8</sup>

The pushing of Lucas and artists like Tracy Emin and Gillian Wearing as the acceptable face of nineties feminism is reductive. (Though no more than the similar championing of artists like Mary Kelly in the eighties. The closures then on what was legitimate behaviour for women are undoubtedly responsible for the bad girl backlash.) Reitmaier's anger at the rubber stamping of Lucas' persona—"Why on earth should a bunch of male artists and critics find themselves in a position to grant license concerning just what an icon for women, or a particular woman, should be?"<sup>9</sup>—is, within a still male dominated art world, more than a little understandable! But beyond this rubber stamping, appropriation and assimilation there are aspects of Lucas' work which highlight why she is more than a shouting, tit flashing ineffectual laddette.

Lucas' work has been popular and much vaunted by male critics. Reitmaier is correct that the impetus for much of this praise has partly, once again stemmed from the need by those men with art world power to generate an illusory gleam of equality in a masculine art world (looking at this years Turner prize, my cynical side can't help but feel they're working their way through a list—a Scot, a woman, a black). But running parallel with this, I can't help but feel the championing of an artist like Lucas is also predicated on a frustration amongst many artists, critics and visitors on not seeing questions of masculine identity and sexuality articulated within art practice (obviously many gay artists, writers and critics have pioneered mapping this terrain, helping to destabilise gender certainties). That Lucas has affected a masculine front, has played with its tropes, is possibly the reason her work is of interest to men whose own sense of identity is as contradictory, confused and volatile as has been ascribed to femininity.

The plethora of books on 'masculinities' is evidence

ABOVE RIGHT AND BELOW: Dave Beech: *After the great divide—Oh yeah*



enough that there is widespread academic interest in the topic. While admittedly many of these books are nothing more than conservative attacks on feminism ('off to the woods men, those viragos will never sap my life-force') many reveal that today, probably more than any other time in the last century, the certainties of male identity are crumbling. As Lynne Segal in her book 'Slow Motion' remarks: "the evidence for the increasing intellectual, emotional and physical impoverishment of men today is startling".<sup>10</sup> While of course any such pronouncement of a crisis in 'masculinity' have to be placed against what Segal calls "the great contradiction of our time [namely that] as the twentieth century draws to a close, men appear to be emerging as the threatened sex; even as they remain, everywhere the threatening sex, as well"<sup>11</sup>, it's hard to escape the feeling, that finally what Homi Bhabha has called "the prosthetic reality"<sup>12</sup> of 'masculinity' is being dragged into the spotlight.

Integral to this "prosthetic reality" and to the contradiction Segal pinpoints, is the symbolic weight that 'masculinity' has ascribed to it. As Segal remarks it is precisely "because 'manhood' still has the symbolic weight denied to 'womanhood' that men's apparent failings loom so large—to men themselves and to those around them."<sup>13</sup> It's this symbolic weight which has largely been left unexamined within artistic culture. The insecurities, contradictions and ambiguities of masculinity rarely surface within heterosexual, western art in the twentieth century because as in other social spheres "to speak of masculinity in general, *sui generis*, must be avoided at all costs".<sup>14</sup>

Lucas' acting out of 'laddish' stereotypically 'male' behaviour can at least be recommended for attempting to look into this "symbolic weight". In works such as 'Two Fried Eggs and a Kebab' and 'Au Nature!' the experience of a feminine voice articulating and representing the brutish reality of misogyny, rooted in a direct social experience, secures the work a power lacking in the more abstract, formalist work of artists like de Monchaux and Helen Chadwick. Similarly in many of her photoworks, Lucas' swaggering laddish front confuses the notion that such behaviour is the property of purely men.

Oscillating between gendered roles, her work thus goes some way towards blurring any simplistic notions of the polar, binary nature(s) of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Instead of the kind of space de Monchaux offers where the supposedly secure identities of male and female are ping-ponged between, Lucas' works create a space where a kind of gender vertigo is experienced.

Central to the disputes that have raged over 'yba' is a struggle over what is the best methodology for artists to pursue. In the polarised climate of the art world, where one scene is replaced by another, the struggle in the nineties has dominantly been represented as existing between those lining up behind a wholesale embrace of theory and those preferring a practice stemming from lived experience. Lucas' engagement is, unlike say de Monchaux or other previous overtly feminist artists like Helen Chadwick, as equally grounded in the contingencies and vicissitudes of the everyday as it is the world of theory. Lucas has referred to this as working in the space between the ideal and the actual, testing the veracity of theory in the realities of the everyday.

It's no doubt indicative of the artworld that a woman is one of the first to look into the more disturbing and difficult areas of masculinity. Probing the darker recesses of the male psyche have of course been familiar turf for artists in other mediums. Scorsese's trilogy of films, 'Mean Streets', 'Taxi Driver' and 'Raging Bull'; Donald Cammell's 'Performance'; and Beat Takeshi's 'Sonatine', all cover similar ground, frequently in an infinitely more complex manner. In such films there is a deeper consciousness of how labour, power and desire overlap and intercon-

nect in the genesis of 'masculinities'. Of course the professional hubris endemic in the artworld, ensures the idea that artists in other mediums have already covered the ground is left as a scotoma. That art might actually be seriously lagging behind other mediums with regard to such questions as gender, is something little discussed (except as proof, for connoisseurs and conservatives, that it should stick to what it knows).

Other less well known artists like Chad McCail, Deborah Holland and Dave Beech<sup>15</sup>, similarly engage with questions of identity in ways which moves their practices beyond the theoretically illustrative work of the eighties. In Deborah Holland's work there is a similar play with the gestures and guises of both masculinity and femininity. Whether she's acting out the classic 'lads' act of assertion, flashing your arse—mooning, or trying on the glamour of a high priestess of celluloid, her work simultaneously uses glossy, seductive attractiveness to 'suck' the viewer into a space where "gender vertigo" disrupts traditional divisions. Chad McCail's drawings and paintings construct narratives which detail instances of infant libidinal desires being suffocated and chastised within the regulatory spaces, such as the home and school. In his scrupulously well drawn storyboards, children can be found looking up their mothers skirts, while adult hands probe the trousers of small children. In detailed worlds which capture all the paraphernalia of childhood, the complex, contradictory elements in the construction of identity reveal themselves.

Dave Beech has attracted a certain amount of vilification for his most recent work. It's perhaps none too surprising that his acting out of classic tabloid male fantasies have been taken as revealing his own desires (the combination of the rabid thirst for autobiography, with a dose of North London ignorance and snobbery about a Warrington male have seen to that). Finding images of a man sitting in bed supposedly after a three in the bed romp, or lasciviously looking up a woman's skirt, those artworld ostriches with their head in the sand have dumbly accused him of misogyny. This is instructive; when artists like Beech attempt to draw attention to the very "prosthetic reality" of masculinity Homi Bhabha pinpointed, the reaction is often one which prefers to deny the existence of such fantasies. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. Such 'vulgar', 'brutish' fantasies don't sit too well in our increasingly bureaucratic and responsible artistic culture. Failing to fall into line, to rationalise, control and regulate the darker matter of identity (this censorious climate is reminiscent of the chastising of women in the feminist movement who refused to dump their enjoyment in fashion), his playing out of wayward, insensitive fantasies dents the notion that such incorrect behaviour can be fixed.

It's been rather too common to talk about masculinity as an homogeneous entity to simply equate masculinity with male dominance. The violence endemic in hegemonic masculine culture, the strenuous steering away from anything which might smack of weakness or inferiority, is frequently spoken about as something which both sits relatively easily with the majority of men and is empirically true. It's alarming how often essentialist conceptions of male identity rear their head, how some characteristics are regarded as 'naturally' belonging to men. However, beyond all the bogus flagwaving about 'yba', 'Cool Britannia' etc., artists like Holland, Beech, McCail and Lucas have engaged with questions of gender and sexuality in a nexus where the pleasures *and* pains of the everyday, the popular, intersect with those of theory, in practices which go some way to destabilising such certainties. If a backlash evolves into a reactionary u-turn, the possibilities opened up in the last five years for a more expansive discussion of questions of identity will be jettisoned. I'd rather not go back to the old school.

## Notes

- 1 Robert Garnett (1998) 'Britpopism and the Populist Gesture'. Published in *Occupational Hazard*, p. 24, published by Black Dog publishing.
- 2 Ibid. p. 20.
- 3 Heidi Reitmaier (1998) *What are you Looking At? Moi?*. Published in *Occupational Hazard*, p. 118. Black Dog Publishing.
- 4 Ibid. p. 122
- 5 Ibid. p. 125
- 6 Ibid. p. 126
- 7 Bob Connell describes sex role theory as being "linked to a structure defined by biological difference, the dichotomy of male and female—not to a structure defined by social relations. This leads to categoricism, the reduction of gender to two homogeneous categories, betrayed by the persistent blurring of sex differences with sex roles. Sex roles are defined as reciprocal; polarisation is a necessary part of the concept". 'Masculinities', p. 26, published Polity 1995.
- 8 Chas in Donald Cammell/Nicholas Roeg's *Performance*.
- 9 Heidi Reitmaier, *What are you looking at. Moi?*, published in *Occupational Hazard*, p. 122.
- 10 Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion Changing Masculinities Changing Men*, published 1990 Virago. Introduction p. 2.
- 11 Ibid. Introduction p. 1. Some quick statistics illustrate this. In Britain 96.2 % of all major companies are controlled by men. Globally 90 % of all political representatives are men. Concurrently of course, as a consequence of global and national economic restructuring, men's unemployment is rapidly growing, in Britain male unemployment outstrips that of women. The incumbent effects on those men denied access to the "symbolic weight" of masculinity i.e. breadwinners, find themselves suffering higher than average ill health and depression. The suicide rate amongst young men is particularly indicative of this.
- 12 Homi Bhabha, *Are You a Man or a Mouse?* quoted in Lynne Segal *Slow Motion* published by Virago 1990. p. 23
- 13 Ibid. p. 2
- 14 Ibid. p. 22
- 15 All of these artists have or will be exhibiting at the Collective Gallery, Edinburgh.

# Hungry Ghosts

Orla Ryan

*Hungry Ghosts, a group show presented at The Douglas Hyde Gallery (10 June-25 July, 1998) comprising the work of Nobuyoshi Araki, John Currin, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Rineke Dijkstra, Marlene Dumas, Keith Edmier, Karen Kilimnik, Sarah Lucas, Hiroshi Sugimoto. All of the work shown has been widely exhibited internationally.*

Broadly the work negotiates varying strands of art practices read through portraiture, documentary, cinema and popular culture, and employs various media including painting, photography, drawing and sculpture. In this instance the works' configuration is framed through the title of the show HUNGRY GHOSTS, a term from Buddhism referring to insatiable desire, perpetual hunger, represented in Buddhist imagery by a big belly and a small neck. Hungry Ghosts as a framing device situates the distinct 'spiritual and philosophical ethos' of The Douglas Hyde Gallery under its director John Hutchinson.

In the gallery handout, Hutchinson writes:

"Extreme forms of desire are not especially interesting, because those who are overwhelmed by them become almost inhuman. Raw voracity is hellish, and it demands fulfilment. In contrast, the people in Hungry Ghosts seem to be in a state of transition, halfway between one world and the other. In a certain sense they are all weightless."<sup>1</sup>

Hungry Ghosts is populated by John Currin's 'realism in drag' type Miss Fenwick, 1997, Dumas' Naomi Campbell and Princess Diana, Great Britain, 1997, the 'rent boys' of Philip-Lorca diCorcia's 'Hollywood' series, Rineke Dijkstra's scrawny adolescents from the 'Beach' series, Kolobrzeg, Poland, July 26, 1992 and four of Dijkstra's Matadors. There are also Araki's hotel porno people, Tokyo Cube (53-58) and Kilimnik's Hello magazine types such as Death in America, Plaza Hotel, 1964, 1989, Sarah Lucas' Bunny—gets snookered no.9, 1997, and Keith Edmier's sculpted from television African famine victims. A motley crew.

Sugimoto's photographic image Stadium Drive in, Orange County, 1993, stands alone as the only image unpopulated and yet the image is overcrowded by a populace just beyond the threshold of visibility. The time lapse process by which the image is produced (exposed for the length of the projected image on the screen) acts as a means of evacuating the image (on screen) and foregrounding what is by necessity usually absent, that is, the screen. This indeterminate presence/absence in-betweenness disrupts the central focus making a blank non-space at the centre exploding the punctum to the edges of the frame and the mise en scene of both the actual space of spectatorship represented in the image and the framing of film as 'product'. The Stadiums situation in Orange County is spatially relevant, within driving distance of Hollywood but closer to Disney.

The placing of Sugimoto's work at the beginning of the exhibition and the foregrounding of 'framing' as an activity enables a reading of the rest of the work and the show as a whole, through the varying topographies of evacuation, the wider world of electro-visual

culture and the possible spectres this embodies. The Buddhist framing of Hungry Ghosts as an exhibition, frames the work through a theological discourse on "...the condition of longing, of unfulfilled desire"<sup>2</sup> one that in a wider art context flows easily enough with Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. This easily aligned mutual gratification has the potential to act as a full stop though, creating an artificial closure to the plethora of readings possible. The stillness of this if you like, the ISness of it all, and the stasis it has the potential to offer, constructs an uncomplicated doxa in the way the work is presented for interpretation. Does this in some way close off discussion of how desire is constituted and mediated?

"The priest carried out the first sacrifice, named castration, and all the men and women of the north lined up behind him, crying in cadence, 'Lack, lack, it's the common law'.<sup>3</sup>

Thinking through the work of diCorcia's 'rent boys', Brent Booth; 21 years old; Des Minew, Iowa; \$30 and Edward Earle Windsor; 20 years old; Atlanta, Georgia; \$30 for example, what is marginalised in reading these images through desire (with a capital D) is the tenuous strands that infiltrate these spaces. It is not that desire should be excluded from the discussion around these images (or even that it could be excluded).

Hutchinson referring to the 'people' in Hungry Ghosts writes "...others are drained, as though they have been exhausted by a fruitless quest for an impossible dream."<sup>4</sup> This is not written specifically in relation to diCorcia's images, I have chosen it as apt because it fits well with the typical 'otherside' negotiation of Hollywood. However reading these characters through this trajectory chooses to ignore information about the production of the images, that they are paid performances, albeit underpaid. The images are taken in a location where rent boys hang out, however there is an ambiguity as to whether they are rent boys, but either/or, they are performing being rent boys, for diCorcia's camera. It is this ambiguity in the set-up involved in their production, that directs attention towards the viewing expectation (desire again). The performative artificial aspect of the images maps an ambivalence to the authority of documentary and opens up the interpretative process to include the detritus of the image. Is this guy who is playing the part of the 'rent boy', paid by diCorcia, drinking Pepsi, because, a) it was part of diCorcia's compositional strategy or b) it was a happy accident? Less fixated on the potential of this image to proffer information on the ontological spaces occupied by the position 'rent boy'—what interests me is how the banal functions as an interactive process between the artwork and the viewer. Does he watch the same ads for Pepsi as me? Is he part of the 'Pepsi generation'?

Approaching Keith Edmier's 'Ethiopian Baby and Young Woman, 1984-5', two figurative sculptures in pigmented vinyl, mindful of, as Dick Hebdige writes that "...we all live these days in the airwaves as well as on the ground in three dimensional neighbourhoods"<sup>5</sup> Edmier's figures are obsessively 'real' based on televisual imagery of Ethiopian famine victims. As 'copies' from the television they are 'copies' from a complex network of codes circulating through global telecommunication network's processing of, for example, Africa, the 'catastrophe', natural disaster etc. With this in mind is the term 'copy' appropriate? Is there an authority of resemblance in Edmier's Ethiopian Baby and Young woman? Reference is deferred in these sculptures of images, images which can be read as representations of particular codes. With Edmier's sculpture are we in the space of simulacrum "...as images without resemblance" although producing "...an effect of resemblance"<sup>6</sup> And, if this is so how are we to negotiate Hutchinson's desire to read this work as accessing 'people'. This focus on the repre-

sentations in the show Hungry Ghosts as in some way directly accessing 'people' (the authority of resemblance) allows descriptions which evacuates the mediation process. Writing that "...some are the objects of love or longing, who have suffered from the weight of their burden ...a few have become empty so they can move, unresisting, with the flow of desire", allows an over simplification in how viewers might want to engage with this work.<sup>7</sup> Even within the terms of Hutchinson's own reference, in accepting these representations as somehow directly relating to an accepted reality do we want to read Ethiopian Woman and Child as Hungry Ghosts.<sup>8</sup> To do this surely we displace the political spectres of 'globalisation'.

The figure of the ghost is situated in recent cultural theory as offering political significance suggesting as Allen Meek writes "...a paradigmatic shift in cultural studies where the poststructuralist death of the subject encounters both the collapse of Soviet communism and the 'revolution' in global telecommunications".<sup>9</sup> In his mapping of 'spectral critique' he cites Derrida's politics "...of memory, of inheritance and of generations",<sup>10</sup> Meek's thesis is that a spectral critique would "...open global tele-capitalism to the enigmas of visibility that call us back to our fundamental social and political responsibilities: to the un- and under-employed ...to non-citizens and to all those whose civil liberties are diminished or annihilated in the New World Order".<sup>11</sup>

John Hutchinson writes: "When we give up hope and perch on the edge of existence, without a steady foothold, emptiness becomes palpable. If we're lucky, we may then begin to see life clearly, with compassion."<sup>12</sup>

Colliding Meek (M) and Hutchinson (H) in order to read (H) "the edge of existence" as the (M) "under-employed or the non-citizen" and (M) "annihilation of civil liberties" as (H) "without a steady foothold", Hungry Ghost's focusing on (H) "the condition of longing, of unfulfilled desire" rather than (M) "social and political responsibilities" begs the question if (H) "compassion" is to be based on (H) "luck" are we in danger of being haunted by what Jameson has referred to as "sheer class resentment".<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

- 1 John Hutchinson, Hungry Ghosts Gallery Hand out, The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, 1998.
- 2 ibid
- 3 Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism & Schizophrenia*, trans Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p154.
- 4 John Hutchinson, op cit.
- 5 Dick Hebdige in *Towards A Theory of The Image* (Ed) Jon Thompson, Maastricht, Jan Van Eyck Akadmie, 1996, p.140.
- 6 Gilles Deleuze, *Plato and the Simulacrum*, trans. by Rosalind Krauss, October No. 27, Winter 1984, pp 46-56.
- 7 John Hutchinson, op cit.
- 8 Angelina Morrison also remarked on this disparity while commenting on the visual similarity to Buddhist images of Hungry Ghosts ie the big belly and thin neck (Angelina Morrison, Gallery Talk, 22 July 1998.) In a specifically Irish context the aesthetic codes of Ethiopian Woman and Child have a certain similarity to the 'Irish famine monument' across from the AIB International Banking Centre in Dublin.
- 9 Allen Meek, *Guides to the Electropolis: Toward a Spectral Critique of the Media in Postmodern Culture* v.7 n.1 September, 1996.
- 10 Derrida, Jacques, *Spectres of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf. Intro. Bernd Magnus & Stephen Cullenberg. London, New York: Routledge, 1994. London, New York: Routledge, 1994, p. xix.
- 11 Allen Meek, op cit.
- 12 John Hutchinson, op cit.
- 13 Frederic Jameson, *Marx's Purloined Letter*, *New Left Review*, No 209 Jan/Feb 1995, p. 86.

PHILIP-LORCA  
DI-CORCIA:  
Hollywood series



# a means of mutatation

*During 1997 and 1998 a series of legal and media confrontations were made in the United States and elsewhere. Amongst those involved were Microsoft, Netscape, and the U.S. government Department of Justice. The key focus of contention was whether Microsoft, a company which has a near monopoly on the sale of operating systems for personal computers, had — by bundling its own Web Browser, Internet Explorer, with every copy of its Windows '95/98 OS — effectively blocked Netscape, an ostensible competitor in Browser software<sup>1</sup>, from competing in a 'free' market. This confrontation ran concurrently with one between Microsoft and Sun Microsystems, developers of the language Java<sup>2</sup>.*

*The "Browser Wars" involved more than these three relatively tightly constructed and similar actors however. Millions of internet users were implicated in this conflict. The nature of the proprietary software economy meant that for any side, winning the Browser Wars would be a chance to construct the ways in which the most popular section of the internet — the World Wide Web — would be used, and to reap the rewards. The conflict took place in an American court and was marked by the deadeningly tedious super-formalised rituals that mark the abstraction of important decisions away from those in whose name they are made. Though the staging of the conflict was located within the legal and juridical framework of the US it had ramifications wherever software is used.*

On connecting to a URL, HTML appears to the user's computer as a stream of data. This data could be formatted for use in any of a wide variety of configurations. As a current, given mediation by some interpretative device, it could even be used as a flowing pattern to determine the behaviour of a device completely unrelated to its purpose. (Work it with tags? Every <HREF> could switch something on, every <P> could switch something off — administration of greater or lesser electric shocks for instance). Most commonly it is fed straight into a Browser.

What are the conditions that produce this particular sort of reception facility? Three fields that are key amongst those currently conjoining to form what is actualised as the Browser: economics, design, and the material. By material is meant the propensities of the various languages, protocols, and data-types of the web.

If we ask, "What produces and reinforces Browsing?" There is no surprise in finding the same word being used to describe recreational shopping, ruminant digestion and the use of the World Wide Web. The Browser Wars form one level of consistency in the assembly of various forms of economy on the web.

Web sites are increasingly written for specific softwares, and some elements of them are unreadable by other packages<sup>3</sup>. You get Netscape sites, Explorer

sites, sites that avoid making that split and stay at a level that both could use— and therefore consign the "innovations" of these programs to irrelevance. This situation looks like being considerably compounded with the introduction of customisable (and hence unusable by web-use software not correctly configured) Extensible Mark-up Language tags.

What determines the development of this software? Demand? There is no means for it to be mobilised. Rather more likely, an arms race between the software companies and the development of passivity, gullibility, and curiosity as a culture of use of software.

One form of operation on the net that does have a very tight influence— an ability to make a classical "demand"—on the development of proprietary software for the web is the growth of online shopping and commercial information delivery. For companies on the web this is not just a question of the production and presentation of "content", but a very concrete part of their material infrastructure. For commerce on the web to operate effectively, the spatium of potential operations on the web— that is everything that is described or made potential by the software and the network— needs to be increasingly configured towards this end.

That there are potentially novel forms of economic entity to be invented on the web is indisputable. As ever, crime is providing one of the most exploratory developers. How far these potential economic forms, guided by notions of privacy; pay-per-use; trans- and supra-nationality; etc. will develop in an economic context in which other factors than technical possibility, such as the state, monopolies and so on is open to question. However, one effect of net-commerce is indisputable. Despite the role of web designers in translating the imperative to buy into a post-rave cultural experience, transactions demand contracts, and contracts demand fixed, determinable relationships. The efforts of companies on the web are focused on tying down meaning into message delivery.<sup>4</sup> Whilst some form of communication may occur within this mucal shroud of use-value-put-to-good-use the focal point of the communication will always stay intact. Just click here.

Immaterial labour produces "first and foremost a social relation ...[that] produces not only commodities, but also the capital relation."<sup>5</sup> If this mercantile relationship is also imperative on the immaterial labour being a social and communicative one, the position of web designers is perhaps an archetype, not just for the misjudged and cannibalistic drive for a "creative economy" currently underway in Britain, but also within a situation where a (formal) language — HTML — explicitly rather than implicitly becomes a means of production: at one point vaingloriously touted as,

"How To Make Loot".

Web design, considered in its wide definition: by hobbyists, artists, general purpose temps, by specialists, and also in terms of the creation of web sites using software such as Pagemill or Dreamweaver, is precisely a social and communicative practice "whose 'raw material' is subjectivity."<sup>6</sup> This subjectivity is an ensemble of pre-formatted, automated, contingent and "live" actions, schemas, and decisions performed by both softwares, languages and designers. This subjectivity is also productive of further sequences of seeing, knowing and doing.

A key device in the production of web sites is the page metaphor. This has its historical roots in the imaginal descriptions of the Memex and Xanadu systems — but it has its specific history in that Esperanto for computer-based documents, Structured Generalised Mark-up Language and in the need for storage, distribution and retrieval of scientific papers at CERN laboratories. Use of metaphor within computer interface design is intended to enable easy operation of a new system by over-laying it or even confining it within the characteristics of a homely-futuristic device found outside of the computer. A metaphor can take several forms. They include emulators where say, the entire workings of a specific synthesiser are mapped over into a computer where it can be used in its "virtual" form. The computer captures the set of operations of the synthesiser and now the term *emulation* becomes metaphorical. Allowing other modalities of use and imaginal refrain to operate through the machine, the computer now *is* that synthesiser — whilst also doubled into always being more. Metaphors also include items such as the familiar "desktop" or "wastebasket". This is a notorious case of a completely misapplied metaphor. A wastebasket is simply an instruction for the deletion of data. Data does not for instance just sit and rot as things do in an actual wastebasket. That's your backup disk. Actual operations of the computer are radically obscured by this vision of it as some cosy information appliance always seen through the rear-view mirror of some imagined universal.<sup>7</sup>

The techniques of page layout were ported over directly from graphic design for paper. This meant that HTML had to be contained as a conduit for channelling direct physical representation — integrity to fonts, spacing, inflections and so on. The actuality of the networks were thus subordinated to the disciplines of graphic design and of Graphical User Interface simply because of their ability to deal with flatness, the screen. (Though there are conflicts between them based around their respective idealisations of functionality). Currently of course this is a situation that is already edging towards collapse as other data types

Matthew Fuller

# notes on I/O/D 4: The Web Stalker

make incursions onto, through and beyond the page — but it is a situation that needs to be totalled, and done so consciously and speculatively.

Another metaphor is that of geographical references. Where do you want to go today? This echo of location is presumably designed to suggest to the user that they are not in fact sitting in front of a computer calling up files, but hurtling round an earth embedded into a gigantic trademark with the power of some voracious cosmological force. The World Wide Web is a global medium in the approximately the same way that The World Series is a global event. With book design papering over the monitor the real processes of networks can be left to the experts in Computer Science.

It is the technical opportunity of finding other ways of developing and using this stream of data that provides a starting point for I/O/D 4: The Web Stalker. I/O/D is a three-person collective based in London.<sup>8</sup> As an acronym, the name stands for everything it is possible for it to stand for. There are a number of threads that continue through the group's output. A concern in practice with an expanded definition of the techniques/aesthetics of computer interface.

Speculative approaches to hooking these up to other formations that can be characterised as political, literary, musical, etc. The production of stand-alone publications/applications that can fit on one high-density disk and are distributed without charge over various networks.

The material context of the web for this group is viewed mainly as an opportunity rather than as a history. As all HTML is received by the computer as a stream of data, there is nothing to force adherence to the design instructions written into it. These instructions are only followed by a device obedient to them.

Once you become unfaithful to page-description, HTML is taken as a semantic mark up rather than physical mark-up language. Its appearance on your screen is as dependent upon the interpreting device you use to receive it as much as its 'original' state. The actual 'commands' in HTML become loci for the negotiation of other potential behaviours or processes.

Several possibilities become apparent. This data stream becomes a phase space, a realm of possibility outside of the browser. It combines with another: there are thousands of other software devices for using the world wide web, waiting in the phase space of code. Since the languages are pre-existing, everything that can possibly be said in them, every program that could possibly be constructed in them is already inherently pre-existent within them. Programming is a question of teasing out the permutations within the dimensions of specific languages or their combinations. That it is never only this opens up program-

ming to its true power—that of synthesis.

Within this phase space, perhaps one thing we are proposing is that one of the most pressing political, technical and aesthetic urgencies of the moment is something that subsumes both the modern struggle for the control of production (that is of energies), and the putative post-modern struggle for the means of promotion (that is of circulation) within the dynamics of something that also goes beyond them and that encompasses the political continuum developing between the gene and the electron that most radically marks our age: the struggle for the means of mutation.

A brief description of the functions of the Web Stalker is necessary as a form of punctuation in this context, but it can of course only really be fully sensed by actual use.<sup>9</sup> Starting from an empty plane of colour, (black is just the default mode — others are chosen using a pop-up menu) the user begins by marqueeing a rectangle. Using a contextual menu, a function is applied to the box. The box, a generic object, is specialised into one of the following functions. For each function put into play, one or more box is created and specialised.

**Crawler:** The Crawler is the part of the Web Stalker that actually links to the World Wide Web. It is used to start up, and to show the current status of the session. It appears as a window containing a bar split into three. A dot moving across the bar shows what stage the Crawler is at. The first section of the bar shows the progress of the Net connection. Once connection is made and a URL is found, the dot jumps to the next section of the bar. The second section displays the progress of the Web Stalker as it reads through the found HTML document looking for links to other URLs. The third section of the bar monitors the Web Stalker as it logs all the links that it has found so far. Thus, instead of the user being informed that connection to the net is vaguely 'there' by movement on the geographic TV-style icon in the top right hand corner, the user has access to specific information about processes and speeds.

**Map:** Displays references to individual HTML documents as circles and the links from one to another as lines. The URL of each document can be read by clicking on the circle it is represented by. Once a Web session has been started at the first URL opened by the Crawler, Map moves through all the links from that site, then through the links from those sites, and so on. The mapping is dynamic — 'Map' is a verb rather than a noun.

**Dismantle:** The Dismantle window is used to work on

specific URLs within HTML documents. URLs at this level will be specific resources such as images, email addresses, sound files, downloadable documents, etc. Clicking and dragging a circle into the Dismantle window will display all URLs referenced within the HTML document you have chosen, again in the form of circles and lines.

**Stash:** The Stash provides a document format that can be used to make records of web use. Saved as an HTML file it can also be read by 'Browsers' and circulated as a separate document. Sites or files are included by dragging and dropping URL circles into a Stash.

**HTML Stream:** Shows all of the HTML as it is read by the Web Stalker in a separate window. Because as each link is followed by the crawler the HTML appears precisely as a stream, the feed from separate sites is effectively mixed.

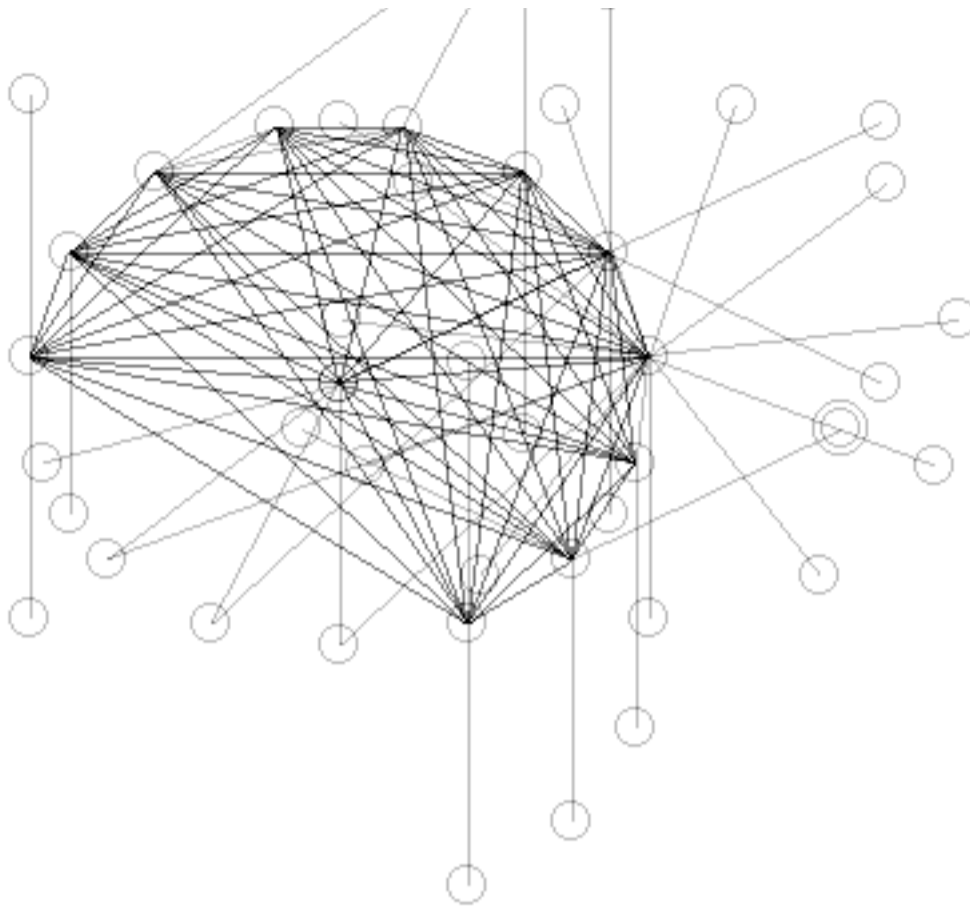
**Extract:** Dragging a URL circle into an extract window strips all the text from a URL. It can be read on screen in this way or saved as a text file.

The Web Stalker performs an inextricably technical, aesthetic and ethical operation on the HTML stream that at once refines it, produces new methods of use, ignores much of the data linked to or embedded within it, and provides a mechanism through which the deeper structure of the web can be explored and used.

This is not to say much. It is immediately obvious that the Stalker is incapable of using images and some of the more complex functions available on the web. These include for instance: gifs, forms, Java, VRML, frames, etc. Some of these are deliberately ignored as a way of trashing the dependence on the page and producing a device that is more suited to the propensities of the network. Some are left out simply because of the conditions of the production of the software — we had to decide what was most important for us to achieve with available resources and time. This is not to say that if methods of accessing this data were to be incorporated into the Stalker that they would have been done so 'on their own terms'. It is likely that at the very least they would have been dismantled, dissected, opened up for use in some way. That it was done anyway is, we hope, an encouragement to those who have the 'wrong' skills and few resources but a hunger to get things done, and a provocation to those who are highly skilled and equipped but never do anything.

Previous work by artists on the web was largely channelled into providing content for web sites. These sites are bound by the conventions enforced by browser-type software. They therefore remain the most

I/O/D 4: WEB STALKER  
screengrab & sticker



determining aesthetic of this work. The majority of web-based art, *if it deals with its media context at all* can be understood by four brief typologies:

**Incoherence** (user abuse, ironic dysfunctionality, randomness to mask pointlessness)

**Archaeology** (media archaeology, emulators of old machines and software, and structuralist materialist approach)

**Retro-tooling** (integrity to old materials in 'new' media, integrity as kitsch derived from punk/jazz/hip hop, old-style computer graphics, and 'filmic references' - the Futile Style Of London)<sup>10</sup>

**Deconstruction** (conservative approach to analysing-in-practice the development of multimedia and networks, consistently re-articulating contradiction rather than using it as a launching pad for new techniques of composition).

The project was situated within contemporary art, it is also widely operative outside of it. Most obviously it is at the very least, a piece of software. How can this multiple position be understood by an art-world that is still effectively in thrall to the notion of the autonomy of the object?

Anti-art is always captured by its purposeful self-placement within a subordinate position to that which it simply opposes. Alternately, the deliberate production of non-art is always an option but not necessary in this context. Instead, this project produces a relationship to art that at times works on a basis of infiltration or alliance, and at others simply refuses to be excluded by it and thus threatens to reconfigure entirely what it is part of. The Web Stalker is art. Another possibility therefore emerges. Alongside the categories art, anti-art and non-art, something else spills over: Not-just-art. It can only come into occurrence by being not just itself. It has to be used. Assimilation into possible circuits of distribution and effect in this case means something approaching a media strategy.

"For modernist intellectuals, cultural capital or distinction in Bourdieu's sense varies inversely with one's contact with the media".<sup>11</sup>

Operating at another level to the Web Stalker's engagement within art were two other forms of media which were integral to the project: Stickers (bearing a slogan and the I/O/D web-address) and Freeware. Both are good contenders for being the lowest, most despised grade of media. That the Web Stalker is Freeware has been essential in developing its engagement with various cultures of computing.

The Stalker is currently being downloaded at a rate of about a thousand copies per week. Responses have ranged from intensely detailed mathematical denunci-

ations of the Map and a total affront that anyone should try anything different; to evil glee, and a superb and generous understanding of the project's techniques and ramifications.

Whilst for many, the internet simply *is* what is visible with a browser, at the same time it is apparent that there is a widespread desire for new non-formulaic software. One of the questions that the Stalker poses is how program design is taken forward. Within the limitations of the programming language and those of time, the project achieved what it set out to do. As a model of software development outside of the super-invested proprietary one this speculative and interventionist mode of production stands alongside two other notable radical models: that of Free Software<sup>12</sup> and that derived from the science shops, (wherein software is developed by designers and programmers in collaboration with clients for specifically social uses). Unlike these others it is not so likely to find itself becoming a model that is widely adoptable *and* sustainable.

In a sense then, the web stalker works as a kind of "tactical software"<sup>13</sup> but it is also deeply implicated within another kind of tactic — the developing street knowledge of the nets. This is a sense of the flows, consistencies and dynamics of the nets that is most closely associated with hackers, but that is perhaps immanent in different ways in every user.

Bringing out and developing this culture however demands attention. In some respects this induction of idiosyncratic knowledges of minute effects ensures only that whilst the Browser Wars will never be won, they are never over. So long as there's the software out there working its temporal distortion effects on 'progress'... So long as there's always some nutter out there in the jungle tooled up with some VT100 web viewer, copies of Mosaic, Macweb, whatever.

At the same time we need to nurture our sources of this *ars metropolitana* of the nets. During recent times and most strongly because of the wider effects of specific acts of repression, hacking itself has often become less able to get things going because it has a) been driven more underground, b) been offered more jobs, and c) been less imaginatively willing or able to ally itself with other social currents.

Software forges modalities of experience — sensoriums through which the world is made and known. As a product of 'immaterial labour' software is a social, technical and aesthetic relation that is embodied — and that is at once productive of more relations. That the production of value has moved so firmly into the terrain of immaterial labour, machine embodied intelligence, style as factory, the production of subjectivity, makes the evolution of what was previously sectioned as 'culture' so much more valuable to play for — potentially always as sabotage — but, as a develop-

ment of the means of mutation, most compellingly as synthesis.

The Map makes the links between HTML documents. Each URL is a circle, every link is a line. Sites with more lines feeding into them have brighter circles. Filched data coruscating with the simple fact of how many and which sites connect to boredom.com, extreme.net or wherever. (Unless it's been listed on the ignore.txt file customisable and tucked into the back of the Stalker). Every articulation of the figure composing itself on screen is simply each link being followed through. The map spreads out flat in every direction, forging connections rather than faking locations. It is a figuration that is *immutably* live. A 'processual' opening up of the web that whilst it deals at every link with a determinate arrangement has no cut-off point other than infinity. Whilst the Browser just gives you history under the Go menu, the Map swerves past whichever bit of paper is being pressed up to the inside of the screen to govern the next hours of click-through time by developing into the future — picking locks as it goes.

Aggregates are formed from the realm induced by the coherence of every possibility. Syntactics tweaks, examines and customs them according to context. This context is not pre-formatted. It is up for grabs, for remaking. Synthesis determines a context within which it is constitutive and comes into composition within ranges of forces. Everything — every bit, every on or off fact — is understood in terms of its radical coefficient, against the range of mutation from which it emerged and amongst the potential syntheses with which it remains fecund. It is the production of sensoria that are productive not just of 'worlds' but of the world.

## Notes

- 1 Only an ostensible competitor because the browsers produced by Netscape and Microsoft are so nearly identical that they form, not an economic, but a technical and aesthetic monopoly. It will be interesting to see whether the release of the source code for Netscape Navigator will also produce a release from the conventions of the browser.
- 2 Again because of its near monopoly over PC Operating Systems Microsoft was able to set the terms—against previously made agreements - on which Java would be developed. It is widely agreed that they—and to some extent, Sun (the developers of Java)—significantly compromised the actual and potential power of the language.
- 3 for instance the I/O/D shout tag. (See documents on I/O/D site)
- 4 see for instance the skirmishes around name ownership produced in the net.art hijacking of corporate names by Heath Bunting and Rachel Baker at irrational.org, (<http://www.irrational.org>) or at the other extreme, the attempts at the technical introduction of a precise indexicality when a brand name is typed into a browser by Centraal (<http://www.realnames.com>)
- 5 Maurizio Lazzarato, *Immaterial Labor*, in Michael Hardt and Paul Virno, *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, 1996, p.142
- 6 Lazzarato, p.142
- 7 The device's advantage is in its ease of use—compared for instance to the tiresome delete command in DOS—rather than any 'natural' affiliation with this metaphor.
- 8 Simon Pope, Colin Green, Matthew Fuller
- 9 The I/O/D site from which all the group's output, including PC and Macintosh versions of the Web Stalker are available from is provided by Backspace: <http://www.backspace.org/iod>
- 10 See FSOL section on I/O/D site
- 11 Mark Poster, *The Second Media Age*, Polity Press 1997, p.5
- 12 Free Software Foundation—<http://www.fsf.com>—The reasons the I/O/D did not in this case follow the FSF model of free software are relatively simple. Whilst as a structure it undoubtedly works and we are supportive of it, it is an economy that demands a developing critical mass to work. This is happening for programmers working with larger computers. With the increasing use of Linux (see Linus Torvald's homepage: <http://www.earthspace.net/~esr/faqs/linus/>), it is also happening for Personal Computers which is the scale we are working on. However, there is no comparable economy working for the exchange of Lingo code. This is of course because Director is designed to produce hermetically sealed routines called 'projectors'. If the code for the Stalker was to have been distributed under Copyleft, there would have been no way of enforcing that its use continue to remain open as this is such an easy method of invisible incorporation.
- 13 see 'The ABC of Tactical Media', Geert Lovink and David Garcia. <http://www.waag.org/tmn/>



# Sound and Vision

What follows is an edited round table discussion that took place at Glasgow Film and Video Workshop between:

**Brian Keeley**, Aberdeen Video Access; **Iñigo Gerrido**, Cafe Flicker; **Lara Celini**, Edinburgh Video Access; **Paul Cameron**, Glasgow Film and Video Workshop; **Gillian Steel**, Castlemilk Video Workshop; chaired by **Martha McCulloch**, photographer and film maker; on video exhibition and distribution in Scotland.

**Martha McCulloch:** What may be worth bringing up is the partisan nature of the promotion of video work and what kind of work *doesn't* actually get covered. In terms of the different kinds and the importance of distribution mechanisms, one of the papers I've been looking at is from the 'Video Visions Forum' which was held at the Fruit Market Gallery, Edinburgh, 25 th July, 1997. Julia Knight spoke about the importance of distribution networks, what she said was: "One of the first things I discovered when I started working on video distribution is that distribution and exhibition work can play a pivotal role in shaping a moving image culture". We could start to open up the discussion asking why it should be that at that particular event there wasn't any representation of people in Scotland who are involved in curating exhibitions, promoting film and video work in all sorts of ways; who are actually encouraging the situation we have, in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, for instance, and also to some extent in more rural areas in Scotland.

**Paul Cameron:** I actually went along to it and I thought it was quite awful. In terms of distribution the only models they had were based around England, London specifically. Distribution facilities in Scotland are ten years behind. A lot of the distribution they talked about relies on MITES (Moving Image Touring Exhibitions Service) and we don't have anything like it here. I actually walked away from that day feeling angry, but we have so few of these discussions in Scotland that they are always loaded with expectations that they are going to sort out all the problems in one day.

**Brian Keeley:** What was the conclusion? Are you saying that we need a kind of Scottish variant of what's happening in England, such as MITES, or saying that should be UK wide.

**Lara Celini:** I attended as well and got the impression the discussion was about the video medium and the art gallery in general, rather than being practical solutions to distribution, which was a bit disappointing. There was a very large England-based presence there among the speakers and it's a shame there weren't more people from Scotland.

**PC:** As far as any problems of there being an English presence, I just think that in Scotland this sort of work is not supported to the same extent. One of the big problems here is that Scottish Screen<sup>1</sup> seems to not want to touch independent artists' film/video work and the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) seems to be reluctant about picking up film/video work.

**BK:** I think a lot of the work falls between two stools, so it's not going to get any support from either of those sources.

**PC:** It doesn't seem to be very focused just in terms of ways of doing things, where you go for support.

**BK:** So we are talking basically about gallery-based work rather than 'sitting in a dark room with an audience' work or is it a bit of both?

**M McC:** In terms of the talk that was given by Julia Knight, she was not only talking about gallery-based

work, she was talking about the whole spectrum of single screen and installation work being promoted. She talked about how MITES is an agency that looks clearly towards the mainstream galleries and tries to shift film and video work into the centre stage. I suppose the implications of what she's saying is that they are actually UK wide and what I wonder is are they really? Obviously some artists from Scotland have their work distributed by those agents. But how wide is that? Is it really covered?

**PC:** I got the impression that even if work is distributed people have a lot of problems accessing resources to show the work. Artists based in Scotland are limited in what they can show because the practical support is not there. They can't get hold of a video projector or a computer, etc. or rather they can't get them at a cost they or the gallery can afford. That in turn can limit the type of work that artists in Scotland make. MITES have all these things but due to the way it is funded through the Arts Council of England it has no remit in Scotland.

**BK:** You'd imagine in this day and age most large mainstream galleries would have one area specifically set aside for audio visual work. Such facilities are usually installed for a specific exhibition and then stripped out again, or for some of the more museum based stuff, you get an area specifically for audio-visual display, but generally there isn't a lot of equipment for things like that.

**PC:** A lot of the time a gallery will just provide the space and it is the artist that is meeting the cost of showing the work. One of the problems we have is if someone wants video projectors, or whatever, for the duration of an exhibition it is beyond the budget of a lot of artists. So we need that facility there for people to hire things from at an affordable rate, and even to be able to provide support in making the work.

**LC:** I think we have a lot of catching up to do, but I do think—on a more positive note—that people are actually organising themselves as well, which I think is a good thing. The Edinburgh Film and Video Access Centre have been collaborating with the Collective Gallery in Edinburgh to show-case new film and video work, things that are a bit more experimental that might not find a comfortable home elsewhere. While all the negative things do have to be addressed, I think it is also important not to forget that there are exciting things happening.

**Gillian Steel:** I think people are being extremely resourceful with facilities, with very little support, as has already been said. Scottish Screen virtually ditched the workshops. SAC are finding it hard to categorise us and what is coming out of the workshops, so there's some but little support there and then mainly through the Lottery. It's hard in terms of getting somebody from that kind of organisation to understand what it is you're doing and the remit you're fulfilling.

**LC:** I think we have a lot of learning to do as well. In the way that we actually go about planning for funding. I think the problem with Scottish Screen is that a lot of things they fund have to be quite commercially driven and unless there is something feasible in an economic rather than an artistic sense, then they probably won't want to get involved. Where as with the SAC what you are up against is you actually have to prove to them that this is going to be important and valuable to people, that there is some sort of community involvement that is going to benefit—that's what we have to try and get across. Involving screenings in a social setting is quite important as well, to make it

something that people go to, not just for some form of mental stimulation or some artistic appreciation but just for pure enjoyment as well.

**Iñigo Gerrido:** Considering the low resources available, the money the work is produced on, the variety and quality of work shown at Cafe Flicker is impressive. What is lacking is some sort of acknowledgment from the administration, like Scottish Screen. They need to acknowledge the work done by organisations working from the heart of the industry, from the roots. I think it's a lack of understanding of what these kinds of organisations are doing. How can we beat that collectively, I think that's instrumental. To gain recognition and an understanding of the value of the organisations and what we all do, because the value is there and the quality is there. Basically how to move the people who could fund us.

**M McC:** What's quite worrying is that people are organising these things for nothing and what then happens is these things tend to fall apart and people forget they ever existed. There is no acknowledgment of that history. One of the questions that comes up is: How's the history written of the development of this particular part of visual art, or beyond the visual arts, actually chronicled? It's actually mis-chronicled most of the time, and this is part of it. If you look at some organisations like New Visions they are actually doing more challenging things than some of the more established institutions, but they shouldn't have to do it for nothing.

**GS:** I think there is a real short sightedness. It's the results of root activity that are really interesting and the culture of film and video really suffers for that short-sightedness. I see it as really embarrassing.

**IG:** It's a lack of communication or an understanding of the problem. I was speaking to the SAC and they said: 'Yes, fill out a Lottery application, we would very much welcome a Lottery application from Cafe Flicker'. And I said: 'Yes, but I need a grant to write an application because I don't have the time to spend 2 or 3 months working full time on an application'. No one at Cafe flicker has got the time to do so. It is very simply a lack of understanding how small organisations like ours are lacking resources.

**GS:** I don't actually know if they don't understand. I think they understand. I think they just expect that people like yourself and New Visions will continue to come up with amazing things from nothing. I don't think it's enough.

**IG:** 'Cafe Flicker has run for 7 years. If you have maintained yourself for 7 years why can't you maintain yourself a little longer,' maybe that is the attitude, but I'm not so sure. But maybe it is a lack of really understanding what the value of these organisations is. If you're saying: 'Who will recognise your work if you're working for free', that's an incredible attitude for the funders to take. I don't want to consider that to be the case. It is the value of organisations, the value of these resources...

**BK:** Is the emphasis more on funding individual artists/film makers to produce single pieces of work which then might be built into an initial big special screening, or whatever, and then after that it just sits on the shelf? There is then no support for that individual to get that film, video, installation work, shown?

**M McC:** Is it because they think that a distribution mechanism is already there in the gallery system and they don't understand that maybe in this particular field the work isn't always seen in galleries anyway?

**BK:** You talk about the gallery side, there is a big discrepancy between being able to produce work on a

fairly limited budget over a long time scale, then to actually try and present that work at a gallery that hasn't got the facilities. It will actually cost a lot of money, and a lot of technology, and a lot of setting up. Maybe that's what scares people off. You can't simply exhibit a screen-based work, it doesn't really exist in a concrete form, it has to have a projector, VCR, cabling, screen, or whatever, to be seen. I think that's just a cultural thing that funders and galleries and wherever just can't get their head round.

**M McC:** In the current climate of galleries having less funding for exhibitions, and the SAC having less funding to distribute to specific exhibitions/projects, it is likely to actually get worse than what it has been up to this point. Most medium-sized galleries are working within a limited budget for an exhibition and have no way of covering the costs of hiring expensive video equipment.

**PC:** In England MITES is specifically designed to support such kinds of work. One of the problems we have is that if someone is having an exhibition and they want video projectors, or whatever, over a period of months it is beyond the budget of a lot of artists. So we need that facility there for people to hire things from, and even be able to provide support in making the work.

**LC:** So what is the solution to that? Do we need organisations like MITES with a presence in Scotland?

**PC:** I think that's the type of thing we need to push for. One of the other problems that galleries face is that technological advances are quite rapid. It's not really practical for small organisations to carry the costs of buying new equipment. Whereas a National based organisation could carry those costs with both resources and technical back-up. Even if a gallery does buy bits of equipment it may not have the technical back up to be able to run it, hire it out and maintain it. People like Glasgow City Council do quite often have such equipment, but there is no central store and there's no way of finding out what they have.

**M McC:** The proposal is there to set up a sort of MITES type organisation in Scotland but again the success of that depends on Lottery funding and on ongoing funding for the project, because it would have to be subsidised in order that it would still be cheap enough for the galleries or whatever kind of venues to use.

**BK:** It'll take a lot of money because you talked about you'd have to have such a wide range of equipment and formats and all sorts of things.

**PC:** It's costing the SAC money anyway, because galleries are buying individual bits of equipment, so you have lots of bits of equipment scattered around and no central resource. Or they are forking out hire costs to commercial companies, which, because of the length of time galleries require facilities, it can often cost more than buying equipment.

**BK:** It doesn't seem the proper way of going about things, that if you create a piece of work and get funding from the SAC that most of that money goes into the commercial market. That doesn't seem like a useful way of putting money into the arts. It seems flawed.

**M McC:** But if there was a facility set up where you could hire it cheaply would you just hire it rather than buy something that was going to be obsolete in a few years or so.

**GS:** Especially if there was technical back-up if things go wrong, rather than having to get somebody else in to do it.

**LC:** The hours that I work are just enough to cover the day to day existence of the centre. There isn't

enough time to do all these funding applications and that's where I think maybe we have to pool resources, where we have some people with expertise that can help us all. That we actually network, that we can actually learn from each other rather than each individual sitting somewhere in the darkroom putting pen to paper.

**IG:** I think that's interesting and quite possible to do. How can we make the point so that there is an understanding of the work that we do, how can we make our position stronger and improve resources. We have to go forward and pooling resources maybe one way.

**GS:** I think it's a combination of what you were saying, firstly that we need to get better applications and yes *pool resources*. But we need the funders to be more responsive in the first place. The City Council don't have a broad concept of what cultural activity is, at best they want it to be educationally based; the SAC want projects to be artist led; and Scottish Screen focus on commerce. There has to be a way in for more resources and also of convincing Scottish Screen that they need to create a separate post for somebody to deal with the workshops and with what they're doing.

**LC:** The point is that Scottish Screen won't fund the sort of thing we're talking about today. I think we can forget it with the funding structure we've got at the moment.

**IG:** Unless we create some sort of umbrella of practitioners (video and film makers) and curators. We should have meetings like this that includes people from the City Council's performing arts department, the SAC and Scottish Screen, and then we can discuss what is missing. We need to make a statement of how we see it and invite them for a meeting and see what can happen after that.

**M McC:** The problem is that they don't acknowledge that these people here are doing stuff, that's the problem.

**BK:** How much have the SAC and Scottish Screen been pro-active in developing film making or video making in Scotland. How much are they purely administering funds? And how much are the smaller organisations—like those represented here and others throughout the country—promoting Scottish film and video work. There's a lot of people and organisations that are actively promoting Scottish film and video production, who are not Scottish Screen—and who don't have funds to administer.

**IG:** The point is the faults are virtually the same across Scotland. Glasgow benefits from Cafe Flicker, it's somewhere to see and talk about films. So it should be supported in those terms.

**M McC:** The fact is that funding has changed. It's something that's happened over the past 5 or 6 years. Yet you don't get a bean out of them without having to do so much work that you think: 'Well if I'm going to end up having to do all that extra work maybe I'm just as well off doing what I'm doing'.

**BK:** The exciting part of it is the spontaneity, the unexpected. You don't know what's going to happen, taking risks. The best work, no matter what medium, comes out of taking risks, people taking risks and putting money into something and they don't know what they're going to get.

**M McC:** That's the point, that in trying to get money out of the SAC or any institution you always have to pay the price of that. But the fact is that wasn't always the case and it doesn't have to be the case. It should be possible for them to give out grants to organisations like Cafe Flicker without all these strings attached when it's run by volunteers.

**BK:** You have people who are working in different areas like funding, running workshops or whatever and those people have demonstrated their commitment and ability. There has to be a change of attitude where funding bodies trust the judgment of the people who are working on the ground. You shouldn't need to have all the red tape to go through, obviously.

**IG:** The only thing Scottish Screen understand is an aggressive, commercial sort of pushing. Their whole procedure is straight forward commercial.

**M McC:** It's very short sighted as well. I think we're going to see that more and more, as more bad work is being given a grant rather than lots of small organisations.

**BK:** It's a whole cultural thing, it's not just film/video making, it goes across the arts in general.

**M McC:** What we talked about earlier, how there's a lack of acknowledgment, that you have to feed things like the film and video workshops in order that these things do exist. That's where the real research is being done I would say. Real researchers aren't funded but people who are 'stars' are. It's happening because they're only backing what they see to be the 'winners', whose work is often quite bad.

**BK:** It's taking the instant, immediate payback for funding. Everyone's got to have immediately recognisable—either financial or cultural—pay back. When funders fund small scale things, like Cafe Flicker or some of the Film and Video workshops around Scotland, there isn't really much immediate payback but the amount of people who go through that system, who if they hadn't, if those organisations hadn't been there, they might never had got round to deciding that film making or whatever is their bag. And then a couple of years later they might go to film school, or go to college, or make a film and get some funding, or they might get a job in broadcasting. But those things might never have happened had the grass roots organisations not been there to support the entry level work and people, you can't quantify that.

**M McC:** You can quantify it or you can choose not to quantify it, which is what happens. People choose to say: 'I'm going to chop off this piece of history', and say: 'Oh I started here. It didn't start back there it started here', because that's a bit embarrassing—to look at that early part of your career. The fact is that some of the 'big' names did come about because of the likes of New Visions. Is it a coincidence that Glasgow's got all these things going on and that a lot of people who are making video work come from here? It's the climate that created them.

**LC:** I think you're absolutely right about the vital role we all provide for people to learn and to flourish, as it were. And I think one of the problems that we have is actually being able to monitor what we provide and hard facts. We've actually got to work out a way of logging our achievements because it's the only way we're going to be able to persuade people how valuable we actually are.

**M McC:** I think you're right, some work can be done by the grass roots organisations to just use examples say, but I don't think we should have to sit in front of them and quote statistics.

**BK:** Sometimes when you try to do that it just doesn't feel right. You try and put those statistical things together and it just feels as if you're trying to control it at a grass roots level. That's when things start to get lost then you simply become an administrator.

**LC:** We need to get feed back and we do need to lobby.

**M McC:** Well maybe all we need to do is say that this kind of developmental and research type of work

is important and that it should be acknowledged as being important. You don't actually have to look too deeply, just look at what's come out of this environment we're sitting in now. The people who've come through here and what they're doing now. The funders don't have to look too far, curators don't have to look too far to see that's where the people come from. They can't see it as just something in the air. To some extent I think why should you be in here justifying what you're doing, if you're doing the work it's up to the people who are supposed to be noticing that and having their fingers on the pulse and on the purse strings, they should be noticing.

**LC:** I think the problem we've got is that the people who should be listening to us haven't got their finger on the pulse.

**IG:** Over one hundred films shown in Cafe Flicker in the last two and a half years, all this information, the full screenings list, is on our web site. The material to put under their noses is there.

**GS:** Again, it's small organisations with no funding doing all the distributing and pushing.

**BK:** I've screened films made through *First Reels* in Aberdeen but it isn't the people who administer First Reels who phone up the workshop and say 'give me a screening'. It is me who organises the venue and promotes the event. You'd think there'd be something other than simply a showcase screening at the Glasgow Film Theatre or whatever. The distribution doesn't seem to go anywhere beyond that. You'd think that if you administered that fund with the films that were made from the money you'd given them you'd try and distribute them more widely.

**GS:** But it's always been New Visions to my knowledge, in Glasgow anyway, who picked up films and actively put them about, taking them to cinemas or to festivals.

**BK:** It can be quite expensive and time-consuming

for an individual. If you've got a film that you've made, you've probably gone into serious debt. Then creating the chance to screen it and to show it in so many festivals. To actually get all the copies made, filling in all the applications and getting all the deadlines and sending it in the post, it really takes a lot of money. And sometimes you're really cleaned out by the time you've made the film, what you need is a bit of support to help with that.

**GS:** Typically the life span of single screen and gallery based work that's supported by these funders tends to be one or two years. After that festivals will consider the work too old to show, so they just sit on the shelf. Clearly that's a problem. So we need an archive not only of recent work but also of work that gives an historical context.

**LC:** I think the issue of an archive is a big one as well. Because all this work is being produced but is there a single place where I can actually go and have a look at what was created last year? It's all getting lost and I think that is the most tragic thing about it all, that the good work that is out there disappears to somewhere under the bed or in the wardrobe.

**GS:** This is not just a problem that's about work being created now though. I think we need an organisation that covers all that.

**M McC:** I suppose one thing we've touched on a little bit is the art market. Clearly that's an aspect of how work is distributed and shown and also remains in those museums to be seen. Are certain kinds of work never bought by museums for instance?

**BK:** Do any of the museums or galleries in Scotland have screening facilities where you can go and see an archive of films? Is there an archive of single screen work. There's nothing like that in any galleries and museums in Scotland?

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Scottish Screen — "A Government backed body encouraging film development and education in Scotland. Provides a wide range of information and support services. Runs the Scottish Film Archive, preserving Scotland's moving image heritage." Guardian Media Guide 1998

#### contacts

##### **Aberdeen Video Access,**

James Dun's House, Schoolhill, Aberdeen, AB10 1JT

##### **Castlemilk Video Workshop,**

17A Castlemilk Arcade, Castlemilk, G45 9AA

##### **Edinburgh Film and Video Access Centre,**

25a South West Thistle St. Lane, Edinburgh, EH2 1EW

##### **Glasgow Film and Video Workshop**

(GFVW), Third Floor, 34 Albion Street, Glasgow, G1

1LH

##### **Café Flicker,**

screenings the first Wednesday of every month at GFVW, <http://www.goma.glasgow.gov.uk/OaksBark/FlickerHomePage.htm>

# Dumbocracy

## The New Scotland

Sponsored by the Herald, New Statesman and The Fabian Society, the conference "The New Scotland" was organised by the little-known **Centre for Scottish Public Policy (CSPP)**. In the last two days of May they hired out most of the arts venues in the Trongate area in Glasgow and charged entrance fees of at least £10—presumably to keep the riff raff out. There was almost no publicity for the event—most venues knew next to nothing about the organisation they housed. Press reports of the conference told us nothing of the CSPP—they barely mentioned their name—even although simple investigation reveals them to be the organ grinders and suppliers of most of the monkeys. Press reports offered no information enabling anyone to judge the objectivity of the event. They did condescend to report that during Donald Dewar's introductory speech there had been a "demonstration by the National Petition Against Poverty" and that the organisers had dutifully called the police. Thus the CSPP's first act was to try to get people (probably violently) arrested. I heard that all that happened was that a woman had loudly and clearly pointed out the brutal realities of poverty in the city. Donald Dewar had this to say:

"If they have a genuine complaint to make, this is not the way to do it."<sup>1</sup>

If offering people some stylistic advice while behind their backs moves are made to get them arrested is all Dewar has to offer, then it is another indication of betrayal; and sadly, things to come. But it is not a case of "if" there is poverty. Poverty is a self evident fact. The poor are the truth.

But in Scotland the Labour Party are ruled by fear, not by truth. Their fear of "activism" or "direct action" or even "the left" is simple cowardice—a fear of direct contact with the people they have betrayed. This fear manipulates them. Their world is littered with guilty secrets. People have been driven to suicide. These days adherence to Orwellian double-think is practically in their constitution. There will be no re-distribution of wealth, well certainly not downwards. Dewar, no doubt, automatically apologised for the lower classes turning up and lowering the tone of the proceedings. It frightens away nice rich upper-class people who get queasy and nervous at the sight of beggars and begin to fear and fret for the safety of their belongings. Best let the police deal with that sort of thing, and then get back to endlessly talking about fighting poverty with the managerial classes while de-regulating the bankers. This conference should have been called "Criminalising the poor—how can we make money out of it?"



### Against boardrooms even the gods contest in vain

The CSPP used to be called The John Weatley Centre, and was named after the respected Independent Labour Party MP who passed through legislation enabling government action on Glasgow's Housing Problem, arguably the chief cause of misery in the city at the time. Old socialists (and their socialism) are not welcome round these here parts no more<sup>2</sup>—so the name has been changed. There are similar organisations like this springing up like poisonous mushrooms and the new Scottish parliament is acting like a vicious fertiliser.<sup>3</sup>

Their web page for the event states that: "The centre is not aligned to any political party." Their brochure describes the CSPP as "independent of political parties." and "...managed by a Board drawn from a wide cross-section of Scottish society." Judge for yourself—this is the board according to the Centre:

**Dr. Alice Brown:** Dept. of politics Edinburgh University.

**Gordon Dalyell:** Solicitor, Wheatley Centre on Law Reform.

**Mark Lazarowicz:** An Advocate, and former Labour councillor. He stood in the 92 election as a Parliamentary Labour candidate in the Edinburgh Pentlands seat, losing to Malcolm Rifkind by 4,290 votes. It had previously, in 87, been a Labour majority of 1,859. He is the convener of the CSPP.

**Anne McGuire:** Labour MP, recently appointed Donald Dewar's Parliamentary Private Secretary. Shortly after the conference she was the principle "gate keeper" who drew up the list of prospective (i.e. acceptably right-wing) Labour candidates for the new parliament. An ardent sycophant she took the opportunity of PM's question time to ask: "Does the prime minister recognise that our emphasis over the past year on the economy, health and education has kept faith with the voters."

**Rosemary McKenna:** Labour MP. On the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee which is enquiring into "welfare to work." The Herald of 24/3/97 reported that McKenna's appointment to the seat of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth was accompanied by the purge of the Home rule faction of the local party at the conference in Inverness. Fears were voiced that this had been "engineered to give a clear run to councillor Rosemary McKenna, who is a leading figure in Network, the pro-leadership grouping which orchestrated the Inverness slate". The Network has been described as "garrulous college leavers anxious to be seen doing the leader's bidding."<sup>4</sup> Its origins are said to be in Jim Murphy, another new MP and responsible for the acceptance of student loans while President of the NUS. He was assigned as "special projects officer" by those in the Scottish Labour Party hierarchy anxious to be seen as Blairite. The big "success" of the network was McKenna's election. Jim Murphy also spoke at the conference.

**Henry McLeish:** Labour MP. Donald Dewar's second in command. Minister for Home Affairs, Devolution and Transport, was opposition spokesman on social security—now the country's chief exponent of workfare.

**David Martin:** Labour MEP and has been Vice-president of the European Parliament, (which funds the CSPP) for ten years—an ex-stockbroker's assistant.

**David Millar:** Formerly a clerk in the house of Commons, then director of research at the European Parliament, now with the Europa Institute, Edinburgh University.

**Kenneth Munro:** European Commission.

**Matt Smith:** Scottish Secretary of Unison one of the biggest unions in Scotland and the UK.

The Thatcher period was marked by scores of "non-partisan" but ideologically directed research institutes, who financed and publicised the work of approved

"experts." The CSPP's pathetic disguise of their political connections relegates them to similar forms of intellectual prostitution. That period also witnessed a huge increase in what was officially called "public diplomacy" a new doublespeak term for what used to be known as government propaganda. We can now re-name this "public policy."

As a result of the conference, the CSPP has an advisory board and a board of directors totalling thirty-eight people. There are eight new directors including Paul Thomson: the editor of "Renewal" (a magazine devoted to pushing New Labour propaganda), Ronnie Smith: the General Secretary of the EIS, Grant Baird: the Chief executive of Scottish Financial Enterprise, and some academics. The advisory board has been padded out with Councillors from Glasgow and Edinburgh and more academics. Twenty-nine of the total of thirty-eight spoke at the conference, which had fifty-five speakers on day one and seventy-four on the other. CSPP members were scattered throughout the three sessions each with eight different seminars per day. More or less half of the talks were non-political and largely arbitrary cultural themes and these ones they avoided.<sup>5</sup> Some talks contained nothing but CSPP members. I think it is fair to say we were somewhat shepherded into hearing the views the organisation is pushing. No one mentioned this in the press.

The CSPP aim to set agendas for the Scottish Parliament, attack home rule, advocate coalition politics and promote the EU—where the Social Democrats and the Labour Party merge into one in the European Parliament.

They are in the business of manipulation. I think they are a part of larger manipulative attempts within the Labour party to push the party towards the right in Scotland and silence any criticism. There are no attempts—one begins to doubt whether there is even the capability—to understand this within the mainstream media. Complicity (perhaps unwitting) could easily be argued. The Herald and New Statesman (who are desperate to re-invent themselves) were after all joint sponsors of the event. It could mean nothing, but several journalists from the Scotsman, STV, Scotland on Sunday, Sunday Times and the Economist all chaired seminars at the conference.

### 'Follow the Money'

On their web page it states that they receive money not only from the EC but also from an organisation called the **Friedrich Ebert Foundation**. This is another example of covert government sponsorship and funding. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation focused on involving trade union leaders in "independent" programmes for Third World unions. Its board comprises of "high ranking members of the Social Democratic Party and [it is] financed by government, business and unions. A parallel Christian Democratic body exists, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation...About the Friedrich Ebert foundation...there are quite clear parallels between the expansionist German foreign trade policy and the work of this foundation."<sup>6</sup>

They told me that they received this funding to stage a members meeting with the European Movement. Back in the early 60s:

"The European Movement, the elite international pressure group which takes much of the credit for the founding of the Common Market, took secret US funding...about £380,000 of US government money passed secretly from the CIA-controlled American Committee to the European Movement"<sup>7</sup>

The CSPP are to an unknown extent funded by government or quasi-government organisations, some of whom have since the 50s moved the Unions and the Left towards the right—by semi-covert and covert means. They are (perhaps unwittingly) straying into territory dominated by the non-parliamentary right and the psychological operations of the secret service.

"The main organisational focus points for the trade union right in recent decades have been Industrial



# William Clark

Research and Information Services (IRIS), the Jim Conway Foundation [JCF] and the TUCETU (formerly the Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding). One single funding conduit links all three organisations...the Dulverton Trust.

JCF facilitated contacts between anti-Scargill factions of the NUM and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the wealthy foundation for the promotion of social democracy linked to the German SPD.<sup>18</sup>

Historically a main thrust of this was to establish connections with the anti-Communist efforts of the USA. Both US and UK governments were willing to help Union leaders from both sides of the Atlantic get together. The years after the war saw the forces which would become NATO (the military, foreign policy and multi-national wings of the USA, UK and German State) exacerbate moves towards concentrated subversion of Union organisations and the left in general; all as part of the "cold war." In Germany secret funding helped Social Democrats "solidify" the German Federation of Labour.<sup>9</sup> CIA funding came into Europe to encourage the Unions to be anti-communist—they had themselves more or less set up the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Besides domestic subversion this nexus also operated as an attack on South American, African, Indian and Indonesian workers organisations attempts to resist the effects of multinational exploitation which operated under the sanction of the foreign policies of the large industrial nations, and which worked closely with numerous dictatorships, as they still do today:

*"The importance of this network in stabilising and pacifying workers' organisations in countries where the transnational corporate operations are flourishing has never been adequately dealt with. The strategic value of this network, as a fifth column, waiting with cobra fangs to strike out to poison, and where possible, to destroy popular attempts to terminate transnational corporate domination has never been realistically weighed. The massive nature of the training programmes which successfully inculcate US-government political and social values has a dramatic importance even before one considers the plots and counterplots which make up the daily life of the US labour network in Latin America."*<sup>10</sup>

The Guatemalan election of 1984 was won by the Christian Democrats. The election was procedurally fair, but the population lived in permanent fear. The US press, when they both to look, selectively focused on one to the exclusion of the other and termed the new government centrist, moderates, who were troubled with 'rogue elements' within them—the death squads they just somehow couldn't manage to control. The history of centerist parties—whatever their guise—has been as a front for corruption of the worst kind. The South and Central American US puppet states run by dictators all had moderate centrist, consensus-loving 'political' parties. Anyone can run them—for any reason.

The German government of the sixties and seventies that, while its security services were run by Hitler's ex-security chief, outlawed parties of the left was also a centrist party. These facts elude the vast majority of British politicians used to the lies and bribery of their own party and who generally have no socially useful political convictions anyway. Centre parties are especially useful to society's institutionalised financial exploiters since the social order remains unchallenged, despite utter abuse of the democratic system. Centre parties are not alone in being open to the influence of think-tanks and factionalism. Since politics is no longer required, in Japan political parties don't really have policies as such, politicians need something to say and do. The post-war tradition has been a roll back of political freedom. The rhetoric which surrounded this is of 'a tinkering with reform'—in reality an effort to spend the taxes

drawn from the people on the rich rather than the poor. The accent is on procedure—as it was in Guatamala.

## "Truth is there's nobody fighting because nobody knows what to say"

In "A Parliament for the Millennium," the first talk I attended, the panel consisted of: David Millar of the CSPP executive committee who wrote their "definitive publication" entitled "To Make the Parliament of Scotland a Model for Democracy." He was joined by Robert Beattie—also a CSPP director but here wearing the mask of an employee of the multinational IBM—who has similarly produced a CSPP "report" called "A Parliament for the Millennium". The third speaker, Mark Lazarowicz as mentioned before is the CSPP convener and one of the organisers of the weekend. His "CSPP Policy Paper" is called "Proportional Representation". These publications were shamelessly endorsed. If this talk was about contributing to the constitution of the new parliament then it was as if they were saying "and just to save some time here's one we made earlier". One would simply have to be crazy to imagine that this was a genuine objective discussion

Unleashing the "bow-tied-affable-old-duffer routine" Millar's talk was on procedure. He assured us that: "parliamentary procedure grants the right of minorities." He informed us that back in the days of the Scottish Constitutional Convention<sup>11</sup> it was decided that the "Scottish parliament should have as little to do with Westminster as possible". On reflection it would seem that this was where he, a retired clerk in the House of Commons, began pottering with the perverse hobby of dreaming up guidelines for the Scottish Parliament. He used to be an information officer—the Director of Research at the European Parliament and perhaps cannot come down from the high. A lifetime of shuffling papers has on its own initiative qualified him to "not just come here and tell you how it's going to be." No no no, "give us your views". He described everything as a clean sheet then rhetorically asked "how have the government started off putting some things on the clean sheet?" Eventually once all the "consultation" is in from conferences like this the Constitutional Steering Group will make the big decisions. It has at its head the Minister for Devolution, Henry McLeish who is a director of the CSPP. I couldn't stop myself from wondering why they couldn't have done all this at the last CSPP committee meeting? Millar read to us what they the Constitutional Convention—or was it what he—or was it what we—have all agreed to. He said it has thought up four key principles (this quote includes his theatrical asides):

- "(1) Parliament is to embody and reflect the sharing of power between people, legislators and the government. That is as far as you can get from Westminster as possible.
- (2) The Government to be accountable to Parliament—that's a change from Westminster too—both it and the government to be accountable to the people. This is red revolution in parliamentary terms.
- (3) Parliament is to be accessible, open and responsive. Procedures enabling participation in policy making and designation.
- (4) Parliament to recognise the need for equal opportunities for all in the widest sense of the term, ahem!"

Millar insisted that the Scottish parliament will not suffer from the folly of Westminster: "...the absurd confrontation will be transformed into accountability...the buck stops in Edinburgh... Proportional representation creates a climate of coalition...All that left and right stuff, we and them, employers and workers. All that stuff will,

over a period, change - its absolutely certain."<sup>12</sup>

So is Mr Millar terminally naive, wilfully ignorant, a "lone assassin", a useful idiot for others or what? On the issue of equal opportunities—he sees the task ahead as "meaning sensible working hours" for the people in parliament. The big struggle it would seem, is to ensure that those inside parliament do well out of all this, the rest of us hopelessly outside this Athenian Democracy are on our own. He went on: "start at ten, finish at five, home to have your tea at seven, no overnight sittings, no nonsense about hours which exclude long hours [sic]." Oblomov couldn't have put it better—so much for the price of democracy being eternal vigilance. He thanked the CSPP for "very kindly agreeing to publish his and Bernard Crick's work," without mentioning the fact that he is on the board and that the guy they will send it to, McLeish is also on the board of the CSPP—why burden us with meaningless details.

The next speaker was Mark Lazarowicz, the convener of the CSPP. He believes that if a parliament is "more responsive" it is "therefore more democratic." Responsive to who? Probably the class of people and their associations who set it up. He also believes that:

*"The government and all the political parties should be congratulated for responding to the public wish for there to be this type of thinking about what kind of parliament can there be, how can it be different. The Constitutional Steering Group...which are the party leaders, and also key people in the eh...academic em... constitutional convention campaign, trades unions, business community..."*

He started to tail off there... I was going to prompt him with "the CSPP", but he picked up the threads and outlined that "the Steering Group has not just been speaking to itself." There has been "a mail out of 800" asking for "views." That leaves about 4,999,200 to go. He tried to appear business-like:

*"One of the things that we want to do—as the CSPP—from today's discussion is we're going to put in a proposal...em...I mean a response to the government...after Sunday."*

Even as the organiser Lazarowicz was having trouble with all the underlying twists and turns of who is who in this conference. The exact point where the CSPP is a consultative body representing independent viewpoints, a Labour Party front, the Labour party, the government or the voice of the people depends on who they are talking to. The big message is democracy need not involve all of us. Lazarowicz eventually got to the point: "quangos and the business community should draw up proposals...and be at the start of the policy making process," adding seconds later, "matters might take a few weeks to go through parliament." After leaving it wide open he offered to close the stable door after the horse has bolted:

*"There is also a danger of course that coalition politics can become a bit too cosy. One of my nightmares is a situation where the three, four, five thousand members of what is effectively the Scottish political elite... the five thousand people or so who have a lot of influence in different ways on the political process —and are the ones who run Scotland; and they'll have a lovely time taking part in all these little forms of discussion and communication..."*

I don't remember anyone voting for a coalition and consensus, but according to Lazarowicz that's what we're getting. What will offset any danger of this "amorphous coalition" is:

*"The need for this process of openness to go not just to those within the political process in various ways, but in... in... in... at a wide level as well."* Following this line of thought the economic need of the people will automatically displace the economic reality of the elite—the rich. We would be as well to wait for a shooting star and make a wish. This man stood for parliament.

After all that the person chairing the meeting then addressed us with a taste of the bathos to come:

*"In the spirit of participation I'm not expecting the*





audience to ask questions of the panel. We'd have very little time if everyone would respond."

**"Did the Scottish rejection of Thatcherism indicate a class-based devotion to real socialism or a nationalism-based rejection of anglocentric centralism? Is this a new dawn for the left, or a false dawn?"**

The above quote—perhaps my favourite one—is from the conference brochure and introduced the next talk, amusingly called "What's left of Labour." The speakers were billed as:

*"Tommy Sheridan, the Scottish Socialist Alliance Councillor; Jimmy Reid The Herald; Robin Harper, Scottish Green Party."*

There would be no problem picking this up on the tape recorder. Sadly Jimmy (There will be no bevvy-ing) did not turn up. Tommy (Brothers and sisters I'll be brief) Sheridan thinks he is a dead cert for the Parliament. Robin is not so sure about his chances. You need a certain percentage. That was about the gist of it. For his amusing anecdote on the difficulty of getting people to actually vote Tommy regaled the nice middle-class audience with a tale revealing how stupid he thinks the electorate are in general and his are in particular:

*"I remember being outside giving out leaflets encouraging people to vote for myself as the candidate, and these two guys came out and says "Tommy where do we put the mark. Do we just put it beside your name" Because what they'd done is went in the polling station and brought out the voting slips [laughter] they marked it outside and then took it back in [louder laughter]. The point about that was they're twenty-nine years old and this is the first time*



*they've ever voted."*

Both speakers, if elected—obviously they were only here to punt themselves—will fight poverty. Everyone in the whole weekend seemed to have pledged themselves to this cause. That and ignoring the distinction between what people say and actually do.

I knew the last talk of the Saturday would be on my home ground as it were.

*"A New Deal for Scotland's Unemployed*

*Venue: Transmission Gallery*

*Speakers: Alan Brown, Director, Employment Service Scotland, Dr Fran Wasoff, Dept. Sociology, University of Edinburgh, John Diownie, Scottish Parliamentary Officer, Federation of Small Businesses, Alex Pollock, BT Scotland Executive Team*

*Chair: Agnes Samuel, Executive Director, Glasgow Opportunities."*

Alan Brown the director of the so-called Employment Services will be the man in Scotland enforcing the "New Deal". He had this to say:

*"This government strongly believes that the best form of welfare is to seek to get people into work, and I'm happy enough to speak here this afternoon and take part in any debate that takes place. But as a Civil Servant—I'm quite happy to explain and defend government policy—but Civil servants have to be careful in one sense that—you know there are certain areas I think where the conversation goes where you probably won't find me able to express my personal opinion about things..."*

At least Pontius Pilate actually produced a small bowl and physically washed his hands of things. Since questions were thus rendered pointless no one bothered to ask Alan whether the £3.5bn the government "took off" the privatised utilities would be spent on the unemployed, people like himself who administrate the

unemployed or the privatised utilities who will get the money back. No one asked whether the "New Deal" will achieve just as much as all the other workfare schemes which have been discredited everywhere they have been tried. And no one mentioned that the unemployed are criminalised under the new system—if you're unemployed you do community service, if you commit a crime you do community service. Brown laughed at the notion that the programme might reduce the number of existing jobs because it will provide a dispensable and cheap labour pool, and as such have a detrimental effect on the unions and conditions of work generally—despite YOPS, YTS etc. becoming by-words for this. It's not affecting his wages.

A few people who work in the "unemployed industry" will admit that it is all "a load of shite and counter-productive". After this talk I met up with a guy who runs one of these extra-tenner-a-week courses where you get to play with computers. I had been on his and we occasionally got into conversations. He had no illusions about it at all, in fact he bent and broke the rules every day because they were impractical, counter-productive or futile. As everyone (apart from the people paid to lie) knows. The last time I passed his place it looked shut down.

This talk took place in Transmission Gallery which some years ago I had been instrumental in building and running. All the committee members were unemployed at the time and technically we were all disqualifying ourselves from our dole cheque. Many of the

other arty venues the conference inhabited could say the same. The point is we wanted to do what we did—it was purposeful, some people built careers on the back of it. The new deal is little more than a punishment scheme. If an individual refuses to comply s/he is reduced to complete poverty and could easily end up homeless. The new scheme targets the young. As the director of all this it is all very well of Alan Brown to wash his hands of any responsibility—OK so he keeps his job and has a mortgage to pay—but this is to just sit back and watch people suffer.

We could have also been spared the disgusting spectacle of watching him defend what he seemed to earlier indicate were lies, while one of his employees, sitting right in front of him, endlessly nodded like a donkey and agreed out loud with every single word he said. This typifies the level of degradation that this class of people have sunk to and try to infect others with. A mentality depriving itself of all human instincts towards self-respect. Hideous twisting of the brain and soul. The nightmare of institutional "thinking". The Orwellian Ministry of Truth came to the fore with Brown drooling over his power to cut people's benefit:

*"Compulsion goes back a long way...always been the case."*

Is that what everything will come down to with this new parliament? Is this the height of our political aspiration—to make the callously indifferent the janitors of other people's lives. *I'm sorry we cut your money, I'm sorry you can't pay your fine I'm sorry your in prison, I'm sorry your child died—but I don't make the rules.* Meanwhile those on a higher public subsidy—such as MPs and civil servants can bask in the glorious rhetoric of the glorious parliament empowering the masses. When do we get to live Mr Brown? <sup>13</sup>

**'Stale Porridge'**

Sunday. Passing up on one talk with A.L. Kennedy and Julian Spalding speaking as representatives of a "cultural renaissance"; and another with "Tartan, haggis, bagpipes, Whisky, festival, golf. Smack, razors, hard men. Is Scotland doomed always to be romanticised or will we ever see more realistic representations of ourselves?" I had decided to start the morning with:

*"An Arts Agenda for Scotland*

*How can the arts best contribute to the life of Scotland and enrich our culture and society? How can we judge success; reflecting Scottish experiences or <sup>14</sup> proving to be major players on a world stage?*

*Speakers: Magnus Linklater, Chair, Scottish Arts Council; Graham McKenzie, Director, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Ruth Mackenzie, Director, Scottish Opera; Dominic d' Angelo, freelance arts activist; Mary Picken, consultant."*

In case anyone had any doubts about just how obscenely smug we were going to get here, Magnus Linklater had conveniently written something ingratiating about the conference overnight, which appeared in *Scotland on Sunday*:

*"...we were all there...talking about the usual things. There was Alf and Ruth and Joyce and Peter and Lindsay and Rosemary and Isobel and the others, collected together to discuss the future. It was good to see them all again, though I must admit it doesn't seem all that long since we last met."*

He then describes the weekend's conference as "the widest spectrum of Scottish society." For Linklater a Saturday afternoon with all his chums is the "widest spectrum of Scottish society". He should get out more. He ends the article by saying: "There is nothing to be gained from being small-minded." Well, he ended up chairman of the Scottish Arts Council.

Both McKenzie and Mackenzie (they seem to be twins) gave talks which followed an identical pattern. First they drooled over the preposterous amount of public money their organisations receive, then they tried to impress on us how elite their organisation's qualities were, then they engaged in a liberal, condescending patronisation of the poor as a justification of their funding. The implausibility of this led them to

get caught up in lunatic flights of fancy and extravagance with, for instance, Mackenzie stating that Scottish Opera is engaged in "combating poverty". We were told that some of the millions her organisation is in receipt of is occasionally used to fund stalwart missionary work in the nasty bits of the city. The "poverty of aspiration" that she witnesses motivates and touches her heart—she "caught them before they're out in the streets joy riding...how many 16 year olds are burning cars?"

McKenzie's talk was similarly peppered with allusions as to how culture will be brought into the city—as if it was famine relief or oxygen in a cultural vacuum. This mind set seemed a continuation of the moral squalor of the last talk on unemployment. The working class are deemed criminal, they have no culture. I had thought that this "missionary position" was a thing of the past in "community arts"—but here it was loud and proud. Do they really have to pretend that they find virtue in this—would they not be better off adopting a smarter way to patronise us? Could they please rehearse the faking of sincerity a bit more thoroughly next time?

Magnus Linklater of course is only in it for the money, as he made clear in his petulant salary negotiations before he got the job. I have nothing to say about the other two contributors.

I was getting a bit fed up by now. There is only so much of this kind of stuff you can take. I felt like I was sinking into a vat of stale porridge. Out of a sense of duty I dragged myself up to the Women's Library to hear the next talk. They kindly gave me some coffee and for a brief moment I felt quite comfortable—the place has quite a warm atmosphere. It was raining outside.

This talk was on the Scottish Media, with Arnold Kemp, formerly the editor of the Herald<sup>15</sup> Jane Sillars from a media studies department and Maurice Smith the business editor of BBC Scotland. In this as with all of the seminars everyone seemed to know each other, speakers, chairperson and audience would all call each other by their first names. To let some late-comers sit down I moved away and ended up behind a library bookshelf. I couldn't actually see anything and tiring of taking notes I started to look at all the books leaving my tape recorder to pick up all the drone. Kemp thinks that there will be no serious attempt to cover the new parliament and that the news is now completely commodified. He is probably right. He also said that "the Scottish press adopted a defiant stance against Thatcherism", there he is definitely wrong.

This event—timed as it was—just before the party conventions, was in one way an attempt to merge various factions together, to bury the hatchet and of course stab people in the back: opportunists who extolled the virtues of Thatcherism are now welcome to extol the virtues of Blairism. On the other hand it was an opportunity to vet Labour people. I got to won-

dering what the press response would be if in London a conference was organised by a group which contained Gordon Brown, Robin Cook, Peter Mandelson and Jack Straw and was introduced by a speech by Tony Blair and then tried to pass itself off as having "independent of any political party," or a body which can represent the views of the public.

I dragged myself to the last talk.

"Where is Radical Scotland?"

*Is Scotland really a left-wing nation? Why does the legacy of Red Clydeside remain potent to many on the left and what was the lasting impact of Thatcherism?*

Speakers: Isobel Lyndsay, department of Government, University of Strathclyde; Pat Kane, writer and broadcaster. Chair Mark Lazarowicz"

All I can bring myself to say is that this one was a sick joke.

The Scottish Parliament will merely take over the work of the Scottish Office, and I don't remember anyone ever getting that worked up about them. The Scottish Parliament will have no power over:

"...pensions; abortion; broadcasting; road transport; shipping; telecommunications; weights and measures; employment; railways; airlines; the Crown Estate Commission; "all fiscal, economic and monetary policy"; natural resources (Westminster reserves the right to control the exploitation of, the ownership of, and the "exploitation of ownership, and the exploration for North Sea gas and oil"); the issue of banknotes (including Scottish ones); banking regulations; most aspects of Scotland's minerals; electricity generated by nuclear power; trade & industry; the transport of radioactive materials; drugs; immigration; what is "an official secret"; firearms; film censorship; betting; gaming and lotteries; trout & salmon farming; the civil service; the defence of the realm; national security; social security; foreign affairs; and relations with the European Union"<sup>16</sup>

Add to that the fact that a great deal of former public sector activity was privatised by the previous government (and will under the present one still be privatised under the Private Finance Initiative). Thankfully for most of the people involved in this conference that still leaves room for bullying and making money out of the poor.

## Notes

1. *Herald* May 30.
2. When I phoned the CSPP to get more information I asked them why they had changed their name and they said that "nobody had heard of John Weatley."
3. The Scottish Policy Institute is being funded by the Barclay Brothers who own the Scotsman newspaper. It will advocate market-based policies for Scotland and probably make much the same noises as Andrew Neil, the editor of the *Scotsman*.
4. *Private Eye* 920.
5. Some of the speakers although not directly connected with the CSPP demonstrated the influence of their material. John McAllion MP, for example, spoke at the seminar on (naturally

enough) coalition politics. On the Saturday in the *Herald's* reporting of the conference, he is quoted as advocating a form of "politics by petition" which came straight out of David Millar's talk at the first seminar I attended and is itself expounded in Millar's CSPP publication.

6. *Where were you Brother?* Don Thomson and Rodney Larson, War on Want, 1978.
7. *Dirty Work (The CIA in Western Europe)*, Editors Philip Agee & Louis Wolf, Zed, 1978.
8. New Labour, New Atlanticism: US and Tory intervention in the unions since the 1970s, David Osler, *Lobster* 33, 1997.
9. "...the Americans sponsored and funded the European social democrats not because they were social democrats, but because social democracy was the best vehicle for the major aim of the programme: to ensure that the governments of Europe continued to allow American capital into their economies with the minimum of restrictions. This aim the revisionists in the Labour party chose not to look at." Robin Ramsay, *Prawn Cocktail Party (The Hidden Power behind New Labour)*, Vision, 1998.
10. *CIA and the Labour Movement*, Fred Hirsh & Richard Fletcher, Spokesman Books, 1977.
11. David Millar and Bernard Crick (an academic, at London and Edinburgh University) wrote a work which purported to revise the Standing Orders of the 1991 Scottish Constitutional Convention and they are trying to 'revise' them again having written the pamphlet 'To make the Parliament of Scotland a Model for Democracy' in '95, which of course was funded by the CSPP.
12. Millar & Crick have proposed that the role of the speaker should be replaced by a presiding officer/president, who should "enter the political fray." A "bureau" would work out the agenda and a "Business Committee" would offer costed policy options. One can just feel the layers of bureaucracy fall away. He ended with the exhortation "go back to your political parties, to your kirk session, golf club, tennis club start getting people talking."
13. The academic at this marvel of doublethink, Dr Fran Wasoff, sat in front of the fire exit the whole time - which will serve as a metaphor for her contribution (well meaning - in the way). The guy from BT when "explaining" BT's involvement in the scheme actually passed round a phone card which they are giving to the 18 - 24 year-olds who are forced to work for them. I now know what a phone card looks like. That too will serve as another quick metaphor.
14. Notice that it is an either or situation.
15. When it ran all manner of disinformation from Paul Wilkinson and Patrick Laurence.
16. *Private Eye* No. 948, 17th April '98.

# Dr. Ismail Besiki

## To the Judges

The following is a shortened version of the preliminary statement made by Dr. Besiki on April 1990 to the Turkish Court. He was arrested in February 1990 following the publication and subsequent confiscation of his book *Interstate Colony — Kurdistan*. He was charged with "disseminating propaganda and undermining national pride." He has been imprisoned by the Turkish authorities since 1971. He has recently been sentenced to 100 years in prison.

### To the Judges: A science that is incapable of criticising official ideology cannot progress

This is not the first time that I have been tried for my studies on the Kurdish question and scientific concepts. I have appeared in various courts on various dates since 1967. The contents of the indictments arraigned on these occasions has never changed. Since the late sixties the same allegations have been repeated in the same terminology using the same concepts:

"Citizens of the Turkish Republic are referred to as Turkish. There is no nation in Turkey except the Turkish nation and no language except Turkish. The existence of another nation or another language cannot be accepted. Every person who is a subject of the Turkish state and everyone who is bound to the state through citizenship is Turkish. Not differentiated in language, religion, sex or race everyone is Turkish. Whatever their ethnic origin.

The basic principle accepted by the constitution is that everyone is Turkish. All Turks are equal in political rights. It is an offense to say there is a nation other than the Turkish nation or a language other than the Turkish language or a culture other than Turkish culture or to defend this language and culture."

The Turkish state and its official ideology denies the existence of the Kurdish nation and the Kurdish language. The Kurds are considered to be a Turkish tribe, the Kurdish language a dialect of Turkish. In this way sociological realities are denied by means of official ideology. Official ideology is not just any ideology. Official ideology implies legal sanction. Those who stray outside the boundaries of official ideology are shown the way to prison. The constraints of official ideology obstruct the development of science. This pressure paralyses thought and cripples and blunts minds. These qualities of science and official ideology have become more obvious in recent years.

As I pointed out above, the contents of the charge sheets have not changed since 1967. However, the subjects and contents of my writings and the social and political understanding therein have changed considerably. For instance the writings published in 1990 bear little or no resemblance to the articles published in 1967. The new work is more correct and coherent. It is plain that the chains that crippled and enslaved thought and language have now been broken and are no longer held in such regard. This is one of the most important facts of the process beginning in the late 60s and continuing to the present day.

It is at this point that I feel it is necessary to touch on the concepts of legality and legitimacy. I do not share the views expressed in the indictment, since these views are an expression of official ideology and based on a lie and denial of the truth. These things may exist in law but they are not legitimate. Whether it is 5 generals or 450 deputies that pass it makes no difference. Legislation denying the existence of the Kurdish nation, language and culture can have no legitimacy at all. In law legitimacy is more important than legality.

The Kurdish population in the Middle East is in excess of 30 million. The Kurds have lived in Kurdistan for 4,000 years, whereas the Turks started to move from Central Asia through Khorasan into Iran, Kurdistan, Iraq, Syria and Anatolia in the second

half of the 11th century. To wipe out the Kurdish nation, its language and its culture is barbaric. There is no way such a process can be approved by public consciousness. The Turkish nation does not deserve to be known as the perpetrator of such barbarism. In this respect there is a great difference between legality and legitimacy on the subject of the Kurdish question. In present day this difference, this contradiction has become more striking and has caught the imagination of public opinion.

All over the world political and social currents like liberation struggles, struggles for self-determination and human rights are gaining strength. These struggles have also, undoubtedly, influenced Kurdish society. In recent years the Kurdish people have entered a process of awakening. The Kurds have realised that Kurdish society is a slave society, the like of which is not to be found anywhere in the world. The system which the imperialist states and the Turks, Arabs and Persians in league with them, have seen fit for the Kurds is a system of slavery. A nation whose name has been banned. A nation whose honour has been usurped, a nation whose self betrayal has been facilitated, a humiliated nation.

The Kurds have not only realised the state they are in and the status seen fit for them. They have also begun to feel shame at their slavery. In which case, they should remedy the situation. They need to find a way to live in dignity. The present struggle is a struggle for equality with all nations and peoples. And through this struggle world opinion is understanding more about the Kurdish question. The world is following the Kurdish struggle for democracy, freedom and equality as is progressive opinion in Turkey.

Let us consider the fact that the Turks came to the Middle East in the 11th century.

They have lived on these lands for less than a thousand years. They have humiliated and degraded the original owners of these lands, who have been here for 4,000 years. While there are independent states with populations of only 10,000 how have the Kurds, with a population of more than 30 million been made to submit to such a dishonourable life? These questions need to be examined.

Today there is a Turkish Kurdistan, an Iranian Kurdistan, an Iraqi Kurdistan and a Syrian Kurdistan. But the Kurds have no Kurdistan. Why not? Kurds also live in various republics of the Soviet Union. They live in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and in villages in the foothills of the Pamir mountains. Why? How did they get there? What was the reason for their exile? Why was a divide and rule policy used against the Kurds? Undoubtedly a nation which is the victim of a divide and rule policy has great weaknesses. What are the Kurds weaknesses? All these questions need to be investigated and scrutinised.

Turkish universities, Turkish professors, writers, Turkish political parties and the Turkish press have a widespread, accepted understanding. This is emphasised in the public prosecutor's indictment. According to this understanding everyone in Turkey is equal and no-one is subjected to different treatment due to their language or culture. Everyone can rise to high office in public service. No-one is prevented from doing so. For instance anyone can become a deput, minister, governor, judge, officer, professor etc. It is possible to give examples of this view:

"In the administration of Turkey there has never been in the past or present, a policy of exclusion based on a person's ethnic origin. Nobody has ever been prevented from entering parliament or reaching the highest posts in the state due to being of Kurdish origin." (Prof. Dr. Mumtaz Soysal. 'Separatism', Milliyet newspaper, 14/3/90)

"The Kurds are not deprived of any rights. No-one in Turkey has been deprived of the right to achieve high office

by claims of being a minority." (Prof. Dr. Mumtaz Soysal. Milliyet 1990, from a speech made at South-East Europe Minority Rights Conference in Copenhagen on 30 March and 1 April 1990)

"The Kurds have not been considered a minority in Ottoman or in Republican Turkey. Citizens of Kurdish origin have been able to take their place equally in the public and private sector." (Prof. Dr. Dogu Ergil, 'Eastern Question'. Milliyet, 23/3/90).

"The Turks and the Kurds have lived together for hundreds of years. Citizens of Kurdish origin can gain promotion in their chosen careers, in the military or civilian bureaucracy without encountering any obstacle. In today's Motherland Party government there are several ministers of Kurdish origin." (Ugur Mumcu. 'Where is the problem?' Cumhuriyet newspaper, 28/3/90)

"There is absolutely no difference between citizens living in the East and citizens in other regions...as democracy is based on the vote it results in a sharing of resources...Turks and Kurds share the same fate. We endure the problems of living in a poor country together. No one treats Easterners as second class citizens...There is no discrimination between Kurd and Turk." (Nazli Ilicak. Press summit in Presidential Palace, Tercuman newspaper, 8/4/90)

"Turkish society is not racist. Anyone who says 'I'm Turkish' is accepted as a member of society. It is written so in the constitution. Ataturk said, 'How happy is one who says I am a Turk' not 'How happy is one who is a Turk'. It is not a matter of race. In everyone's past there is some element of Turk, Laz, Georgian, Circassian, Kurd or other. They have become mixed up. There are those among us who have a different mother tongue. It is possible to meet migrants from Crete who speak no Turkish. This does not prevent them being one of us. Turks of Kurdish origin in our midst have become commanders, judges, MPs, ministers, prime minister, even president. They have achieved more high posts than their percentage of the population. There is no discrimination. While this is the state of affairs we are faced with a clandestine struggle in the south-east. There are no Muslim minorities in Turkey. The language spoken is Turkish. Everyone is obliged to learn this language. Primary education is compulsory. If there are people who don't know Turkish the fault lies with the teachers who didn't teach them or the students who didn't learn." (Ihsan Sabri Caglayangil. 'Turkey's security and an appraisal'. Gunes newspaper, 10/4/90)

It is necessary to point out that the professors, writers, journalists and bureaucrats' ideas are wrong. They emphasise that those 'of Kurdish origin', have equal rights with Turks and that they are able to achieve high office in the state apparatus. But they ignore the basic condition for this "equality". In Turkey a person "of Kurdish origin" who denies his identity becomes like a Turk and makes propaganda for Turkish nationalism can achieve anything. There is no doubt about that, but it is not equality. This means enslaving this society, destroying it, facilitating its self-betrayal and humiliating the nation and the people. According to Turkish university professors, the Turkish press, Turkish diplomats and Turkish writers this is "equality". One cannot claim that a person who is enslaved, who denies his identity, has equal rights with the person and the nation he tries to resemble. Democracy and its basic condition, equality is of course a universal concept, whereas the concept being propagated above can only be "equality according to the Turks" or "democracy according to the Turks".





It is emphasised that people from the East, or those of "Kurdish origin", can become MPs. But it should be realised that these people do not contest the elections as Kurds, they do not get elected as Kurds! In Turkey the Kurds are a nation which has had its identity usurped. When a child is born to Kurdish parents the child is registered as a Turk. From the Turkish constitution downwards all Turkish laws usurp the Kurdish identity. A Kurdish child is given a Turkish identity card. His or her Kurdish identity is objectively denied. After such a denial and a Turkicisation operation to say that all Turks are equal regardless of race, language or religion does not mean everyone is equal. This is undoubtedly not an objective equality but an ideological equality. In that case it is a constitutional and legal requirement that Kurds, those "of Kurdish origin", are Turkish. It is quite natural then, that after everyone is Turkicised at birth they should contest elections, become civil servants and achieve high office.

For a person to work in the state bureaucracy it is of course not enough for that person's Kurdish identity to be usurped. That person has to reject the characteristics of Kurdish society, has to say he is a Turk and with his ideas and actions put this over convincingly. Those who defend their Kurdish identity can get nowhere in Turkey. They cannot even become a caretaker or jailor, let alone a MP. There is only one thing these people can become: an accused person or a convict.

It is true that there are several ministers "of Kurdish origin" in today's government. But they achieved these positions because they denied their national identity and became slaves. For this reason, whenever there is the slightest national oppression of Turks in Bulgaria, Western Thrace (Greece), Cyprus, Azerbaijan etc. these "Turks" speak out. They defend the rights of these Turkish communities. However, when in Kurdistan the Kurds are faced with intense persecution and repression they remain silent.

In the 1980s over forty young people were tortured to death in the dungeons of Diyarbakir because they insisted on defending their identity and didn't sing the Turkish national anthem and take part in Ataturkist education. Ministers "of Kurdish origin" felt not the slightest need to intervene. In Southern Kurdistan the Kurds were massacred in their thousands with chemical weapons, tens of thousands were wounded and crippled and hundreds of thousands were forced to flee to Turkey in a wretched state. They were put behind barbed wire and treated like prisoners. They have not been recognised as political refugees. Of course, the ministers whose "Kurdish origin" is emphasised made no fuss about this. For professors, writers and the press to assert that everyone is equal and can become a MP or even a minister means nothing less than that they approve of the slave status seen fit for Kurdish people. This shows just how official ideology has blunted intellects. The fact that professors make such assertions shows just how official ideology has distorted science. A science that does not challenge and criticise official ideology has no chance of developing. It is easy to see that Turkish professors, journalists and writers have double standards. They opposed vehemently the Bulgarian state's claim that: "In Bulgaria there is no such ethnic group as the Turks. They are Bulgarians who were Turkicised by the Ottomans. Everyone in Bulgaria is of Bulgarian ethnic origin. Every Bulgarian is equal in regard to race, language or sex". They asserted that this was an example of racism and imperialism to be found nowhere else in the world. There, too, those who denied being Turkish could achieve high office. But this did not mean the Turks had equal rights. The professors, writers and journalists condemned the Bulgarian government's violations of human rights. They stressed the inequality of Bulgarians and Turks. They see as equality the much worse situation of Kurds vis-a-vis Turks which is much more obvious and has existed not just in recent years but for nearly seventy years. They boast that: "The Turks have never treated anyone differently on account of their ethnic origin". This is racism. Not to see other peoples as deserving rights they see fit for their own nation. And this racism is thoroughly systematized. For example, Bulgaria has been able to change its policy concerning the Turks whereas Turkey cannot even dare to think about the subject of the Kurds.

One shouldn't perceive racism as always being a matter of separate housing estates, separate restau-

rants, separate beaches etc. Turkish style racism means humiliating and looking down on the Kurdish language and culture i.e. everything Kurdish, and imposing the Turkish language and culture in its place, using state terror as the most effective tool in this process. In Turkey professors, writers and diplomats both perpetrate intensive racism and also start their articles by saying "Turks aren't racist". The Turks apparently count as one of their own anyone who says "I'm Turkish". This is not the point. Problems start when someone says "I'm Kurdish". This is when state terror is used to "transform Kurds to Turks".

This racist and double-standard approach is not reserved only for professors and writers. It has been defended by Turkish universities as a whole and a very large proportion of the Turkish press. Turkish political parties, Turkish workers' organisations, legal associations, the theology ministry and Turkish sports federations have also adopted this idea and approach.

Many judges criticized Bulgaria for its policies towards the Turks but when we say "the Kurds suffer severe persecution, state terror is being used against the Kurds. The Kurds are being assimilated", we are put on trial in front of these very same judges. The double standard evident in the thoughts and actions of these judges attracts attention of course. It is just such a system of justice which damages justice itself. This double standard approach doesn't stop there. Look at this example:

*"Recently you must surely have heard frequently people saying 'How can Turkey, which is under threat on account of the Kurdish question of self-determination, dare to base its own case in Cyprus on the same right?' Or words to that effect. Turkey's stand finds heart in the fact that in the administration, neither in the past, nor today, has there been a policy of discrimination based on ethnic origin. No one has been prevented from entering parliament or taking high office in the state because they were 'of Kurdish origin'. In other words, the exact opposite of the situation in Cyprus.*

*Yes, there are problems and especially in regard to the freedom to use the mother tongue there are definitely steps that must be taken. But these are not problems that cannot be solved within a framework of common sense that is not based on ethnic discrimination.*

*On account of this to draw parallels between the situation of citizens of Kurdish origin in Turkey and the situation of the excluded Turks in Cyprus is an ill-intentioned position that can be used as an excuse either to incite unnecessary division in Turkey or deliver the Turkish Cypriots into a Greek Cypriot Sultanate. Or it's just another way of weakening our just case by our own hand."*

*(Prof. Dr. Mumtaz Soysal. 'Separatism' Milliyet. 14/3/90)*

Here we have a mentality which needs to be examined and scrutinised closely. A comparison is being made between Turkish Cypriots and Kurds. It is being emphasized that the Kurds live in very good conditions while the Turks in Cyprus live in very bad conditions. In other words, that Turkish-Kurdish relations are run in a very democratic legislative framework whereas Greek Cypriot-Turkish Cypriot relations are administered in a very anti-democratic legislative framework. This is not only the mentality of Prof. Soysal. It is the shared mentality of Turkish writers and the Turkish press. It is becoming increasingly the mentality of the state's official ideology. In this respect it needs to be examined.

For over 20 years intensive, widespread oppression has been practiced in Kurdistan. State terror has been adopted as a basic policy. The security forces, commandoes, gendarmes, police and counter-insurgency squads frequently raid villages. All the inhabitants are rounded up in the village square.

Children and women are lined up on one side and the men on the other. The men are then stripped naked. The men are tortured in front of their womenfolk and children. String is tied to the sexual organs of the men and the string is then given to the women. They are then made to parade around the village under rifle butts. This is undoubtedly humiliating and degrading treatment.

Did the Turkish Cypriots suffer such treatment I wonder? Whether before 1974, 1964 or 1958. So how can it be said that the legislation governing Turkish-Kurdish relations is democratic whereas that governing Greek Cypriot-Turkish Cypriot relations was so anti-democratic?

In Kurdistan today human beings can easily be killed by the security forces without anyone asking questions. Sometimes people are killed to exact vengeance, sometimes to intimidate and threaten the people. Sometimes, too, commanding officers say "Bring some heads, then you can go on leave". Junior officer Riza Parlak said Gendarme private Nuri Kocak had been rewarded with 15 days leave by his commanding officer, Zahit Engin for killing two villagers. (Gunes14/3/1990)

When the relatives of those killed complain to the appropriate departments they get nowhere. No investigation or inquiry is started into either the commander who gave the order or into those killed.

When the situation is so clear, so strikingly manifest, how can the Turkish Cypriot community be compared with the Kurds in Kurdistan? Did the Greek Cypriots kill the Turkish Cypriots in such an arbitrary way, with no questions asked?

The state's counter-insurgency squads frequently disguise themselves as guerrillas and commit atrocities. The incident which took place on 21 January 1990 when 28 Kurds were massacred in Sete (Ikiyaka) village near Yuksekova was one such example (see "Towards2000", issue No 13, 25/3/90, page 26: "I didn't do it, I was beaten and made to appear on TV").

Sometimes, too, village guards in guerrilla garb are encouraged to kill patriotic Kurdish families. The slaughter of 3 people, two of them babies, in Hakkari in March was one such incident. The incident was reflected in the Turkish press as "Baby murderers

PKK". (Milliyet, 31/3/90). Subsequently it came to light that the crime had been committed by village guards. ("Towards 2000", issue No4.1/4/90)

Despite all the above Prof. Dr. Mumtaz Soysal is still able to compare Turkish-Kurdish relations favourably to Greek Cypriot-Turkish Cypriot relations, since, we are told, those "of Kurdish origin" whose identity has been usurped can be elected to parliament. Presumably he thinks that once they can sing Kurdish folk songs everything will be peace and light.

In Cyprus prior to 1974 Turkish Cypriots could enter parliament as Turks. They could become ministers as Turks and the vice-president of Cyprus was a Turk. There was no question of the Turkish Cypriots being excluded.

It is necessary to ask the professors: In Turkey Kurds do not enter parliament as Kurds, they do not contest elections as Kurds because as soon as they are born they are registered as Turks. "Equality" begins after this usurpation. This is not, of course, equality, because equality is a fundamental principle of democracy, is a universal concept to which conditions cannot be attached.

Every year on 23 April Turkish Cypriot children come to Turkey and participate in the 23 April celebrations (International Children's Festival). The same people who say "we love children very much, we are the first state to give children a festival", show rifle butts to Kurdish children.

In Kurdistan the sole administrator is the military. They rule by decrees and orders. Governors have no say. People are forced to eat excrement to make them obedient and loyal to the state. After people are killed at random the army claims they were "PKK militants". Bodies are then burnt to eradicate evidence. Has any thing like this ever happened in Cyprus? How can such comparisons be made?

Israel cannot think of using chemical weapons against the Palestinians and the Americans were unable to use them in Vietnam but these weapons have been used on several occasions in Kurdistan.

Kurdistan is an international colony divided between four states. In fact Kurdistan is a country that is not even a colony. It is a nation without an identity, a nation that has had its identity usurped. There are great differences between Kurdistan and classical colonies. For instance between the way Britain administered India and the way the Turks administer Kurdistan. When Britain appointed a senior official preference was given to those who knew local languages and were familiar with local cultures. But when officials are appointed in Kurdistan knowledge of Kurdish and familiarity with Kurdish culture is not required since the Kurds are a nation under threat of being eradicated along with their language, culture, name and history.

Turkey guarantees legally and in practice the political, social and national rights of the Turkish Cypriots. Their rights are also guaranteed by international treaties. Whenever there is a violation of the rights of the Turkish Cypriots Turkey intervenes immediately to seek redress through diplomatic channels or, if necessary, by military means. The situation is the same for Turkish communities in other countries. Whenever any pressure is put on the Turks in Bulgaria or Western Thrace (Greece) Turkey immediately protests. The problem is taken to international assemblies and human rights organisations are alerted.

For the Kurds the situation is somewhat different. Since the Kurds have had the right to set up their own independent state usurped, whenever there is persecution there is no authority which can make a protest to the state concerned. As protests and condemnations from human rights bodies are unofficial the states persecuting the Kurds will ignore them.

The use of chemical weapons in Southern Kurdistan in 1988 was the greatest instance of genocide since Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. However the world's reaction was muted. Saddam Hussein's regime suffered no great condemnation. The Halabja massacre took place on 16 March 1988. On 20 March the Islamic Conference held a summit meeting in Kuwait. At the summit the Bulgarian government was condemned for changing the Turks' names and giving them Bulgarian ones. The Israeli government was condemned for persecuting the Palestinians and the Greek Cypriot government was condemned for not recognising the Turkish state of Northern Cyprus. The Soviet Union was condemned for its presence in Afghanistan but not a word was spoken about the geno-

cide perpetrated against the Kurds by the Iraqi regime. Not one leader of the 42 Islamic countries felt the need to put the subject on the agenda. For this reason Saddam Hussein's government was able to commit such crimes against the Kurds. If there were a member of an international body that could put the matter on the agenda they would not be able to behave in such an unrestrained manner. All this is a consequence of the division and parcelling up of Kurdistan.

Let's imagine for a moment that Israel used chemical weapons against the Palestinians. What would the world's reaction be? The world would be in uproar. There would be protests for weeks all over the world. Huge demonstrations would be held. There would also undoubtedly be protest meetings in Israel too, because one shouldn't forget that Israel is a democratic society and that it is possible for public reaction to show its opposition to government policies. Israel would be condemned and isolated from the international community, which it knows very well, so it would not even consider using chemical weapons.

However these weapons have been used in Kurdistan without resulting in great international protests whereas when an English (sic) journalist named Bazoft was executed in Bagdad the Western countries protested long and loud.

If even a small part of the persecution and genocide practiced in Kurdistan was applied in Cyprus against the Turkish Cypriots the Turkish government, political parties, universities and press would lead the protests. It would be wrong to criticize a professor or a writer for not supporting oppressed peoples and those suffering persecution because to support or not to support an oppressed people is a moral question. However if such a mentality tries to give lessons in democracy every day then it should be exposed for what it is. The racist and colonialist attitude and behaviour should be exposed. Official ideologists make their propaganda regularly whereas those who criticize are sent to prison. The Turkish press should remember Voltaire.

The opposition parties in Turkey have given the government a blank cheque saying "do as you wish, just stop these troubles, we won't ask any questions, don't worry".

There is something ironic about these words. The political parties in Turkey don't have the power to ask questions! Even though they have millions of votes they have no power. A few generals take power, detain the party leaders for a time and then send them home. There is no such thing in Turkish politics as resisting military coups. Surrendering to military coups is an important tradition in Turkish politics. Turkish politics is cowardly and sycophantic. The only freedom political parties have is to approve policies of persecution and tyranny. In Turkey Kurdistan policies are not government policies, they are army and MIT (National Intelligence Organisation) policies. In other words, state policies. Policies on Kurdistan are formulated by the National Security Council. These policies cannot be debated in parliament and as state policies have to be supported by opposition parties. In Turkey the government, opposition, political parties and parliament are a lot weaker than is thought. In Turkey the state has an illegal aspect, an illegal function and this is its powerful aspect. It is this illegal function of the state which dominates parliament. Turkish politics has yet to expose this illegal character of the state.

We have tried to give some examples of state terror in Kurdistan. One shouldn't perceive state terror as only physical oppression. One shouldn't neglect the mentality behind state terror, torture and oppression. This also needs to be examined. In my opinion "Understanding of science peculiar to Turks", "Understanding of democracy peculiar to Turks" and "Understanding of equality peculiar to Turks" etc. are important dimensions forming this mentality. The "national interest" can make it necessary to tamper with the facts, to distort the truth. The Turks need democracy but this democracy will include torture. Otherwise how will those who are "patriotic" be able to bring round those who are "unpatriotic" or "traitors".

Nationalism is a characteristic the Turks certainly won't relinquish but they also seem to feel it necessary to eradicate other people's national characteristics and to try to make them resemble themselves.

If the reporting of an incident conflicts with the national interest then that incident shouldn't be reported. This is the mentality behind state terror, oppression and torture. In this respect state terror in Kurdistan is formulated and reproduced with the

assistance of Turkish universities, the Turkish press, Turkish political parties and Turkish legal associations.

One of the concepts stressed in the indictment is that of "shared national joy and sorrow". According to this there is an indivisible, organic link between all citizens in pain, sorrow, joy and pride. It is emphasised that everyone is Turkish and that everyone shares common feelings in cases of the above feelings. In reality of course, this was not the case. For example during the war in Cyprus everyone was expected to assist Turkey and to publicise the justness of Turkey's action. When there was persecution of the Turks in Bulgaria everyone was expected to criticize Bulgaria and participate in the campaign against it. But if a Kurdish resident of Siirt or Hakkari tried to assist the Kurds fighting the Iraqi government by, for instance, sending medicine, he would be arrested and thrown into prison.

The situation of the Kurds who had to flee from Southern Kurdistan and take refuge in Turkey and that of the Turks who were sent from Bulgaria is informative. At first Turkey didn't want to accept the Kurds as refugees, and even returned some to Iraq. Later, for various reasons, Turkey allowed the Kurds to stay but rather than recognising them as refugees stuck them in camps behind barbed wire and treated them like prisoners of war.

Of course the Turks from Bulgaria were not treated in this way. Our "cousins" were assisted in all ways possible. Those with relatives in Turkey were allowed to stay with them, whereas the Kurds from Iraq were not allowed to stay with their relatives, or in other words, the Kurds in Northern Kurdistan were obstructed when they tried to help those who had fled from chemical bombardment. The Turkish government even announced that "Our doctors have carried out tests and have found no sign of the use of chemical weapons". They protected Iraq the perpetrators of genocide. A delegation of experts from the UN were denied permission to carry out tests on the Kurds, who were suffering the after effects of chemical weapons. As the Kurds have not been granted refugee status, aid from abroad is also not being accepted. The Turkish government says, "Send us the aid, we will distribute it to those in need". Foreign states, finding Turkey unreliable, are unable to send aid. They are not sure that such aid will reach the Kurds. The Turkish state prevents aid reaching the Kurds, stops Kurdish people in Turkey rendering assistance and then complains about the "financial burden" the Kurds have brought.

I want to dwell a little upon the concept of "national pride". Wanting the Kurdish people to be free, wanting them to live in equal conditions with the Turkish people is taken to be propaganda undermining the national pride of the Turks. In fact, demanding equality for the Kurdish people, or the removal of bans on Kurdish language and culture definitely cannot undermine the national pride of the Turks. On the contrary it would strengthen it since defence of human rights and freedoms strengthens national feelings.

The campaign in Germany against the Turks may well wound Turkish pride but why should the demand for Kurdish freedom wound Turkish feelings?

The fact that the United Nations and some member states are unable to send aid to the Kurdish refugees because they consider the Turkish state's promises lack credibility may well wound national pride.

Turkey, with its colony Kurdistan, certainly has no chance of taking a place amongst the democratic states of the West. It is becoming increasingly clear that Turkey is ruling a colony with a policy the like of which is not to be found anywhere in the world. Turkey will move further away from the West, from Europe, because at every international gathering it attends Turkey will face questions about its colony Kurdistan. Turkey's record on this subject is not without blemishes. It has much to answer for. The only way it will be able to avoid these questions is by taking care to stay away from these meetings. This is all I have to say at this stage of the proceedings.

With respect.

Ismail Besikci  
18 April 1990, Sagmalcilar Prison, C-13  
Bavrapasa, Istanbul

# Moving History

What follows is an edited discussion, conducted via e-mail, between Chris Byrne and Malcolm Dickson that starts to plot a history of the profusion of film and video activity in Scotland. This discussion is an attempt to redress, in a very small way, the recent miasma surrounding the documentation and discussion of such activity in Scotland.

Chris Byrne: There is currently an absence of real discussion in Scotland about what we might call Moving Image art. Video art, experimental film, screen-based art displayed on computers or via the internet, it is all out there, happening. It's just that no-one seems to talk about it much. There is a sense of operating in a relative vacuum: ideas and influences appear from elsewhere, outwith Scotland. Yet there are traditions of work in these fields by artists within Scotland. It seems that very few know much about them. It is essential to begin the process of mapping a history of these areas of practice, with a specifically Scottish context.

If there are Scottish histories, when did they start? Certainly with Avant-Garde film there was a good deal of activity in the 1930s around Norman McLaren, Glasgow School of Art and the GPO film unit. Unfortunately the sources of this experimental energy left for Canada and elsewhere, leaving post-war Scottish film practice to the documentarists and dramatists.

Malcolm Dickson: That period in question is an interesting starting point to an origin of forms for 'experimental' practice in film. The hand-crafted nature of these films, most of which involved animation, suggests a correlation with painting which shouldn't have been too much out of step with the dominant taste of the art schools and the 'academy'. I don't know very much about that time or extent of the practice and how it made itself visible in public terms. Film-makers have been grouped around the 'Kinecraft' movement, and I believe the Scottish Film Archive is the first point of call regarding that history. The 1996 New Visions festival, co-ordinated by Ann Vance and Paula Larkin, included a package of works on the Kinecraft movement put together by Pauline Law.

CB: Out of this milieu did emerge a distinctive voice in film, that of Margaret Tait. Her films were grounded in realist documentary, but transcended the standard conventions to become much more lyrical, poetic works. Simply made, but with great elegance and flair, focusing on moments, fleeting glimpses, everyday settings. Telling stories through moving images and location sound.

MD: Margaret Tait is interesting because she has a creative proximity to a literary tradition. I think the links through literature and philosophy to the visual arts are quite strong and robust—it offers a more holistic overview than one constrained to a stifling tradition of fine art. Writers and artists in moving image have and do work together—it's important to mention Tom McGrath, Writer in Residence at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art (DJCA) who worked in the video department in 1985/86.

CB: Tait's was a lone voice during the 1960s, when most Scottish film makers were pre-occupied with documentary realism, or 'the movies'. This situation was in contrast to what was happening in London, New York and elsewhere, where underground and

experimental film making was flourishing. Video art had also started to make an appearance in Canada, America and Germany.

One exception to this trend took a London-based artist to the Edinburgh Festival in 1971. David Hall made a series of short television works, which were broadcast on Scottish Television in place of advertising during the Festival period. Shot in and around Edinburgh, they are a landmark both for UK television and moving image art in Scotland. Mick Hartney in his essay 'Int/ventions' in *Diverse Practices: A Critical Reader on British Video Art* states that Hall's television works were part of 'Locations Edinburgh', curated by Alistair Mackintosh at the Scottish Arts Council for the Edinburgh Festival. According to Hartney: "The central idea of the project was that the artists should deploy the various communication networks of the city to make their work or to make it visible." Other artists in the show included Stuart Brisley, David Parsons and Jeffrey Shaw, all with Hall part of the 'Artists Placement Group' (APG), a conceptual art grouping which interested itself with tactical interventions into popular culture and public space. Brisley apparently staged a slow-motion car crash in a disused car showroom, Ed Herring played back ambient sounds into the environment, Parsons made street banners, Shaw and others made inflatable sculptures.

MD: John Latham's statement underpinning the APG, that 'context is half the work' of course went on to inspire and provide the philosophical foundation on which David Harding began the Environmental Art Course at Glasgow School of Art.

CB: Later in the 1970s, the first 'video art' started to appear in galleries in Scotland. In 1973 the Scottish Arts Council gallery in Edinburgh hosted 'Open Circuit', featuring video, photography and film, including an ongoing performance installation by David Hall, using video equipment.

MD: Scotland at this time wasn't so far out on a limb in terms of artists intervening in exhibition structures, as limited as they were. The 'Open Cinema' exhibition in the Scottish Arts Council's gallery in Charlotte Square in 1976 is another case in point. It included film makers centred around the London Film Makers Co-operative, such as Malcolm Le Grice, Tony Sinden, Tony Hill, Nicky Hamlyn, Annabel Nicholson and Jane Rigby. The introduction to the catalogue by Deke Dunsiberre stated that: "This programme of 'expanded cinema' offers Edinburgh the opportunity to see recent examples of an area of international avant-garde film-making... By inviting film artists to present new work..., the SAC is opening new perspectives on the cinema; perspectives yielding film installations which should be viewed not in the narrow context of conventional film history, but in the general context of art history."

Also in 1976, the exhibition 'Video: towards defining an aesthetic' was held at the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow. It argued for specific codes of consideration in the medium of video with David Hall's article beginning with the challenge: "... A brief attempt at some of the distinctions between video and film may be useful." The issues raised are interesting in relation to time-based art and they are not marked in my mind as being time-specific. In fact, there are resemblances to debates around digital arts, interactivity and new media happening today in forums such as *Digital Dreams*, *LoveBytes*, *Shock Waves* and *Ground Control*, numerous events organised at the ICA and throughout the Video Positive Festivals to ISEA 98. There is a suggestive critical rigour there that clicks with earlier ideas which in retrospect have had quite far reaching consequences. It's not as if we don't have the Stuart

Marshall's of today it's just that our terms of reference have altered and are more fragmented. Two books to mention here are Sean Cubitt's *Timeshift: On Video Culture* and also Owen Kelly's *Digital Dialogues*. Every page of these books explode with ideas that are linked to practice—they aren't hypothetical. Another point of reference which I have to mention here are the articles by Sara Diamond and Kate Elwes which featured in a series of works on 'Women and New Technology' in the first volume of Variant.

Another change that has taken place I think is the notion of 'opposition' and positions of contestation. Video was seen as challenging conventional broadcast television and indeed institutionalised art.

But to get back to an earlier point we've been alluding to regarding a lineage for practice today, is that the lobbying for mainstream legitimacy is not something new—even if it was articulated as contesting that which it actually depended upon—and the aforementioned bears a frustrating similarity to the contemporary situation in the 90s. However, now the ownership of an experimental tradition is not such a critical issue between a film history or an art history—both are too constrictive.

CB: On the distinctions between film and video as tools for making art, the two are often grouped together under a broad moving image category. There are significant differences in the ways that the image is reproduced, however.

Experimental work did not really take off in Scotland during the 1970s. Certainly it was a turbulent time politically, and there were indeed groups making what might be termed 'agit-prop' films in Edinburgh, notably Red Star Cinema, who made low-budget Super-8 films on topical local political issues of the day. I think Robin Crichton (now with Edinburgh Film Workshop) and Dave Rushton (now running the Institute of Local Television in Edinburgh) were involved with this group.

Maybe it was seen as more important to be politically 'avant-garde', i.e. socialist, in Scotland at the time. The big movements in theatre at the time seem to mirror this trend. It also seems that anyone not involved in political, community-based groups was aspiring to make popular entertainment, either for cinema or television. Also during the late 1970s and early 1980s the film-making avant-garde based around the London Film Makers Co-op was in the grip of a rather austere Marxist concept of 'structural film', whose main theorist was Peter Gidal. This aesthetic may have seemed out of touch and unappealing to many artists, perhaps unfairly. Video art of the time was possibly more adventurous, but addressing itself to the galleries of London, New York and Cologne. There may have been a reaction against such a metropolitan outlook in Scotland, or possibly no-one here was much interested!

When Channel Four was set up in the early 1980s, the Workshop Declaration gave funding to film and video workshops to support their activities. Apart from London Video Arts, who distributed and helped to produce video artists' works, I think all the workshops were community based organisations making work mainly around social issues. This includes Edinburgh Film Workshop, the only Scottish organisation to be funded.

So perhaps it is more a question of the support infrastructure not being in place for artists' production in the 1970s and 1980s. After all, it is difficult to make films or videos if you can't get access to equipment and maybe an artist would not think of working in such a medium, if no-one was advocating it. Central to this was the role of the Scottish Art Schools, who did not embrace these 'alternative' media unlike similar institutions in England and Wales. There were

a handful of individuals who helped support work. Colin McLeod, now with the Photography, Film & TV Department at Napier University, was I believe working at Edinburgh College of Art in the late 1970s as a film technician in the Architecture School. If 'fine artists' wanted to make films, they went to him.

Access to resources changed somewhat with the arrival of video artist Stephen Partridge as a tutor at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art (DJCA), Dundee in the mid-1980s. He persuaded the College to invest significant resources in the video department, and it has become one of the UK's leading centres for video and media art teaching and production.

MD: That takes us back to David Hall and what is lightly referred to as the 'Maidstone mafia' from Dundee. Joking aside, the influence has been profound.

CB: Yes, Partridge was a student of Hall's at Maidstone College. The course was the first in the UK to teach video specifically as a medium for artists. It has been very influential, and during the 1980s some saw the artists trained there as an overbearing legacy of 1970s conceptualism.

Later in the 1980s Edinburgh College of Art set up Animation and Film & TV departments, followed by Napier University. Though these courses were not specifically designed to teach video art or experimental film, the result of this activity in education was that many more artists were versed in the technologies. The establishment of new access-oriented, membership-based film and video workshops in Glasgow and Edinburgh meant that artists could source camera equipment and post-production facilities after leaving College.

MD: There were possibilities brewing in the late 80s regarding film and video from an 'experimental' perspective. What it lacked was a desire on the part of funders to strategically support this growing and visible area of practice. It was different with photography

in Scotland where it took a SAC commissioned consultancy chaired by the director of the Scottish Film Council to go through the motions of validation—then for a proposal for a festival to be drawn up, encouraged by the SAC, and for Fotofeis to be established. Now of course the funding has been withdrawn. Where do people interested in that direct their enquiries now? The same is true for New Visions—the Glasgow based bi-annual festival of film, video and new media—although that is on a different scale and economy of financial and human resources.

There have been notable advances in the past that I think we can still pick up on: the SAC established the Visual Artists Video Bursary in 1987. Pictorial Heroes, who were among several recipients of the award, made some very large and arresting video installations for the Scottish Society of Artists and the Royal Scottish Academy. Prior to that there was EventSpace 1, which involved Stephen Partridge from Dundee, Doug Aubrey and Alan Robertson of Pictorial Heroes. That event, held at Transmission in its early years, was the first exhibition in Scotland of video since the 1970s. Artists included in that were Kevin Atherton, Steve Littman, Zoe Redman, Partridge, Rigby and more. Whilst at Transmission we organised a series of events under that title. When our tenure on the committee was up we formed EventSpace separately—Ken Gill, Doug Aubrey and Alan Robertson were the others. The model there as far as I was concerned was Projects UK in Newcastle—that of a non-venue based agency promoting innovative work in site-specific and non-gallery locations. The most significant event organised there I think was 'Sites/Positions' in 1990 which commissioned several artists to make new work, including Douglas Gordon, Christine Borland, Alison Marchant, and Gillian Steel who created an animated film with girls from Springburn. 'Sites/Positions' was the first event of Glasgow's Year of Culture, and all the more significant for that. EventSpace continued with similar projects before focusing more strongly on the moving image with a series of screenings before organising

the New Visions festival in 1992.

The SAC set up a New Projects Scheme (NPS) in 1988. This was at a time when discussions were taking place between advocates of the sector and with both SFC (Scottish Film Council, now Scottish Screen) and SAC. Many agonising moments were spent trying to justify what this work was and was not. The 'get out clause' was always the inability for the definition of experimental to fit within any established funding criteria or for that matter just being able to recognise that. So, the video bursaries and the NPS I think were ways of attempting to address that and it must be said the arts officers, Lyndsay Gordon (who in fact had been involved in organising the '76 video show at the Third Eye Centre) and Robert Livingston were supportive.

It is worth noting some of the many events that have marked this period: I remember a huge Dan Reeves installation at the Pearce Institute in Govan 1990, then later his 'Jizo Garden' at the CCA in '92. He appeared again as part of the National Review of Live Art, which (with the help of the video department at DJCA) for many years hosted many installations and screenings and gave video a strong platform and presence. The homage to David Hall's 'TV Pieces' was replayed again with Fields & Frames' 'TV Interventions' event in 1990. Even earlier in 1989 Jane Rigby and Steve Partridge working under the company title of 'Art Tapes Ecosse', put together 'Made In Scotland' which was shown at several festivals and events. The same year I was involved in making Variant Video, which was an electronic compliment to the printed magazine. One edition featured works from Dundee and interviews with video artists.

CB: An important show was 'Interference', at the Seagate Gallery, Dundee in 1987, this being the first video show outwith the central belt. A clutch of artists associated with the course at Dundee made installations over the course of the event. Stephen Partridge, Pictorial Heroes, Chris Rowland, Alistair McDonald,

Tony Judge, and Kevin Atherton. Single-screen tapes by other artists were also shown. The year after, Partridge and Steven Littman from Maidstone organised the video section of the National Review of Live Art at the Third Eye Centre. Installations were staged by Mineo Aayamaguchi, Lei Cox, Paul Green, Daniel Reeves, Chris Rowland, and Jeremy Welsh.

MD: So there has been a lot of frenetic activity.

CB: The Fringe Film Festival was started by Harald Tobermann in 1984 as an alternative experience to the mainstream Edinburgh Film Festival. Community projects and low budget Super-8 films were shown alongside old classics and 'Indie' movies. The festival consisted of cinema screenings mainly, with some occasional interesting live events. Particularly memorable was a night of classic silent films with newly composed musical scores, performed live. Tobermann went on to found an unfortunately short-lived Scottish based video distribution company, which promoted productions from the many workshops then active in the UK.

It was not until 1990, when film-maker Louise Crawford ran the festival, that Edinburgh saw expanded cinema again: several installations were shown at the Collective Gallery in addition to the core event of cinema screenings. In 1991 the first video art appeared at what was by then the Fringe Film and Video Festival (FFVF), Video being added to the title, co-ordinated by video artist Nicola Percy. Between 1992 and 1993 I organised the festival and showed several site-specific moving image and performance installations during the period. Artists included Riccardo Iacono, Kenny Davidson, Ally Wallace: also in 1993 I brought over a show to the Collective Gallery from the World Wide Video Centre, The Hague which included work by Jaap de Jonge and Justin Bennett. During the 1995 and 1996 events organised by Dave Cummings and Becky Lloyd, the FFVF showed a video sculpture by Bob Last at the Collective, an early Cary Peppermint internet performance, plus various works on CD-ROM.

The significance of a festival such as the FFVF was, I feel, not appreciated widely at the time. It gave artists and film-makers the opportunity to make their work visible to the public. It also provided an annual focus around new work, raising the profile of this area with funders and exhibitors. The forums for debate on the film and video sector in Scotland were an important chance to meet other artists and discuss concerns and issues of common interest. The fact that the scene now seems so fragmented can perhaps be attributed to the lack of any such regular forum for showing and discussing new work.

MD: Both festivals engaged a wide cross-section of makers, public and supporters. Their great strength was the diversity of international media art production that both embraced and their motivation in linking local makers and concerns with a wider international perspective. A main feature of New Visions has been the 'International Zeitgeist' programmes culled from open invitations—as you will know there are hundreds of responses to these calls for submission. That's encouraging in terms of the volume of new work being made. There has been an attempt to blur art and community approaches through the 'Communities of Resistance' programme theme devoted to documentary, group and issue-based work. Another feature has been the forums for debate: in 1994 there was the 'Digital Deviance' event featuring Despite TV, Graham Harwood and Mathew Fuller, and the 'Tactical Television' theme; representatives from Van Gogh TV came and from the Amsterdam Translocal Network. There was a lot of discussion created and some anticipation concerning how the prospects for image making could be linked to the social purpose of working with those marginalised from the mainstream through the creative use of new technologies.

Many Glasgow based artists put on installations at New Visions in different venues: Smith/Stewart, Stevie Hurrell, Ewan Morrison. But it's really just the tip of the iceberg, and whilst we might bemoan the lack of structural support for activity emanating from the 'grass-roots', there has been a process of legitimacy aided by the international attention given to the emergence of video projection by artists such as Bill Viola and Gary Hill. This has assured the absorption of

video into the mainstream institutional context of art history. Douglas Gordon's '24 Hour Psycho' at Tramway in Glasgow was quite influential I think in affecting younger artists here in their perception of what video was or is and how it can be used. I hope that the 'V-Topia' show also at Tramway is a case in point here. The aesthetic of video has eluded the critics and journalists because they have been unaware of its presence and history in Scotland—there hasn't been anything that has penetrated that fog to bring all the connection points together. Now we can't talk of medium-specific aesthetics given the convergence between digital arts, fine art practice, graphic design, film, video and multimedia, except to provide an historical cohesion for present practice—that, however is vital.

CB: I think that is true, there is more promotion now of the individual artist as opposed to the medium. That said, in the past few years video in particular has had a higher profile in the major art institutions. In Edinburgh, Marina Abramovic showed a video sculpture installation at the Fruitmarket in 1995; there was a lot of work in the British Art Show in 1996; the Fruitmarket showed Bill Viola last year, Yoko Ono and of course Smith/Stewart this year. This rash of activity is interesting given that during the 1980s there was I think only one video show at the Fruitmarket: Marie-Jo LaFontaine in 1989. Unfortunately these recent shows have been confined mainly to successful artists already made famous by the international art market. Exceptions to this rule include recent installations by Dalziel and Scullion at the National Gallery of Modern Art, and David Williams at the National Portrait Gallery.

It has been mainly in what used to be the alternative spaces that video by Scottish based artists has been most prominent in the last few years. The Collective Gallery has a particularly good record of supporting work. This was often in collaboration with the FFVF in the past, but over the last few years some interesting artists have made video or computer works in the space: John Beagles and Graham Ramsay's incisively witty show being easily the most memorable.

MD: I like to think of art activity as being made up of all these little points of nascent energy and the role that a festival or an organisation has is to temporarily harness that without dulling it. Many venues have focused a lot of attention into the Lottery in terms of building based projects, rightly so I suppose in that the infrastructure has to be there to be materially facilitated. There are a couple of non-venue based organisations in Glasgow though who are doing their thing, but in the area of the moving image and new technology there is not an established organisation that understands the nuances of the inter-connecting sectors of small budget film, independent video, fine art and the possibilities with the new media to bring all those things together in exhibition and distribution across Scotland.

CB: Certainly the need still exists...one only has to look at the example South of the Border. England would not have anything like the presence it now has in this field without organisations such as the London Film-Makers Co-op, London Electronic Arts, Film & Video Umbrella, Hull Time-Based Arts, Videopositive...the list goes on. With the withdrawal of funding from FFVF, New Visions and Fotofeis, in Scotland we now have no organisation at all advocating, promoting or touring in this area of work. Whilst some galleries do a good job, I still think they need support, and the artists in this field certainly do.

MD: Lobbying tends to come in cycles—ten years is probably the maximum amount of time anyone can sustain energy on one issue without a corresponding change occurring from the lobbying before they have to move on, if they are not burnt out. There have to be tangible legacies to build upon in practice.

CB: Hopefully what has gone before can inform future developments. If not, the field will be left to others to start from scratch all over again.

# From Porn to Art

## Stewart Home

Manet's *Olympia* was painted in 1863 and images of sexual exploitation have been popular among artists ever since. Although art has long provided the bashful with illicit kicks under the guise of self-improvement, it is only more recently that porn stars began making the transition from the video underground to the cultural mainstream. Nevertheless, sustaining a straight movie career can be difficult. Teenage porn sensation Traci Lords was elevated to matinee status thanks to a role in *Cry Baby*, but currently makes techno records after several box-office flops.

Pornography is an integral part of the entertainment business, and the vehicles created for its stars are every bit as formulaic as Hollywood blockbusters. While there may be less money in more experimental areas like performance, such genres offer a freedom that is attractive to individuals who are sick of being type-cast. Porn veteran Annie Sprinkle is typical of those who want to escape the limitations imposed on them by mass culture: "The reason I got out of porn and moved into art is because there's more room for experimentation in art. I can be myself."

Gay porn stars are making this transition too. Aiden Shaw whose autobiography *Brutal* was published last year, has been pulling in punters at prestigious venues such as the ICA. Shaw's act, which lies somewhere between performance art and Chippendale-style pop, has been packaged as part of a musical review that also features cult rockers Minty. While cynics see these gallery escapades as a neat way of marketing over-exposed sex stars to a fresh audience, a trooper like Annie Sprinkle radiates sincerity as she hard sells 'post-porn modernism' as a 'new age sexuality'; "sex is a path to enlightenment. Women producing porn will push things in a positive direction."

One woman who relishes breaking down sexual boundaries is Cosey Fanni Tutti, born Christine Carol Newby in 1951. Between 1974 and 76, Tutti worked as a glamour model for *Fiesta*, *Curious* and *Ladybirds*, then exhibited her centre-spreads in art galleries. Tutti also toured London pubs as a stripper, as well as appearing in films such as *Confessions Of A Superstud* and *I'm Not Feeling Myself Tonight*, all in the name of art. These activities are currently being researched by Simon Ford, a post-graduate student at the Courtauld Institute of Art.

"The strength of Tutti's work lies in its play on artistic authenticity," Ford explains. "For this to register there had to be a certain loss of agency in the studio stages of its production. It was the ability to draw on real experiences as a real model in the fantasy world of pornography that made it so hard for critics to deal with in the seventies. It is the explicit play on notions of authenticity and identity through a foregrounding of pornography as a signifying system, that marks out Tutti's work as a significant contribution to the feminist critique of an essentialised femininity."

Tutti favours plainer words when defending her activities: "You get feminists saying you're being exploited and all the rest of it. But it's not like that. It's a total power trip. When you're being exploited, it's when you're doing something you're not comfortable with. When it's not you. When someone is saying do this." Porn queen La Cicciolina, whose stormy relationship with Jeff Koons was recorded in a series of hardcore poses that her partner marketed as art, seems to have been more ruthlessly exploited on the gallery circuit than during her glory years in glamour. Since the breakdown of her marriage, Cicciolina Cicciolina has disappeared into a post-porn wilderness.

Art and porn are mirror images of each other. Sex sells and the main thing distinguishing these two genres is the more open and honest approach of the sleaze merchants. Nevertheless, even someone as pretentious as film-maker Michael Winner was able to begin his career with the nudie abomination *Some Like It Cool*, while numerous struggling actresses have made ends meet by appearing in blue movies. Elaine Page of *Evita* fame cameos in *Adventures Of A Plumbers Mate*, while Joanna Lumley features in *Games That Lovers Play*. Both the art and pornographic worlds are fashion based. In each there is a constant turn over of faces. While former porn stars make adequate artists, let's hope there isn't a widespread attempt at reversing the process.

# A quality cinema experience

## Marshall Anderson

The Highlands of Scotland has survived many invasions in the past which have broadened its culture and changed the complexion of its population. The most influential of these has occurred in the latter half of the 20th century bringing about changes on an unprecedented scale and affecting every aspect of culture and social organisation. It began with an Act of Parliament in 1965 and the setting up of an agency whose remit was to re-populate and develop not only the highlands but the islands as well. The Highlands and Islands Development Board worked for twenty-five years only to be succeeded by another Act of Parliament and another bureaucracy: Highlands and Islands Enterprise. HIE is the flagship organisation for a network of ten local Enterprise Companies stretching from Shetland to the Mull of Kintyre. Its task, according to a statement within its 1996/97 Annual Report, is to "create a strong, diverse and sustainable economy where quality of life is matched by quality of opportunity." Within HIE's 'Strategy For Enterprise Development' the organisation's 'Vision' is outlined placing emphasis again on "a high quality of life", a phrase that is reiterated throughout HIE's glossy brochures. These try constantly to smash the romantic 19th century Highland myth replacing it with a 21st century equivalent based on "high-value services, knowledge-based activities and a diversified portfolio of manufacturing industries."

Despite HIE's somewhat propagandist 'Vision' the Highland region is still referred to as Europe's last wilderness by tourist organisations and the media. This exaggerated claim instills in the minds of an urban majority a landscape that is devoid of habitation, amenities and culture. A place, therefore, that might suit resettlement by dissatisfied city dwellers threatened by rising crime, traffic congestion, over-crowded conurbations and other urban ills. This resettlement and associated development is actively encouraged by HIE and until recently was financially supported by European Objective One funding along with substantial injections of cash from UK government agencies. This re-population and development programme has brought with it an increase in middle-class administrators and economically active incomers with money to invest in their own businesses. Statistics show that the number of self-employed people in the HIE area has increased by 33% from 1981 to '91 but this increase shows an expansion in the service sector rather than in traditional industries, many of which are in relentless decline. Incomers have brought their own perceptions of what the highlands were, what they are, and more importantly, what they should become.

Psychologically the empty highland wilderness is a place where this middle-class immigration can establish its own nirvana. An idealised highlands that will become the envy of other less fortunate urbanites. Aspirations are high and the general feeling is that

anything can happen. The romantic highland myth which remains a strong selling device for the area is under threat from entrepreneurial 'new' highlanders who require a new myth to stimulate development and economic growth. Into this landscape comes a project which satisfies both camps for not only does it help to perpetuate the old romantic wilderness myth but it also assists in the construction of the new, idealised myth of an area of new technologies where everyone has a quality lifestyle.

When told about HIE's decision to launch a £640,000 articulated lorry sized mobile cinema that will one day tour the Highlands and Islands, Doug Aubrey, independent film and video maker, said it typified a middle-class heroic vision of the Highlands. "A place", he went on to say, "that is still perceived as one to conquer. And what better way to conquer it than by transporting an accessible medium like film about in an impracticably cumbersome, non-efficient and extravagant vehicle. If they really wanted to distribute cinema to isolated communities", Doug concluded, "they could have set up their own local broadcasting channel for a lot less money. It seems to me they haven't taken advanced technology into consideration."

Aubrey's somewhat common sense criticism may indeed say much about the middle-class perception of the Highlands. And HIE's foremost reason for launching the vehicle, "To provide a quality cinema experience for isolated rural communities" says much about the Board's aspirations and 'Vision'.

By taking cinema out of its historical, Highland screening venue, the village hall, where a mobile unit consisting of projector and screen once entertained isolated communities, the more high-tech contemporary version may contribute towards the redundancy of village halls as community nuclei and consequently precipitate a dependency upon State run entertainments superseding community organised events. The Screen Machine, so unimaginatively named by Hi Arts (HIE's art development agency), is cribbed from the French, Cinemobile, the first of which was launched in La Region Centre in April 1983.

Cinemobile was made possible by la Maison de la Culture d'Orleans with the financial assistance of du Conseil Regional and other sponsors. The specially designed articulated lorry, fabricated by Toutenkamion, was named after the legendary French film director, Jean Renoir. Surprisingly, the nationalistic French, paranoid about Hollywood imports undermining the economy of their own film industry and their language, did not concentrate specifically upon promoting their home product. Their priority was to deliver mainstream cinema to rural communities.

Apparently any protective cultural policy was nudged aside in favour of commercial considerations. This more populist philosophy made *Le Jean Renoir* a huge success leading in turn to the inauguration of *le Jacques Tati* by Catherine Deneuve in 1992 and *le Jean Carmet* by Pierre Tchernia in March 1995. This third addition to the fleet cost 3.8mf and reaches an audience of 66,000 citizens, 11,000 of which are school-children. It delivers its "superbes salles de cinema" into the heart of fifty communities visiting each venue once a month. Different programmes are provided. During school hours specific films (in one instance *Lethal Weapon II* dubbed in French) are screened and pupils pay 17f per head. Early evening and late evening screenings cost 35f and 25f for concessions. Les Cinemobiles are administered by ADATEC in association with l'ARCC (Association Rurale de Culture Cinematographique) based in Orleans.

During 1993 *le Jacques Tati* was invited by the British Film Institute, the Welsh Film Council and the Scottish Film Council to visit Somerset, Aberystwyth, and Moffat where it gave local dignitaries a full screening of the Hollywood version of Martin Guerre. This mini-tour prompted a British Film Institute feasibility study into the probability of a similar vehicle operating

within a rural setting in the UK. The feasibility study was undertaken by Dick Penny a freelance consultant with experience in cinema and theatre management who had been the chief executive of Watershed Media Centre in Bristol during the early 90s. Penny's non-specific first study was followed by one examining the possibility of a mobile cinema based on the French model (which he had seen in France) operating in the Highlands and/or Dumfries & Galloway. Robert Livingstone of Hi Arts writes, "The cost of Penny's report in the Highlands had been met by Scottish Film Council, HIE, and a consortium of Highland local authorities. Following the positive report, this grouping asked Hi Arts to develop the project on their behalf." It was appropriate for Hi Arts to undertake this for not only was local government reorganisation pending but as the arts development arm of HIE it had an Act of Parliament and a powerful common development and social remit to back up its claim.

A second Cinemobile tour by *le Jean Carmet* took place in 1995. This time it visited Sanquhar, Castle Douglas and Newton Stewart in Dumfries & Galloway as well as Fort William for the occasion of the International Celtic Festival of Film and Television. This, writes Robert Livingstone, "offered an opportunity to show the French system off to those who would eventually support our applications for funding." The initial SAC Lottery application was made in 1995 based on the costs within Dick Penny's report of purchasing a French model and in November of that year it was announced that £330,000 of Lottery money would be forthcoming. HIE also committed £110,000 to the project. Hi Arts then entered into a lengthy process of commissioning a design before going out to tender. It had been shown that the French model was unsuitable for Highland roads and did not meet British Health and Safety standards. The tenders were placed Europe-wide but no specialist bids came from Scotland and those that were returned in May 1997 indicated costs far in excess of the original estimates. It was, therefore, necessary to make a second Lottery application to meet the costs of ordering a purpose-built vehicle from Lynton Commercial Units Ltd of Manchester. The second Lottery tranche amounted to £150,000 and was added to by a further £20,000 from HIE. The total cost of Screen Machine being £640,000 on the road meant that a short fall of £30,000 had to be met by Scottish Screen.

According to Dick Penny's report the estimated running costs would be in the region of £129,000 per annum and the estimated income would be £66,812 showing a deficit of £62,477—figures that no politically sensitive public agency could admit to. Revised figures for the expected ten year life-span of the vehicle released by Hi Arts, as hypothetical as Penny's, are based on a local survey carried out by Graham Campbell, at that time a student in Leisure Studies at Moray House College of Education. These reveal running costs amounting to £147,847 in the period 1998/99; £146,780 in the period 1999/00 with the figure rising to £173,813 in the period 2002/03. This perceived expenditure is balanced by an equally fictional income of £146,945 (1998/99); £147,151 (1999/00) and rising to £173,600 (2002/03). This indicates an imagined deficit of £902 in the first year of operation followed by a surplus of £370 in the second year and so on. These figures are based on an estimated audience of 20,000 per year with ticket prices set at £4 for adults and £2.50 for children with concessions set at £3. At the time of writing no price for block bookings has been set. Each ticket sold will be subsidised by £1.50 but Robert Livingstone writes, "a third of that subsidy is likely to be sponsorship, so public sector subsidy will be nearer to £1.00 per ticket." Contributions towards the running costs have come from the Post Office (£30,000), Scottish Arts Council (£50,000), and Scottish Screen (£60,000). Each of these substantial leg-ups cover three year peri-

OPPOSITE:  
*Le Jacques Tati*  
BELOW:  
*Le Jean Renoir*





ods only and finally dry up altogether after 1999/00. Thereafter Hi Arts hopes to attract £10,000 per year from the private sector to add to the £20,000 per year which must come from the public purse to keep this reels on wheels on the road.

A new company, Hi Screen, has been formed to lease Screen Machine from Hi Arts, to operate it and employ the necessary staff. To minimise costs all programming, marketing and financial services will be contracted from Eden Court Theatre in Inverness which runs its own in-house cinema appropriately named 'Riverside Screen'. This too is subsidised by local authority money plus a grant of £16,400 per annum from Scottish Screen. Riverside Screen offers a fairly typical 'alternative' programme appealing to many movie-going tastes. Robert Livingstone insists that Screen Machine's programming will be specific to it although he qualifies this statement by saying that, in some cases the same film will be shown in both venues. But of course Screen Machine does not include Inverness in its touring circuit.

From the project's inception the steering group anticipated Screen Machine's benefit to the Scottish film industry as being its showing of work by contemporary Scottish film makers commissioned through Tartan Shorts and Prime Cuts. These mini-movies, as well as dusty, nostalgic reels from the Scottish Film Archive and the Post Office's own collection of commissioned classics, adding support to main-stream features. Alan Knowles of Scottish Screen was at pains to point out that the vehicle's prime function is to plug the gap in disadvantaged areas and to replicate, as near as possible, a cinema quality experience. It is this quality experience that will sell the Screen Machine to the public for if they feel that they are not getting their money's worth they may well stay at home and watch videos or travel the extra distance to Inverness where Warner Brothers has opened a multi-plex to serve that area which has mushroomed to a population of 70,000. There are other cinemas within the Highlands and Islands' larger towns that might also capture a dissatisfied Screen Machine audience. And here too it must be noted that the vast majority of people living in isolated communities are compelled by necessity to visit these larger towns in order to purchase their weekly shopping - so why not take in a movie at the same time and make a day of it? For the truly isolated and disadvantaged members of rural communities, eg. OAPs, unemployed single parents, who cannot drive or cannot afford to run a car, a much improved bus service to larger towns would have been of more benefit than a mobile cinema which still requires a car to attend.

For Alan Knowles the promotion of Scottish film is a secondary consideration. In this he appears to be adopting a similar attitude to the French who deliver a popular programme of American and home product to rural communities. The French model has been so successful that it has established a framework upon which to build an operating practice that can alter according to cultural necessities. It is necessary in Scotland to nurture our film industry and to instill a confidence in it at both ends of the spectrum - amateur and professional. The French may not feel this necessity as its film industry has a strong history and a vital contemporary practice. In Eire one may witness a similar confidence so it is not surprising, therefore, that the Film Institute of Ireland too "is interested in

pursuing and researching the possibility of introducing a cinemobile into Ireland." In a written statement Martha O'Neil, Chairperson of the Board, continues thus: "the cinemobile is not directly about promoting our own industry here in Ireland, though Irish material would be central to its programming, it is more about offering the opportunity of excellent exhibition across the land, along with a diversity of films that would ultimately, in our view, enhance the appreciation of filmmaking among audiences which would of course have a knock on effect in the production sector down the line." Both Alan Knowles and Robert Livingstone echo these aims taking the knock on effect one stage further.

As far as can be ascertained the French Cinemobile did not have at its heart a commitment to encourage film production. Robert Livingstone says that stimulating an interest in and developing the production of community film and video was always a key element in the thinking of the Screen Machine's steering group. He believes that there is sufficient grass-roots interest to partly justify the project's expense.

Although Graham Campbell's market research into a need for mobile cinema did not concern itself with trying to find out just how many people in Highland communities are interested in film and video production it is assumed that by stimulating an interest through regular film attendance this might lead to amateur productions. Cromarty-based and Highland-born filmmaker, Don Coutts, thinks the Screen Machine is "Brilliant!" and can't wait to work with local schoolchildren on community-based documentary video projects that may be screened in the mobile unit. He envisions the Screen Machine bringing communities together in a shared cinema experience in much the same way as the mobile film projector of his childhood once did in village halls. His enthusiasm is infectious. Robert Livingstone's enthusiasm on the other hand is more sober. He says that art development in the Highlands and Islands has to be taken one step at a time. In this he appears to be bureaucratically cunning as he advocates setting up levels of administration to support each stage of development. The Highlands and Islands Film Commission, which began in 1991 as a liaison only body financed by Highland Council, was launched in the Autumn of 1997. Its remit is to offer location support, to publish a directory of all services available to the professional and bottom end of the industry, and to encourage the development of indigenous filmmaking. But this HIE funded service has no money allocated for community productions. There is no Highland film fund so any would-be director must join the queue at the door of Scottish Screen and pray for a share of the film production fund or try the Lottery.

Don Coutts' notion of documentary video at a community level is shared by Robert Livingstone but one wonders what his own expectations as a bureaucrat might be. Will he hope that, like HIE's glossy brochures, such hypothetical community documentaries will reflect the quality of life, the area's unique environment and cultural heritage? Will he be shocked and embarrassed if communities reveal a few truths about the realities of living in the Highlands? Will documentaries that comment upon the increasing crime rate, drug abuse, and homelessness be given support? (moral rather than financial) Recently released statistics reveal that suicides and undetermined deaths in the Highlands have, between 1985 and 1996, fluctuated between 32 and 53 per year indicating that HIE's 'Vision' of an area offering a quality lifestyle is seriously flawed. Would such a necessary documentary examining this aspect of culture be shown in the prestigious Screen Machine or even qualify for grant aid? (if such aid was made available by HIE) Is it now too late to show how stone-built vernacular Highland architecture is being replaced by ill-designed kit houses that sit incongruously upon the land instead of occupying a rightful place within it, or how indigenous culture is being pushed aside by an incoming one that embraces its own 21st century vision, or how tourism inflates the prices of all essential commodities from cups of tea to rented accommodation and house prices?

In order to make the case for Screen Machine abundantly clear to all, including those sceptics who feel it is a gross extravagance, a high profile launch

was planned for 5th May. The island of Islay was chosen because, as Robert Livingstone explained, it typified a location that is as far away from a regular cinema as it is possible to be within the Highlands and Islands. His reasoning did not take into account the islands of Tiree, Coll, Eigg, or Jura which the cumbersome Screen Machine cannot reach. At the eleventh hour, amidst a clamour of public and media, the launch was cancelled. The white elephant had been lamed as it journeyed from Manchester to Islay. Press speculation as to how much money had been wasted on the launch and what had gone wrong technically was, according to Livingstone, wildly exaggerated. Gregor Fisher, Scotland's equivalent of Catherine Deneuve, it was claimed would not have moved for less than £10,000. Livingstone said that in reality Fisher would have appeared for nothing, his fee being paid instead to a charity of his choice. Of course this does not answer the question of what that fee was to be. In the event, however, Fisher's plane from Glasgow was halted and the amount of money lost was restricted to £5,000.

Robert Livingstone preferred not to think of the £5,000 as being lost because, although the launch had not gone according to plan, it had still worked as a publicity opportunity for the project and the Lynton Group who received a number of enquiries about similar vehicles. Of course we only have Livingstone's word for this. It is obvious that such a breakdown at the first objective caused a great deal of embarrassment not only within the Lynton Group but also within HIE whose notions of 'quality' were badly tainted.

At the time of writing it is known that the Screen Machine left Lynton's factory without the suspension being set properly. As a consequence the trailer was grounding on the corners. This caused the floor of part of the cinema to buckle resulting in a failure of the folding out procedure which transforms the articulated trailer into a 110-seat auditorium. As the vehicle had not formally been handed over to HIE the Lynton Group is being held responsible for making good the repair and the fault that caused the damage. Robert Livingstone was not at liberty to discuss any financial implications and was equally reluctant to expand on other details such as how long the delay will be before another launch (if any) is attempted.

This unfortunate incident does focus attention on Lynton's capabilities and raises the question of why they were awarded the contract. Livingstone is unequivocal in his support saying that the Lynton Group was the best to tender for the contract. But then to be fair Robert Livingstone is not an engineer nor for that matter was anyone else on Hi Arts' project team that supervised the mobile cinema development. Sandy Maxwell, the project leader, was the venue manager of the Cottier Theatre. Hardly a qualification to supervise a complicated engineering project worth £640,000. The rest of the project team comprised the board members of Hi Screen chaired by Jan Nicholson who runs a company in Portree delivering domestic gas and retailing camping equipment. His expertise as someone who has a couple of lorries on the road was all the project team had to rely on when it came to scrutinising the Screen Machine's detailed plans and suitability for highland roads. If Lynton's design did have any shortcomings none of these people would have been qualified to spot them. Sound Associates of London were contracted to select and install Screen Machine's state-of-the-art equipment providing 35mm film, video and slide projection with widescreen and digital surround sound. This aspect of the quality package is, one imagines, assured. It's just a pity that the money required to locate it in twenty or more community organised venues throughout the Highlands and Islands had not been found.

It is one thing to use the Q word as a rhetorical device within glossy publications and speech but it is quite another to deliver it. Although the Screen Machine will deliver a quality cinema experience to many highland communities as well as the outer isles of Lewis, Harris, the Uists and Barra, it must be noted that there are more communities that it will not reach. And there are many more people living in the region for whom the middle-class concept of 'quality lifestyle' in the Highlands and Islands is a dream as distant as it might be for similarly disadvantaged citizens wherever they live.



# In the Eye of the Beholder

## John Tozer

The uproar and hyperbole that accompanied the pre-release of Adrian Lyne's recent filmic adaptation of *Lolita* came, in the light of recent similar media-propelled moral panics, as no real surprise. Determined to maintain its tradition of sanctimonious over-reaction, last April the *Daily Mail* ran the front page headline 'Lolita actor sparks child sex storm', with 'Jeremy Irons in child abuse storm' writ large across page seven inside.<sup>1</sup> The intended ambiguity of both headlines is representative of the chronically confused and often hypocritical attitudes of commentators on both public and private depictions of children. In the light of this the following is intended not only as a brief study of *Lolita*, both Nabokov's and Adrian Lyne's, but as an attempt to sort through and make sense of some of the tangled threads of fact, fiction and biased opinion that gather around many representations of children today.<sup>2</sup>

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* concerns the unusual relationship between thirty-something Humbert Humbert and twelve year old Dolores Haze. Driven by memories of a passionate but unconsummated adolescent relationship with a girl named Annabel, Humbert pursues the ghost of his first love until twenty five years later he finds Lolita, who to Humbert's inflamed senses is the embodiment of the 'certain initial girl-child' with whom he was smitten as a boy. His infatuation gradually turns to obsession, but at the age of fourteen Lolita deserts him for a pathological deviant and pornographer named Quilty, who in due course she also leaves. The two are briefly re-united after three years when Humbert finds Lolita married, heavily pregnant and adamantly un-interested in him and his protestations of love. Humbert tracks down and kills Quilty then dies of heart failure in prison, and Lolita, having produced a still-born daughter, dies in childbirth.

Though it is the sexual relationship between Humbert and Lolita that seems to receive the most attention across the media spectrum, Nabokov's novel is not primarily concerned with the notion of old men and little girls, though many would like to think it is, as simplistic interpretations are often easier to digest than those that are more complex. Instead there is within the book an implicit subtext that can only be grasped from an engagement with the novel in its entirety. Ultimately the underlying theme of *Lolita* is not that of the relationship, sexual or otherwise, between a grown man and a child, but is concerned with that of the reader and the level of his or her sympathy with what occurs between the book's two main protagonists. *Lolita* is about how to swathe a story of child abuse in dazzling and brilliant packaging to make it acceptable, even agreeable. It is about the often difficult balance between art and morality; a

challenge to the reader to form an allegiance with a problematic point of view and to adopt a moral position based not on whether child abuse is acceptable, (for we all know that it can never be so), but upon whether art is a sufficient excuse for writing a story about a man who is imprisoned ultimately for murder and not for his immoral activities with a young girl. We as readers must weigh the pleasure we get from *Lolita*, and our belief that it is a 'great novel', against the knowledge that, despite the 'fancy prose style', it tells the story of a grown man's physical and emotional obsession with a child.

Where Adrian Lyne's *Lolita* fails is, despite what the press have had to say, in his use of a young actress who does not appear taboo enough to duplicate the dynamic of the book: because Dominique Swain, fifteen when making the film, appears not as a pubescent girl but as an averagely sexy teenager Nabokov's point is lost. In some respects Lyne's *Lolita* is successful in its evocation of the tragedy of a relationship that is doomed from the start, and one leaves the film almost wishing that the two could live happily ever after, but this effectively destabilises the fragile balance achieved in the book between the sympathy elicited by the tragic figure of Humbert and the moral unease of the reader at the notion of an adult male physically possessing a twelve year old girl.

In effectively censoring *Lolita* in this way Lyne has in fact been unfaithful to the novel, and has relied heavily on the notorious character of the book, and the predictable wrinkling of the public's nose at any whiff of problematic sexual scandal, in order to inject the troublesome element of sensationalism that the film lacks. One should not be surprised, though, at Lyne's reluctance to use a child in his film, as he as well as anyone else must be aware just how difficult it would be for an audience to witness some of the scenes in *Lolita* played by an authentically young actress.

Depictions of the body, and particularly the bodies of children, present a dilemma for both artists and commentators, and often photographers who work with children, like Jock Sturges, Sally Mann, Graham Ovenden or Ron Oliver, are discussed almost entirely in terms of the works' uncertain legal status and the fact that the images may be open to classification by some as pornographic, not due to their intrinsic visual content, but to a woefully, (and perhaps inevitably), inadequate set of categorical laws that may vary from country to country or from state to state.

However, what defines the status of images, or what enables them to produce meanings, is not necessarily their formal denotative qualities, but the connotative meanings and messages that are constructed by the nature of the field through which they are realised or consumed. An image such as Robert

Mapplethorpe's *Rosie* may not be dissimilar to images that may be found within a small number of the Internet's pornographic news-groups but is not in itself pornographic. *Rosie* the image was described by moralists in 1996, shortly before it was withdrawn on the advice of the police from the Hayward Gallery's Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective,<sup>3</sup> not only as 'child pornography' but as 'utterly horrific'. This however does a disservice not only to *Rosie* the child, in describing her image in this way, but to Mapplethorpe the photographer, as although he would have been aware that the image was certainly striking, not least in the intensity of the child's

gaze, *Rosie* is, in the context of the rest of his oeuvre, a moderate and compassionate depiction of humanity.

What seemed to be overlooked or ignored by the majority of commentators at the time was that in order for an image such as *Rosie*, (or the family photographs of the newscaster Julia Somerville's seven year old child at bath time, held by a member of Boots processing staff to be obscene), to be seen as pornographic the viewer must project a pornographic sensibility onto it. So despite the fact that *Rosie* clearly has her childish genitals on view, they can only be seen as pornographic, (and by extension erotic), by an individual who has a predisposition to seeing them in that way, whether they be paedophiles or moral crusaders. To anyone of a rational sensibility *Rosie* is just a striking photograph of a little girl who happens not to be wearing any knickers.

Censoring images of children like this is, for a number of reasons, likely to do more damage in the long run than good. Firstly, in condemning all images of naked or semi-naked children to the status of child pornography one is not *preserving* the innocence of childhood but *removing* it, and casting all children in the role of potential tempters and tempresses; destined forever to be seen within the public's imagination not as young people on the path to maturity but as individuals forced to belong to the world of grown-up fantasies and neuroses before their time. Even a recent television advertisement for the Yellow Pages showed two new-born babies with their infant genitalia judiciously cast in digital shadows in order that they should not offend.

There is a danger, with the increasing attempts of some pressure groups to promote the belief that any depiction of youthful nudity is inherently unhealthy or bad, that one may no longer be able to see a naked child for what he or she is but instead become accustomed to seeing a body sexualised in adult terms; consequently, the childish body, both clothed and unclothed, is in danger of being fetishised and turned into a routine container of adult sexual values. In addition to and as an effect of this, in their desire to depict children as existing in some pre-Fall Edenic state the activities of some child care groups are, by insisting that they are non-sexual beings, actively denying children the right to their own, non-adult, sexuality; to the sexuality that is part and parcel of being human at any age.

Social constructions of puberty and adolescence will inevitably dictate the extent of the problems that are perceived to exist within the welfare and protection of children. When something arrives to disrupt the 'normal', 'healthy', received social stereotypes of how children should fit into the spaces set aside for them by society, as with the work of Jock Sturges, Ron Oliver or Sally Mann,<sup>4</sup> it has tended to come under fierce attack from individuals or organisations who perceive it as a threat; not just to children but to the social order itself. But, as the welfare of children is, rightly, high on our moral agenda, it should not be surprising that there should be those who are prepared to question the role that children have within the culture, sexual or otherwise, of our society. Those who maintain that children have no role within sexual narratives are, I would suggest, not helping to solve the problem but in fact adding to it. In seeking to censor debate around aspects of the lives of children our attitudes and understandings of 'sensitive' subjects will remain stifled, and discourses that may prove to be of value will, because many find them unpalatable, remain unarticulated.

The objects and methods of censorship are dictated by the standards of the day, but as these standards are in a permanent process of evolution we can never be exactly sure what it is we are censoring and why. For



instance, Ron Oliver makes photographs of, by and large but not exclusively, young girls, often pictured with their mothers or fathers. The photographs are commissioned by the parents and a number have been published as a collection in *As Far as the Eye Can See*. However, in 1992 Oliver was arrested by the Obscene Publications Squad on charges of producing child pornography, and had much work confiscated which has yet to be returned. If we look at Oliver's *Threesome* it is hard to distinguish what it is that is either obscene or pornographic or should need censoring. There is a pregnant mother and a young daughter, both of whom are naked, and the tumescent bump of an unborn baby. The mother kisses the child and the child embraces the mother. The obvious relationships set up between the experienced mother, the young girl and the baby speak simply and eloquently of the human cycle of reproduction, nurturing and development. There seems nothing degrading or horrific about this image: on the contrary, it is a touching portrayal.

One possible explanation as to why we find images of the pubescent body so problematic could be located in our reluctance to be reminded of the loss of our own innocence, and the inevitable consequence that is our often difficult, 'grown-up', sexuality. If as a society we are suffering from a *fin de millénaire* weariness with the difficulties of being members of what appears to be an increasingly unstable community it is natural that we should develop, as an antidote to the more unpleasant aspects of everyday life, a desire to preserve what we perceive as, in the absence of religious certitudes, expressions of humanity untainted by the cynical and superficial aspects of the late Twentieth Century. Hence the value of the child in society as a signifier of our hopes for the future. A more faithful, and more honest, filmic adaptation of *Lolita* would have used a younger actress, a child who could actually convey the impression of youth intended by Nabokov, but in the current moral climate we should not be surprised that Adrian Lyne has acted as his own censor in order to avoid the hue and cry that would surely have greeted the appearance of a genuinely juvenile Lolita.

<sup>1</sup> The *Daily Mail*, Friday April 24 1988, p. 1 and 7

<sup>2</sup> There are so many themes that arise in connection with the main subject of this essay that inevitably in a relatively small space I can hope only to articulate a small proportion of them, so the reader must bear in mind that I am in no way presenting my feelings here as an open and shut case.

<sup>3</sup> Of interest on this subject is Mark Sladens' 'School for Scandal', *Art Monthly*, no. 201 November 1996, pp. 12-14

<sup>4</sup> Sally Mann is the exception as, while producing photographs that are both provocative in their depiction of unashamed nakedness and haunting in their beauty, she has so far not suffered at the hands of either moral zealots or the authorities, perhaps because the children she has photographed are her own and, as interviews and documentaries have shown, entirely undamaged by the process of photography.

# New Media,

## Doctor Future

I am attending a smart cheese and wine party hosted by the Arts Council and one of their corporate sponsors when it is announced that the director of a well known North American art centre is present and is looking for new proposals for their artists fellowship programme. I have an idea that could do with some 'institutional support' so I decide to forego the race for the vol-au-vent and cross the room to introduce myself. I begin to explain my exciting new method of image synthesis but do not get very far before she makes her position clear.

"Is your project internet based?"

"No..."

"Is it multimedia?"

"er...no..."

"Well those are the only projects we do now".

In the corner of my eye I can see someone skewering the last savoury parcel.

In 1995 the grand daddy of electronic arts prizes, the *Prix Ars Electronica*, decided to drop its 'computer-graphik' still image category after suggestions in previous jury statements of a 'tiredness of creativity' and speculations on whether this form had 'outlived itself'. That year it was duly replaced by the new World Wide Web category. In addition, the computer animation section became increasingly dominated by special effects feature films selected by a jury made up largely of members of commercial production companies. Amidst timid jury statements questioning the wisdom of having to compare half a dozen Hollywood films made by Industrial Light and Magic with a short sequence made by a lone artist working out of their bedroom, *Prix Ars* reinforced the feeling that artists had gradually abandoned 'older' forms of 'new' media for the safety of emerging 'cutting edge' technologies before they too are 'professionalised'.

This year, the ISEA'98 revolution symposium distinctly positioned itself at the forefront of radical arts practice, brazenly featuring this quote on its call for proposals — "the opposition of writer and artist is one of the forces which can usefully contribute to the discrediting and overthrow of regimes which are destroying, along with the right of the proletariat to aspire to a better world, every sentiment of nobility and even of human dignity". Against this heady rhetoric, the invi-

tation for exhibition proposals to ISEA '98 contained no mention of either still image work nor film and video art in its list of entry formats, presumably relegating such outdated forms to an earlier era of 'pre-revolutionary' practice.

So we are left to infer, perhaps, that a new medium can only sustain a period of true artistic innovation and challenge for a limited time before it is exhausted of radical ideas and has to leave centre stage. The new incarnation of progressive arts practice then rises into the sky on the wings of blue sky research labs while its decaying predecessors have their bones picked clean of creative meat by the vultures of venture capitalism. Film art begat video art begat computer art begat interactivity begat the WWW. This cycle of birth and death has now assumed a familiar logic — artists need not worry as the routes of access to media production are closed off by the mainstream commissioning policies of the commercial industry. They need only wait for the next wave of media to appear and then to seize that window of critical intervention to undermine capitalist social relations before the corporations know what's hit them. The only article of faith that this requires is that technological progress march inexorably onwards, generating the raw material that can be used to subvert its own previously recuperated incarnations. Political innovation requires technical innovation.

The theoretical justification for this attitude is given in terms of art as a 'transformative practice' or aiming at a 'functional transformation'. It is a direct reference to Walter Benjamin's famous materialist theory of revolutionary art practice. This is expressed most concisely in his *The Author as Producer* lecture of 1934 where he formulates it in terms of a distinction between an art work that supplies a social production apparatus and an art work that tries to change a social production apparatus. What this means in effect is that it is not enough for, let's say, a writer to criticise the capitalist system in words if he or she continues to use a capitalist form of cultural production to publish those words. Benjamin warns that bourgeois culture is very capable of absorbing all kinds of revolutionary ideas without at any time allowing those ideas to threaten its power. Instead of publishing political arguments in the usual academic form of books and scholarly articles, the socialist writer should use new forms that change the writer's production relations, especially their relation with their audience, the proletariat. The newspaper, pamphlet, poster or radio broadcast were the most appropriate media in Benjamin's time because they could be used to reach a mass audience and avoid

patterns of traditional cultural consumption that were rooted in class structure. What matters most in the political effectiveness of an art work is not the 'tendency' of its content but the effect on production relations of its 'technique'.

In contemporary times this translates into an oppositional arts practice which uses the most advanced materials of its time to demonstrate in a concrete way the direction in which society should be progressing. It challenges currently accepted notions of production, authorship and creativity by using new media to show how electronic distribution changes exhibition, interactivity changes authorship, sampling changes creativity. Technology is shown to possess the power to restructure these production relations and alter what people had previously taken for granted. And whenever production relations threaten to ossify into restrictive ideologies as newspapers are merged by press barons and radio airwaves are regulated then they can be blasted apart again by the socialising potential of each further technical development that can be applied to the mass media. All of which is fine except for the fact that this is not entirely what Benjamin meant.

Later on in his lecture Benjamin goes on to discuss some explicit examples of the effects of 'technical innovation' on the political function of culture. He uses quotes from the musician and Brecht collaborator Hanns Eisler to show that concert hall music has entered a crisis caused by the advent of recording technologies which change the relation between performer and audience. "The gramophone record, the sound film, the nickelodeon can...market the world's best musical productions in canned form...The crisis of concert hall music is the crisis of a form of production made obsolete and overtaken by new technical innovations." But we are told that this is not sufficient by itself to transform music into a politically potent form—strategies such as the addition of literary elements like words are also necessary to help overcome social effects such as the breaking down of culture into isolated specialisations that occurs under capitalism. It is the transformation of this bourgeois musical form through words, 'interruptions,' 'making strange,' quotation and other modernist methods that eventually leads it to the form that Benjamin finds most exemplary—Brecht's Epic Theatre.

What is technically innovative about Brecht's theatre? It is not cinema, it is not radio, it is not mass media. But it does change the relationship with its audience, not by using film or broadcasting technology directly, but by adopting their 'techniques'. The principle technique is montage, the ability of modern media to fragment perception and then recombine it. In Brecht's theatre this is absorbed in the form of 'interruptions' to the dramatic action in order to create 'conditions' presented to the spectator that require a 'dialectical' response. In this way montage is

# Old Technology

employed as an 'organising function' as opposed to a 'modish technique' used merely to stimulate the viewer's fascination. So we see that the actual works that Benjamin is interested in use new techniques at a variety of levels which can include different media, perceptual modes, 'organising functions' and aesthetic considerations. Contrary to using the latest technological means, Brecht is described instead of returning to the ancient origins of theatre, turning the stage into a simple podium for exposing present behaviour and conditions. New technique does not mean new technology.

Today we see digital artists driven onwards to become multimedia artists to become net artists and in their wake they leave a trail of unresolved experiments and re-stagings, unable to develop an idea through before the next software upgrade is announced. As if 'earlier' forms of new media had been 'outlived', no longer able to express the forms of subjectivity that are now experienced. But by picking up any magazine or observing any street advert we can clearly see that on the contrary commercial design and photography has continued to exploit and push the still image form way past the stage where many artists abandoned it in their move on to more 'revolutionary' media. Through this work we can still see the potential of continuing advances in the standard commercial digital software packages like Photoshop which has unfortunately now taken on the status of an office desktop accessory with many artists. The artists that have continued to work in areas that are almost unfunded have shown how much further image and print media can go in producing their own newspapers, fly posters, fax art, graffiti and underground cinema and in experimenting with alternative methods of distribution.

Similarly in moving image production, developments in digital image synthesis are amongst the most advanced technical accomplishments in the world today, but are only ever seen as 'special effects' in feature films or promos, a 'modish' or stylistic use of the medium as the new-as-always-the-same. It seems almost an accepted fact that the sophisticated logics created to structure image events such as dynamic simulation or motion capture can only ever be used for blowing up space ships or for the latest shoot-em-up computer game. It is as though they are perceived as so closely aligned with the interests of Soho art directors that they can never be quite new enough to escape from its orbit. Instead it appears far easier for arts organisations to develop schemes to support work made for a particular piece of hardware or software they have just seen on Tomorrows World than to look one layer below the surface to ask what techniques, like montage in the 1930s, are likely to have an impact on the function of many forms of practice. For it is surely the case that technical and aesthetic develop-

ments in the basic manipulation of sound and image are applicable to a wide range of media generally. Arts centres fall over themselves to attract work designed for the latest internet software, VR environment or multimedia platform but are not willing to consider projects in image or sound making that could radically alter the possibilities of all three.

There is an argument to the effect that by being involved in the early stages of a new medium that artists can exert some influence over the direction in which it develops. By getting in first before mainstream genre forms have had the time to become entrenched it could be possible to indicate alternative patterns, but it is still very difficult for artists to work as maverick researchers against a corporation's ultimate agenda. This approach also implies that media will inevitably develop into a single optimum commercial form without any further hope of an intervention, a kind of commercial determinism. In fact the computer industry seems to be distinguished for its continuing volatility just when everyone thinks the dust has settled.

I am reminded of a story related by Graham Weinbren, the artist who pioneered the use of interactive cinema in the late eighties. He and his brother had developed a system that allowed for real time transitions between different story streams and was demonstrating one of his first pieces to an audience of industry professionals. They were duly impressed by the speed and fluidity of the system and wanted to know the technical specifications. However, when Weinbren revealed that it was based on an old 386 PC, a machine already obsolete even in those days, their interest immediately cooled. The problem was that the logic of the commercial industry demanded that new products were always premised on the notion that they embodied nothing but the latest in technology and manufacturing. To revert back to a previous 'generation' of machines would have introduced an uncomfortable contradiction into that philosophy. Unfortunately this is also a philosophy that has now been taken on by arts organisations that feel that here is an easy way to align themselves with progressive media simply by pointing to new black boxes.

So artists find themselves running to keep still, trying to keep at bay the panic that they will be left behind in the latest hi-tech funding opportunities and consigned to the back room of old media. Condemned to chase a never ending succession of software versions and hardware upgrades, their practice is now so 'transformative' that it never gets past the round of demos and beta tests. By becoming fixated on the receding horizon of technological developments the space for consolidating what has been learnt is lost. The avant garde artist trying to lever an oppositional advantage at the fringes of advanced materials is replaced by the techno artist entrepreneur

providing research and development services for corporate sponsors. There is no reason to develop an idea beyond the point at which it can be sold.

During the seventies and most of the eighties artists that wanted to use computers were obliged always to be working at the frontiers of technology because there was practically no where else to be. Computing machinery was so limited that in a real sense the machine was the artwork because you would always be using it at the very extremes of its abilities. Such was the desire to escape these restrictions that faster and bigger architectures were eagerly sought after and resulted in the feeling that to produce the best art you needed the best computers. Nowadays this principle clearly sounds erroneous, partly due to the fact that desktop computers are so powerful that the 'best' in computing is accessible to the point of being unavoidable. But it has been surreptitiously replaced by a 'softer' version that implies that to work in the newest media you need the newest technology.

The effect is to divert attention from innovations in currently used media by implying that artists can only retain their radical credentials by concentrating on the 'cutting edge' of new technology. And, surprise, surprise, it is exactly this mythic trajectory of technology that commercial companies depend on to motivate the consumption of their endless releases of new products that allow you do the same thing more often. Both are now united in their quest for a Killer Art for the Killer App.

# Virtual Migrants

## Imperialism as Deportation, Art as Ideology —a contextual framework for creativity

*"How do we collectively acknowledge our popular cultural legacy and communicate it to the masses of our people, most of whom have been denied access to the social spaces reserved for art and culture? [...] Progressive and revolutionary art is inconceivable outside of the context of political movements for radical change."*

Angela Davis, "Women, Culture and Politics" (Women's Press, 1990).

Art along with media is a form of ideological production—consciously or unconsciously it reinforces, represents, questions, or attacks various views we hold about our world, hence it always has an educative component, positive or negative. Many artists (unlike media practitioners) feel unable to think of audience and the political effects of their work—a writer once said "If I worried about that, I'd never write anything at all!" This mistaken and self-indulgent form of individualism, fostered by western art education, is as foolish an approach as it would be for a politician, scientist or media mogul to divorce themselves of any responsibility for the social consequences of their work. Furthermore, the art establishment is over-critical of art that speaks out with a direct voice—I recall the continual scepticism during production of the 'Nach-ural Struggle' CD-ROM, which we described as a 'digital art polemic', as to whether it was 'True Art' or an educational CD. Yet in effecting change, art and ideological production is most powerful when linked to progressive struggles. It is as important for campaigns to use the arts and creative media as required to meet their immediate and foremost objectives as it is for artists and media practitioners to raise awareness and generate discussion around those campaigns and the relevant issues. With reference to the new digital media it is also the social use of a new technology which finally determines its future, and the 'Virtual Migrants' new media research project is developing this area through collaboration between artists, educationalists and campaigners.

The title 'Virtual migrants', while alluding to the 'digital technology' aspect of a project about migration and deportation, essentially describes the sense of displacement among those peoples who are constantly reminded that their area of residence is not necessarily their home, a sense of an incomplete migration which is perpetuated along racial lines. There is a great lack of CD-ROM material on such a subject, with "the first CD-ROM on racism and the black presence in Britain" (entitled 'HomeBeats') having only just been produced by the Institute of Race Relations. 'Virtual Migrants' focuses on globalisation, barriers to migration, state ideology and the paradox between the shrinking world with freedom for information to travel, and yet the increasing tightening of racist immigration laws and ever-increasing gaps between the 'first' and 'third' world. Imperialism is more than ever the dominant global system perpetuating extreme oppression and inequality. Its pre-development created modern racism, and therefore attacks on racism will only scratch the surface unless they relate to anti-imperialist struggles. This places the Black artist concerned with race in direct alliances with the grass roots of the Third World, and the story told must be as much about strength and resistance as about abuse of state powers.

By 'Black', I mean the term progressed here in the

80s indicating people of non-European descent, marginalised here by notions of imperialist British nationality. While not without contradictions, 'Black' is still better than those subsequent liberally backward and anti-political moves resulting in phrases like 'cultural diversity' and so on. Increasingly, aspiring black artists seem to want the freedom to not tackle race since whites don't have to be similarly pigeon-holed, yet this naive position plays into the establishments' hands. Under a dictatorship artists who innocently ignored the political reality around them are used as testimony to the creative output of that regime while opposition is ridiculed and suppressed; a broad consciousness of resistance informs art work even at intuitive levels, and within this framework of a need for political change there is no such luxury to avoid the social reality around oneself. Wealthy liberal democracies such as in Britain cloud their injustices, inequalities and global sufferings with a biting air of comfort and decency, but in essence the framework is the same.

But let us take the relationship between art and ideology a step further—how can a work of art consciously and purposefully describe and express an ideology, and thereby develop the tangibility and currency of the concept itself? If an ideology is a set of related beliefs, attitudes and opinions, then the old linear narratives have surely done a dis-service to their understanding. The non-linear nature of the CD-ROM lends itself particularly well to the artistic exploration of such abstract social concepts which are not normally described easily using such narratives as in films and books. The medium carries with it the potential for enabling the active viewer to link together seemingly disparate events and pieces of information into a well-defined conceptual framework, in any order. To this end, 'Virtual Migrants' initially focuses on the story of Liverpool-based Nigerian dissident Bayo Omoiyola (currently threatened with deportation) and the layers of interwoven connections that link together Euro-British racism, colonial history, global economy, and definitions of nationality. We will return to this story later.

Our last piece 'Nach-ural Struggle' was an attempt to achieve a non-linear experience of a politicised yet abstract concept, and did at least establish the strength of a piece which was undeniably visually and aurally stunning *as well* as being rich in informative, educative content. However, it remained arguable as to how far the piece created an emotive sense of its central concept through the multiple connections gained via non-linear exploration, and also whether experiencing the whole really was greater than simply the sum of all of its parts. Nevertheless, the piece clearly demonstrated that the CD-ROM medium enables possibilities for a piece to be discretely artistic, educative and also campaigning all in one physical format, due to the ability for a user to navigate through specific sections without the need to encounter other entire bodies of content. So with 'Virtual Migrants' we're trying it again. But rather than simply engaging in cultural action, we need to think and understand the political concepts and global contexts before any statement can hold firm. Deportations are highly charged with politics, suffering and emotion, creating life or death situations requiring people to take to the streets to demonstrate anger and opposition. But looking at the construction

of national identity and global power concentration, the story is more complex and after some decades of such action the goal-posts haven't moved - cultural activists and campaigners alike need to further our understanding before we can act with greater clarity and strength.

### The example of Bayo Omoiyola (summarised)

Bayo is currently threatened with deportation. He has lived here many years, has one child born here who has the right to stay, yet his wife and other children are currently in Nigeria awaiting Bayo's status here to be resolved. It was in 1995, just a week after Ken Saro Wiwa was killed, that Bayo was given a deportation order by the Home Office and from there his already two-year long campaign intensified. The campaigners have weekly meetings, though typical of long-running campaigns attendance can become erratic until something happens; he has recently been given a 6-month reprieve before his next hearing and his campaign has won the particular support of Unison along with some Churches, MP's, and the local community and friends. Although 118 Labour Party MPs had signed an early day motion for Bayo's right to stay during Tory rule, it is uncertain if they would still go along with this now as Labour is deporting people at a higher rate than the Tories ever did.

Nigeria gained 'independence' in 1960, yet its economy continues to be dominated by multinationals. Within the oil mining sector Shell is the largest company and is widely held to be responsible for various forms of ecological destruction. A military coup in the mid-60s and further coups subsequently have led to military control for most of Nigeria's history, despite a brief period of democracy from 1979-83. Human rights abuses, detentions and deaths have been well documented. The military remains accused of shooting down a demonstration against Shell, who in turn is understood to support the military rulers. The USA also has an interest in oil imports from Nigeria at favourable prices. Despite this unholy alliance serving 'western' interests and those of the Nigerian military elite minority, international pressure has slowly criticised Nigeria (though without any material clout) who has claimed it will release detainees and allow elections; the Pope's visit did indeed trigger a few to be released.

Broadly speaking, it seems that the exploitation which colonialism began is continuing through the multinationals, and is continuing to destabilise the country—right through all the coups and military regimes it would appear that only the multinationals reaping their profits has remained constant. Dissenters and human rights activists are frequently forced to live in exile, such as Bayo who was and still remains involved in the pro-democracy movement. It was also the income from exploitation for the white colonising countries which allowed them to stabilise their own economies and diffuse political unrest; racism itself was constructed during the colonial era to justify colonial exploitation, and white workers were brought into this ideology. It is the same racism which through colonialism created Nigeria as a third world country, which destabilises and therefore in turn encourages corruption in Nigeria, which was also able to bring about the influx of migrants into Britain from

# Kuljit 'Kooj' Chuhan

the late 40s to early 60s, and which now denies Bayo the right to political asylum from the corruption which it created the conditions for.

Bayo is constantly in touch with Black issues in Britain via his own experience and community involvements, and is clear that the threat of deportation against him would not have happened if he were white. He has also received racism in various other forms, including threats from clients of reporting his supposed bad conduct to the housing office (while working for Liverpool City Council's Housing Dept.); as a result he had to be moved to work on other estates. Bayo's continuing experience of racism as a Black citizen in British society is an equally significant microcosm of the global whole. The racist history of changes in immigration laws and rules together with the associated publicity is usually tied in with particular shifts in the economy, migration patterns or nationalist sentiment, such as the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act under the Labour government to prevent the rightful entry of British passport-holding Kenyan Asians. Every such change has invariably whipped up a wave of racist feeling, attacks and even murders; it is a cornerstone of British racism. Immigration laws are also almost unique in terms of how fast major changes are pushed through with almost no public debate; the 1968 Act was typically rushed through in just three days.

In these ways, the British state continually raises the question of national identity and its need to identify Black minorities as never having any real claim to full social and economic participation in this society; the laws and their practice are a continual reminder to every Black person, and indeed every white person, of this fact. In this role, the legal system and infrastructure is a major contributor to the *production* of the racist ideology rather than merely an instrument of it. Within a global context we must also remember this is a key component of the system which also acts to ensure that cheap labour continues in poor countries to enable cheap goods for wealthy countries such as Britain, and ultimately to maintain the divide between rich and poor nations.

## Towards a synthesis between digital art and campaigning

In Britain it has been the numerous anti-deportation campaigns which over the years have been in the front line of opposition to racist immigration laws. For the past three years the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) has played a coordinating, lobbying and consciousness-raising role at a National level and also linking with like-minded organisations globally. In response to the 'Virtual Migrants' project they pointed out that the immediate issue for their campaigning groups was the lack of computer access. Out of 28 core campaigns of NCADC, only 6 had regular (but not ongoing) access to a computer, which belonged to and was normally used by the host agency for that campaign. Other campaigns used computers (e.g. for leaflet production) by irregular or special arrangement. None of the campaigns had a central computer or internet/multimedia access for campaign use. However, NCADC recommend that all campaigns be linked to the internet with their own computer due to the increasing speed at which changes in immigration and nationality take

place; it would be much faster and efficient to publish those changes on a website or email them to a specified list than to organise a mail-out and publicity. NCADC intend to develop this internet access as soon as any possibilities arise, therefore the access for campaigns could change significantly over the next few years.

With media such as interactive CD-ROM, the direct benefits for and usage by individual campaigns needs to be gauged, despite difficulties of access to the medium. Digital art practitioners and cultural activists need to bear in mind that current problems of grass roots access to the 'new media' (CD-ROM and the Web) may be partially resolved in the near future, and that progressive media aesthetics and practices have to be developed now in anticipation of this. Previous examples of campaigning videos produced have often been linked in with student projects, have been sold within campaigns to raise money and have possibly been shown at meetings, but they have tended not to develop issues further than the campaign leaflets and have mainly preached to the converted due to the lack of any distribution or exhibition strategy. Nevertheless, they may have raised the consciousness and resolve of campaign members/supporters by giving them a more intimate and emotional insight to the issues at stake than simply a leaflet or even a well-delivered speech. As with any media production, there always remains the issue around the need to develop a series of 'screenings' or an exhibition programme to encourage the visibility of the material produced. The bottleneck for such products is indeed in distribution; no artwork can be radical unless seen or heard and while production tools seem to be increasingly accessible the distribution channels are not, and even the supposed exception of the internet is under mounting criticism. The cultural activity of an arts or media project within a campaign may also assist in sustaining active member support and public interest, particularly in lengthy and drawn-out campaigns which struggle to maintain regular active presence until something happens.

Indirect benefits to campaigning must also be recognised through their educational role in a wider context thereby raising public awareness and insight; it may be possible for NCADC (who publish a vibrant website and quarterly newsletter) to link in with the project in this context. In the case of 'Virtual Migrants' this will initially involve community networks, education and arts audiences and at a later stage probably also some form of independent or semi-commercial distribution. Even more, media activism of this kind which not only documents real struggles of principled opposition but also imaginatively develops it further must also be recognised as an essential part of creating a history of resistance for future activism to learn from. Involvement with local struggles in an ideologically conscious creative process which in turn is embedded in a global context is a springboard towards a more holistic political culture; let's pass it on.



TOP: BAYO OMOIYOLA *Virtual Migrants* CD-ROM  
ABOVE: *Natch-ural Struggle* CD-ROM

# Unsounded

## the Decline and Fall of Music

### David Thompson

"We belong to an age in which culture is being destroyed by the means of culture."

Nietzsche, 1878

If the music and related media consumed by the young and curious are, to some extent, barometers of our anxious age, any recent gauging might lend Nietzsche's words an unwelcome resonance. Those of us whose interest in new musical forms extends beyond the Ten Commandments of the market niche may have detected a steep downward spiral in both of the above. At a time when music intrudes in so many private and public spaces, from shopping malls and music-on-hold to the routine assaults of overdriven car systems, the levels of popular attention and public expectation seem lower and more regulated than ever before.

A cursory scan of the numerous magazines ostensibly enthralled by musical possibilities actually reveals a striking uniformity of both presentation and content. Rare displays of critical acuity, if indeed they can be found, seem strangely disconnected from the cognitive poverty of their printed surroundings. Amidst the numerical reviews announcing marks out of ten, any glimpse of more considered articulation seems arch and incongruous, as if it were the improbable result of some typographical glitch. Much of the music media no longer appears willing to explore its subject in terms of shape, suggestion and intention. Accordingly, the personal experience of music is almost entirely overshadowed by a fixation with the collective leisure activities of clubbing, chemicals and rock concerts. A journalistic preoccupation with convenient appearances seems in unwelcome ascendance, sitting all too neatly with a wider contemporary reduction of culture to a mere entertainment commodity, something to be *consumed*.

Perhaps the most dazzling marriage of cult and consumerism is the phenomenon referred to as 'club culture'. Few could have anticipated the rise to prominence of an inter-continental youth movement whose tribal figureheads are acclaimed for an ability to momentarily synchronise two turntables. The heated and uniquely functional listening context of the dance-floor not only simplifies the range of musical criteria, with its obvious emphasis on the linear and ballistic, but also offers its initiates a heavily accessorised and uniform relationship with the music they embrace. The narrow musical menu of the club experience can easily become reified in the rituals of powders, pills and other chemical paraphernalia, effectively relegating even the most geological low frequencies to a convenient pretext for the more fascinating business of social preening, sartorial status and sexual manoeuvres.

The default format of magazines orbiting 'club culture' is perhaps the most obvious evidence of declining expectations in the producers, consumers and

critics of music. Paradoxically, the exhaustive array of titles fighting for shelf-space and shrinking attention spans offers the reader no significant choice at all. Largely interchangeable, each brightly-coloured collage of sound-bites, self-reference and fashion spreads provides few qualitative reasons for choosing one rather than another. Despite the bold protestations of 'underground' status, the youth culture being advertised has much in common with the bizarre homogeneity and anaesthetic toy-town aesthetic of the shopping mall. (It is, incidentally, hard to avoid the suspicion that almost every major chain-store now promotes some form of 'loyalty card' precisely because there is no longer a reason to feel loyalty toward any such organisation.)

The content of most popular music magazines rarely addresses music directly at all and seems determined to steer the reader toward purely visual concerns. Coincidentally, the arrival of MTV and the music video could be said to have reduced music to a limited menu of sneering postures and adolescent *anomie*, with the performer as the exclusive and inevitable object of attention. Consequently, a neurotic and fiercely territorial approach to music is fostered, with any small criticism of the artist's work being felt as a barbed personal assault by the fan. As the listener is encouraged to personally identify with the *figure* and not the work itself, any serious discussion of the artist's material becomes impossible. Both parties share a tacit conception of music as an incidental accessory; an arbitrary vehicle to attaining the purported nirvana of status and celebrity. In these televisual terms, gimmicks, gestures and sexual fetishism are the true preoccupations of an audience hypnotised by the relentless and banal imagery of youth culture.

A creed of coarsening expediency and cultural utilitarianism runs unquestioned throughout mainstream music publishing, an ever-decreasing frame of reference resulting in a myopic constriction of ideas and debate. The notion of music without a prefix is anathema to a generation of writers and retailers who discuss music entirely in terms of endless, and often ludicrous, classifications. The demanding and untidy ideals of journalistic depth, detail and factual accuracy no longer seem necessary. Irrespective of their interests and intentions, artists and labels are obliged to fit comfortably within the narrowing parameters of a glib and frequently cynical media formulation. The testing of artistic substance and probing of ideas appear to be in retreat, systematically replaced by sweeping resumption and simplistic prejudice. Indeed, the word itself seems increasingly squeezed into the inconvenient gaps left by advertising and images.

As the proliferation of titles compete for an audi-

ence of jaded palette and finite size, publishers have become ever more dependent on advertising revenue to sustain their efforts. This unannounced shift of emphasis from the reader to the corporate sponsor inevitably jeopardises editorial autonomy. Few editors can afford to be openly critical of the handiwork of companies whose promotional budget keeps their own boat afloat. Writers previously known for a measure of intelligence and forthright independence find themselves having to adjust to a prevailing climate of cautious expediency and manic infantilism. If a piece of writing does not directly endorse or promote a particular product, the chances are it will be met with a degree of editorial discomfort or quietly be excluded on the grounds it doesn't 'fit' the magazine's 'style' or 'readership profile'. The cost of this uneasy compromise, and its broader implications, are not difficult to fathom.

If the printed music media is often fearful of deviating from the predictions of market research by talking 'above the heads' of its readers, it is evidently all too happy to talk down to them and insult their intelligence as a matter of course. In his recent book *The Aesthetics Of Music*, Roger Scruton points out: "Muzak induces relaxation precisely in those who do not notice it. To the musical, who cannot avoid noticing such things, muzak is exquisite torture." Similarly, those who take the greatest pleasure from the experience of music are the first to suffer from the lowering of aspiration and endeavour. Conversely, those in whom the interest in music is superficial and transitory now dominate the media agenda and command its overwhelming attention. The arts coverage of the British broadsheet newspapers routinely favours barely grammatical rock concert coverage over a spectrum of more substantial and demanding musical forms. The Spice Girls were exhaustively covered by each of the British 'quality' papers, all eager to billboard 'five low-forehead whores and their male marketing pimp', albeit with varying degrees of irony and post-modern *ennui*. For six months and more, the shadow of the incapable seemed almost inescapable.

Attempts to articulate either the wider considerations of an artist's work, or indeed the detailed specifics of such work, require more than a glib identikit summary. The seriousness and commitment that an artist may feel toward their own compositions, or to creativity in broader terms, sits uncomfortably in a context of reflexive cynicism. Truly innovative work, perhaps by definition, defies easy classification and predetermined marketing niches. Of course, obviousness and immediacy may be the aims and aspirations of *neither* artist nor listener, and some measure of effort and attention may be required before the work

# Practice:

## Journalism

unfolds its secrets.

As the scale, expense and complexity of the music industry have increased by orders of magnitude, cynical assumptions and failures of imagination have hardened into habit, coinciding with the emergence of an orthodox commercial blueprint. The sheer cost of launching a new artist into the popular arena now dictates a shifting of priority away from exploratory innocence and artistic autonomy toward a more self-conscious calculation. The ascendancy of market research and the near-ubiquity of focus groups define a climate of trepidation and second-guessing audience appetites based purely on what has gone before. Artistic decisions are thereby ultimately surrendered to the audience, a manoeuvre that confines creativity to its own history and presumes art and show-business as entirely indistinguishable concerns. The role of the contemporary A&R manager can, and often does, serve to undermine the artist, diminishing their participation to that of a convenient brand name or face.

Few A&R managers appear to entertain the possibility that the listener might listen precisely because they don't know what possibilities exist, and the musician's value is precisely as an expert and guide through unfamiliar terrain. The idea that music might be written independently of audience expectation and still prove to be enormously popular has been largely abandoned, replaced by music that is specifically *designed* to be popular. The principles of this careful engineering are far from esoteric: *Ask nothing. Give nothing. Offend no-one.* We are evidently expected to accept a new down-sized definition of artistic endeavour, defined purely in functional terms of tactical calculation and rudimentary problem solving. Dissent from this terminal orthodoxy is commonly viewed as a Copernican heresy and the heretic is likely to be labelled as elitist, quixotic or simply deranged. The poignant and ineffable connection that music can make possible, often without warning or invitation, is, however, an intangible quality and is therefore enormously difficult to quantify or formulate. The value of music as meaningful and important is now all too easily excluded from the very process it has made possible.

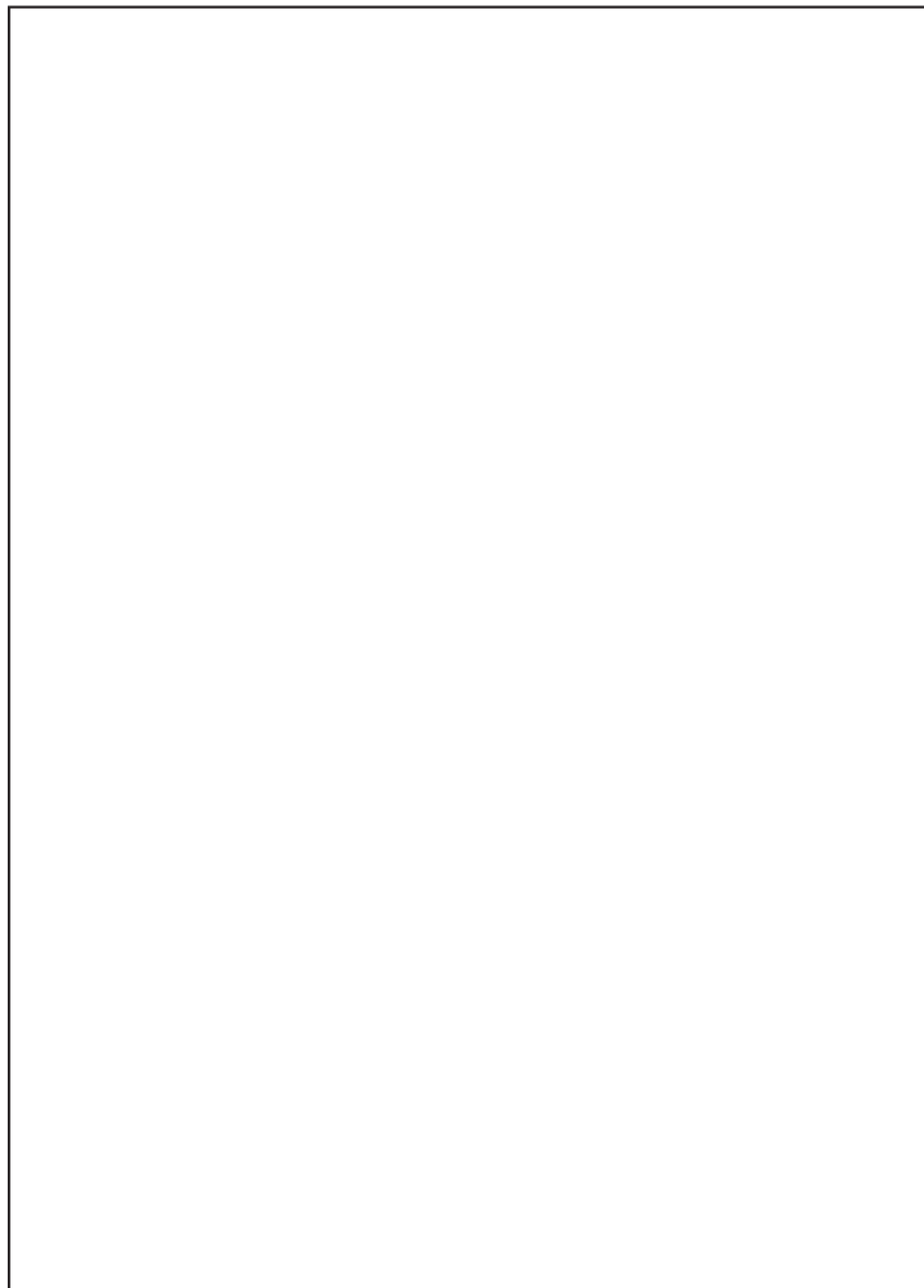
The vast media array of *laissez faire* capitalism seems absorbed by this new economic fundamentalism, fixated by surfaces, untroubled by the poverty of intimacy and substance, and indifferent to the consequences that seem likely to follow. One of the prominent features of this economic ideology is a tendency toward a pantomime of dubious egalitarianism. Curiously, the more overtly commercial the publication, the more aggressively this selective view of democracy holds sway. Significantly, the advertised

democracy is expressed as an inflexible and unquestioned devotion to feeding appetites of the lowest common denominator. The over-riding tenet of faith being: *"Aim low, sell cheap"*. Any acknowledgement of the role of a diverse and well-informed debate as a vital component of democracy is conspicuously difficult to detect.

Perhaps this is merely a symptom of some wider malaise. The immediate advantage of capitalism over the ideologies it has largely replaced has been the diversification and choice it can facilitate. Perversely, the current economic climate, which amounts to a predatory struggle for distribution space and market share, shows alarming signs of reversing this trend toward diversity in many areas of cultural life. As corporate assimilations increase and global oligarchies form, the gravitational effects of capital have become pronounced and unavoidable. Money attracts money, and the bigger the available budget, the more of other people's money tends to accrete. In the industries of music, film, television and literature, an increasing proportion of financial and promotional resource is being diverted to a handful of seasonal do-or-die blockbusters, whether in the form of albums, movies or popular novels. The television programme *"Seinfeld"* apparently amounted to no less than 40% of the NBC network's profits for 1997. The success of this strategy depends heavily on the occupation of all possible space within the media and distribution systems. The underlying aim is simply to obscure and exclude any evidence of alternatives. If the latest remake of *"Godzilla"* is shown across two or three screens in every major American multiplex, the movie may do very well indeed, but the freedom to choose one's viewing is clearly, and deliberately, being limited.

In a recent ECM catalogue, Manfred Eicher, director of the acclaimed Munich label, asked *"How can serious music get a hearing in the absence of any substantial critical debate?"* The ongoing shrivelling of journalistic expectation threatens not only the future of musical diversity and the risk-taking inherent to innovation, but also calls into question the honesty of

any residual discourse that may survive. If the creation, criticism and circulation of music is ultimately to be shaved down to a series of swift financial transactions and nothing more, can the printed opinions of any writer be taken at face value? With fewer spaces allowed for reflective pauses and open-ended questioning, will the music journalist be expected to function primarily as a partisan lobbyist, another extension of the PR machine? Will the potential for a boot-straping symbiosis between artist and critic—in which a mutual honesty is essential to any development of the work in question—become entirely theoretical?





Robin Ramsay

# Uncle Sam's New Labour



*'The New Labour project has always been defined in an Anglo-American context.'*<sup>1</sup>

Gordon Brown used to tell interviewers that he spent his summer holidays in the library at Harvard University. In 1986, CND member Tony Blair went on one of those US-sponsored trips to America that are available for promising MPs and came back a supporter of the nuclear deterrent.<sup>2</sup> Blair, Brown and John Monks, an important Blair ally as head of the TUC, have all attended meetings of the Bilderberg group, one of the meeting places of the European-American trans-national elite.<sup>3</sup> David Miliband, Blair's head of policy, did a Masters degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Powell, Blair's foreign policy adviser, is a former Foreign Office official whose previous posting was in the British Embassy in Washington.<sup>5</sup> Edward Balls, Gordon Brown's economics adviser, studied at Harvard, wrote editorials for the *Financial Times*, and was about to join the World Bank before he joined Brown.<sup>6</sup> His wife, 1997 MP Yvette Cooper, also studied at Harvard. Sue Nye, Gordon Brown's personal assistant, lives with Gavyn Davies, chief economist with the American bankers, Goldman Sachs, and one of Labour's chief economic advisers.<sup>7</sup> Majorie Mowlam, now Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, did a PhD at the University of Iowa and then taught in the United States in the 1970s.<sup>8</sup> Chris Smith, now Heritage Minister, was a Kennedy Scholar in the USA — as were David Miliband and Ed Balls.<sup>9</sup>

And then there's Peter Mandelson, Blair's confidant, chief strategist and, as this was being written, Minister without Portfolio. By the end of his final year at Oxford University in 1976, via the United Nations Association, Mandelson had become Chair of British Youth Council.<sup>10</sup> The British Youth Council began as the British section of the World Assembly of Youth (WAY), which was set up and financed by the CIA and SIS in the early 1950s to combat the Soviet Union's youth fronts.<sup>11</sup> By Mandelson's time in the mid-1970s — under a Labour Government — the British Youth Council was said to be financed by the Foreign Office, though that may have been a euphemism for SIS. Peter Mandelson, we were told in 1995 by Donald McIntyre in the *Independent*, is 'a pillar of the two blue-chip foreign affairs think-tanks, Ditchley Park and Chatham House.'<sup>12</sup>

Peter Mandelson, Majorie Mowlam, Defence Minister George Robertson, Heritage Minister Chris Smith, and junior Foreign Office Minister in the House of Lords, Elizabeth Symons, are all members of the British-American Project for a Successor Generation (BAP), the latest in the long line of American-funded networks which promote American interests among the British political elite.<sup>13</sup> The BAP newsletter for June/July 1997 headlined its account of the May 1997 General Election, 'Big Swing to BAP'.

An older and more direct expression of American influence within the wider British labour movement is the Trade Union Committee for European and Transatlantic Understanding (TUCETU). TUCETU is the successor to the Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding (LCTU), which was set up in 1976 by the late Joe Godson, Labour Attaché at the US embassy in London in the 1950s who had

become an intimate of the then leader of the party, Hugh Gaitskell. Organised by two officials of the NATO-sponsored Atlantic Council, TUCETU incorporates Peace Through NATO, the group central to Michael Heseltine's MoD campaign against CND in the early 1980s, and receives over £100,000 a year from the Foreign Office. TUCETU chair Alan Lee Williams was a Labour defence minister in the Callaghan Government, before he defected to the SDP; director Peter Robinson runs the National Union of Teachers' education centre at Stoke Rochford near Grantham. In the mid-1980s Williams and Robinson were members of the European policy group of the Washington Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

Among the senior union and Labour Party figures on the TUCETU's 1995 notepaper were Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers; CPSA general secretary Barry Reamsbottom (a member of the Successor Generation Project discussed above) and president Marion Chambers; Lord Richard, Labour leader in the House of Lords; former trade union leaders Bill Jordan (now head of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the CIA's chief cold war labour movement operation),<sup>14</sup> Lord (Eric) Hammond, and Lord (Frank) Chapple.<sup>15</sup>

The Atlantic Council/TUCETU network provided New Labour's Ministry of Defence team. Defence Secretary George Robertson was a member of the Council of the Atlantic Committee from 1979-90; Lord Gilbert, Minister of State for Defence Procurement, is listed as TUCETU vice chair; Dr John Reid, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, spoke at a TUCETU conference; and MoD press office biographical notes on junior Defence Minister John Speller state that he 'has been a long standing member of the Trade Union Committee for European and Transatlantic Understanding'. Peter Mandelson has written a (very dull) pamphlet for TUCETU based on a speech he gave to its 1996 conference.

In other words, the people round Blair, the key New Labour 'project' personnel, are all linked to the United States, or the British foreign policy establishment, whose chief aim, since the end of the Second World War, has been to preserve the Anglo-American 'special relationship' to compensate for long-term economic decline.

## 'We asked the Americans...'

Mr Blair has been quite open about the US role in all this. To the annual conference of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp he said:

'...the Americans have made it clear they want a special relationship with Europe, not with Britain alone. If we are to be listened to seriously in Washington or Tokyo, or the Pacific, we will often be acting with the rest of Europe...the Labour Government I hope to lead will be outward-looking, internationalist and committed to free and open trade, not an outdated and misguided narrow nationalism.'<sup>16</sup> (Emphasis added.)

It could hardly be more specific: we asked the Americans and they said go with Europe and free trade. In other words, go with traditional, post-war American foreign policy objectives; and, since the mid-1960s, the objectives of the British overseas lobby. Put another way: thanks to the massive exportation of British capital which began during the Thatcher years, British-based capital has the largest overseas investments after America, and we will continue to support American political and military hegemony as the best

protection for those interests. This is being 'outward-looking' — looking beyond Britain to where British capital has gone.

But British economic policy being 'outward-looking, internationalist and committed to free and open trade', in Blair's words, is precisely the problem from which non-metropolitan Britain has suffered for most of this century. These are the values of the overseas lobby, the Home Counties financial elite, people for whom Hull or Norwich, let alone Glasgow and Cardiff, are far away places about which they know nothing — and care about as much.

The analysis of the Gould group — and that of the many other similar analyses which preceded it — implied that Labour, if it sought acceptability from British capitalism, should look to the domestic economy, to a more radical version of the producers' alliance attempted by the governments of Wilson, Callaghan and Heath. But John Smith and Majorie Mowlam did not embark on a tour of the regional offices of the CBI, or the Chambers of Commerce of the British cities. They headed for the Square Mile. The Blairites, following the lead of John Smith, have become the party of the City, the big trans-national corporations and the Foreign Office — the overseas lobby. They have become the party of the Europe Union — British membership of which is still supported by a majority of the overseas lobby in Britain.<sup>17</sup> This shift explains the enthusiasm for the Blair faction expressed by the London establishment — the Foreign Office, the higher media and the EU-oriented section of British capital — in the run-up to the General Election of 1997. Labour under the Blair faction was a more reliable bet for continued EU membership than the Conservative Party with its vociferous Euro-sceptic wing.<sup>18</sup> And with this shift to an overseas orientation, comes the concomitant position that Labour's traditional constituency — so-called Old Labour — the domestic economy, especially manufacturing and the public sector, becomes merely a collection of special interest groups to be taken for granted, conned, betrayed or ignored.

## The problem becomes the solution

The key move was to see the City — the overseas lobby — and the asset-stripping of the domestic economy, which began in the 1980s, not as the problem but as the solution. This shift can be illustrated by two quotations. The first is from the Labour Party policy document, *Meet the Challenge Make the Change: A new agenda for Britain*, the final report of Labour's Policy Review for the 1990s, published in 1989. The subsection Finance for Industry (p. 13), began:

'Under-investment is the most obvious symptom of short-termism in our economic affairs, yet there is no shortage of funds for investment purposes. The problem lies in the criteria by which the City judges investment opportunities. If short-termism is the disease, then it is the City which is the source of the infection.'

This section is a rewrite by what Austin Mitchell MP called 'the leadership'<sup>19</sup> of a section of the document written by the committee chaired by Bryan Gould. The *original* Gould committee version had stated, *inter alia* :

'The concentration of power and wealth in the City of London is the major cause of Britain's economic problems'; and that Britain's economic policy had for too long 'been dominated by City values and run in the interests of those who hold assets rather than those who produce.'<sup>20</sup>



Seven years later in their *The Blair Revolution*, Peter Mandelson and co-author Roger Liddle, now Tony Blair's adviser on Europe, said of Britain in the 1990s:

'Britain can boast of some notable economic strengths — for example, the resilience and high internationalisation of our top companies, our strong industries like pharmaceuticals, aerospace, retailing and media; the pre-eminence of the City of London.'<sup>21</sup>

Not only has the City ceased to be the problem it was perceived to be nine years before, Mandelson and Riddle have internalised the values of the overseas sector of the economy, of which the City is the core. Not only is the 'high internationalisation' of our top companies an 'economic strength', we now have a retailing 'industry' and media 'industry'.

### Goodbye manufacturing

The prospect of North Sea oil revenues had begun to persuade members of the overseas lobby that they could, perhaps, abandon what they saw as the troublesome, union-ridden, manufacturing sector of the economy. In 1978, we learn from Frank Blackaby, that a 'senior Treasury official' had commented, 'Perhaps we can either have North Sea oil or manufacturing industry, but not both.'<sup>22</sup> On 3 July 1980, Samuel Brittan, who was then the leading economic commentator on the right of British politics, published an article in the *Financial Times* headed, 'Deindustrialisation is good for the UK.'

The former Thatcher Minister, the late Nicholas Ridley, wrote in his memoir:

'I do not think it is a disaster if we become an economy based primarily on the service sector. It isn't vital, as socialists seem to think, that we have a large manufacturing sector. They seem to think this mainly because Britain's old manufacturing industries used to be the basis of their political support.'<sup>23</sup>

The former Conservative Minister, Cecil Parkinson, one of Mrs Thatcher's Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry, wrote in his memoir:

'Trade [i.e. Ministry for Trade at the DTI] traditionally took the view that it was the custodian of GATT and upholder of the open market wherever possible. It tried to ensure that we acted within the rules of GATT and was sometimes regarded as almost unpatriotic when it argued the case that just because other people's imports were unwelcome this was not necessarily unfair.'<sup>24</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Whereas a domestically-oriented Department of Trade might see its role as promoting British exports, defining its role as the 'the upholder of the open market' is as clear an expression of the overseas lobby's views as can be imagined.

As the Thatcher regime accelerated the deindustrialisation of Britain, this was rationalised in and around the City of London and by some of its spokespersons in the Tory Party, notably Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson, with the belief that financial and other services would replace manufacturing industry: we were moving to a post-industrial society, such as..... Switzerland<sup>25</sup>

During John Major's period as Prime Minister, Edward Pearce wrote:

'I have been told by a Treasury knight that though very fond of Mr Major, he worried a little at his anxiety about manufacturers. "He wasn't very happy with the analogies we made about Switzerland, so prosperous entirely from service industries, so it was necessary to let him make friendly things (sic) to the manufacturing people."<sup>26</sup>

Pearce is telling us that one of the most senior civil servants at the Treasury, and by implication — the use of 'we' — perhaps several or all of them, had decided that Britain should pursue a policy of abandoning its manufacturing base altogether.<sup>27</sup>

One of Gordon Brown's appointments to the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee, the American economist DeAnne Julius, was the co-author of an essay which argued that it would be a mistake for

Western governments to try and hang on to their manufacturing base and that they should concentrate on service industries.<sup>28</sup> (And according to William Keegan in the *Observer* 15 February 1998, Ms Julius is 'widely considered to be the closest the MPC [Monetary Policy Committee] has to someone in touch with industry!')

Such attitudes are now openly expressed in the financial media. Gavyn Davies is perhaps Labour's most important economic advisor. He lives with Gordon Brown's office manager, Sue Nye, and is the chief economist for the US bank Goldman Sachs. Immediately after the Labour election victory in 1997 he dismissed concern about the damage the rising pound was doing to British exporters, with the comment that 'the health of the one sector of the economy which is directly affected by the exchange rate [i.e. domestic manufacturing] cannot take precedence over the maintenance of the inflation target.'<sup>29</sup> (Davies' implied claim that the City is not 'directly affected by the exchange rate' is an extraordinary lie or self-delusion. The higher it is the more money the City makes.) By early 1998 Davies' response had become the standard reply to all complaints about the value of sterling.

The same line was offered in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1998 in an article whose title, 'Metal bashers shut up shop and do the nation a service', echoed that of Samuel Brittan's 'De-industrialisation is good for Britain' nearly twenty years before:

'Sympathy for manufacturers is no basis for economic policy...the plain fact is that manufacturing will go on shrinking, and the more prosperous we become, the faster it will decline...interest rates may be relatively high, but setting them in order to succour manufacturing will only succeed in feeding inflation.'<sup>30</sup>

With these attitudes comes the extension of the term 'industry' to encompass any kind of economic activity. We now have 'service industries', 'financial industries', 'leisure industries', 'the sports industry', 'the tourism industry', 'the gambling industry', 'the sex industry' etc etc. It does not matter if the manufacture of products in Britain declines: they will continue to be replaced by financial 'products', holiday 'products', leisure 'products' and so forth. (As yet I haven't noticed welfare 'products' but they cannot be far off now.)

New Labour's economic policy makes no distinction between the City and domestic manufacturing. But policies which suit the domestic economy — cheap money, expansion, controls on the uses of money and credit; planning, consistent demand in the economy — do not suit the City which wants expensive money (sorry: 'competitive interest rates') and freedom from controls (sorry: 'self regulation'). This used to be understood by the Labour Party and was the basis of party economic policy until the mid 1980s.<sup>31</sup>

New Labour still occasionally recognises that there is something called the domestic manufacturing economy, and as the value of sterling rose throughout the first year of New Labour's first term in government with the steady dose of increase rate rises imposed by the newly independent Bank of England, government spokespersons initially watched from the wings and made ritual noises of sympathy and regret — what the unnamed Treasury official quoted above called 'making friendly things to the manufacturing people.'

\* 'Mr Brown...is concerned that sterling's 20% appreciation over the past 12 months will damage industry by making exports more expensive.'<sup>32</sup>

\* Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to the Treasury: 'We share the concern about the impact the pound has on industry.'<sup>33</sup>

\* President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett: 'The Government values the manufacturing base of this country and shares its belief in the benefits of a stable and competitive exchange rate.'<sup>34</sup>

But three months later Mrs Beckett told the annual dinner of the Engineering Employers' Federation that the government 'has to take a view of across the whole economy, not just a part, even as important a part as manufacturing' — the line offered by Gavyn Davies, quoted above.<sup>35</sup>

### A fatal inversion?

British politics has been stood on its head. The Conservative Party, traditionally the party of financial and overseas interests, has been replaced in that role by Labour. Instructed by its new friends in the City, Labour has become the party of financial, pre-Keynesian, orthodoxy. Gordon Brown looks determined to re-enact the role of Philip Snowden in 1931—the perfect Labour Party front man for the interests of the overseas lobby. The last three years of the Major regime saw Chancellor Kenneth Clarke running the kind of orthodox demand management policy — increasing government deficits in response to the recession — which Labour, under Wilson or Callaghan, would have run, but which is anathema to 'Iron Chancellor' Brown. On becoming Chancellor, virtually his first action was to make the Bank of England independent; and the Bank of England said, 'Thanks very much' and began putting interest rates up, despite the pound being too high for the domestic manufacturing economy. The first year of New Labour's term of office produced a stream of newspaper stories complaining of the damage being done to British manufacturing by the strength of sterling identical to those which appeared in the first years of Mrs Thatcher's Government — and for the same reason: interest rates were being put up.<sup>36</sup> Once again, just as in the first years of the Thatcher regime, the exchange rate for sterling was not a consideration.

Gordon Brown gave up the state's influence on the Bank of England, as far as we can tell, in the belief that independent central banks have a better record on preventing inflation than those under political control.<sup>37</sup> Which is another way of saying that, without prioritising the effects on the domestic economy, central banks can be relied on to put interest rates up. Gordon Brown acts as though he's got the equivalent of economic amnesia, and cannot remember anything that happened before 1997. How else can we explain his determination to try to 'control' inflation using only interest rates — what Edward Heath used to dismiss as 'one club golf' — and ignoring the large range of other economic tools which were used, in the days before Mrs Thatcher?

### We are powerless

'New Labour' believes — but is unwilling to state in so many words — that governments can do nothing against the power of trans-national finance. This belief has become the acid test for 'New Labour'. In the Commons debate on the Nick Leeson-Barings debacle on 27 February 1996, it was Sir Peter Tapsell, a High Tory stockbroker, not Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown or Labour's City spokesman Alastair Darling, who declared that the derivatives market was 'so speculative in nature as to deserve the term gambling and perhaps should be banned in international law.' Gordon Brown meekly echoed Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke and called for an inquiry. In a letter to me on the subject of Tapsell's remarks on derivatives, Alastair Darling, now Chief Secretary to the Treasury, made the following assertions:

'It is not possible to ban derivatives. They have been about for 200 or 300 years. Properly controlled and supervised there nothing per se wrong with them. The fault lies in the control systems. In any event, I trust that you will accept that it would be impossible for one country to ban the trade even if it was desirable. The trade would need to be banned throughout the world.'

To the implicit question, 'Why not do something about this?' Darling replied:

It cannot be done. (*So do nothing.*)

In any case, there is nothing wrong with them. (*So do nothing.*)

Even if there was, and you wanted to ban them, it would have to be done world-wide. (*So do nothing.*)

The financial sector's interest in not being controlled by government has been universalised into the beliefs that not only is it impossible to impose such control, it is positively a bad thing to try. (The market is magic.) In an article in *The Times*, Peter Riddell said what the politicians never quite dare to say: 'Politicians know that real power lies with global business'. But where is the evidence to support this belief? Where is the

evidence to support the view that the nation state can no longer manage its own economy? When you ask you usually get told of the 'French failure' in 1983, when the Mitterand Government tried to expand the economy in a pretty traditional demand management fashion — while trying to remain a member of the European Monetary System. But as an example of the impossibility of demand management in one economy, this example fails. Just as Heath did in 1972 with his expansion, the French government reached the point where they either floated the currency as the trade balance went into deficit, or abandoned the expansion. Pursuit of the geo-political competition with Germany inside the then EEC, the so-called 'franc fort' policy, proved more important, and the French government abandoned the expansion.<sup>38</sup> Thus, it is believed on all sides, did 'Keynesianism in one country' die. But even the most lumpen accounts of demand management economics acknowledge that it may be necessary to abandon attempts to maintain fixed parities if growth is pursued. (The real mystery of the French expansion in 1983 is how they thought they thought they could have expansion *and* 'franc fort'.)

But while the French failure looms large in the we-are-powerless Labour modernising mind, the experience of Britain leaving the ERM in 1992, does not. Yet what happened in 1992 when Britain was forced out of the ERM in 1992 by these 'global forces' we are supposed to fear so much? Dire consequences were predicted if the pound left the ERM, notably a massive increase in inflation. (Being in the ERM was claimed to be a guaranteed anti-inflation measure by both Labour and Conservative economics spokespersons.) The world's currency dealers concluded that, at D-mark 2.95, the pound was seriously overvalued — a view shared by a wide section of British economists and, we are led to believe, despite their silence on the subject at the time, the Labour Shadow Cabinet.<sup>39</sup> The Conservative Government tried to defend an unrealistic exchange rate by the usual means — giving the Bank of England's reserves away to speculators — and then recognised defeat. The value of sterling fell, and none of the predictions of economic disaster turned out to be true. Inflation did not shoot up; domestic production expanded with the more competitive pound, exports expanded and unemployment fell. In direct refutation of everything Labour's economics spokespersons apparently believed, the *relatively* good economic position inherited by the Blair government in 1997 is a direct consequence of the British economy leaving the ERM.

In the *Independent on Sunday* of 15 January 1996, Alastair Darling, now Treasury Minister, was quoted as saying, 'It is not up to the government to say that the banks can only make so much profit.' It certainly *used* to be 'up to the government': even Geoffrey Howe imposed a windfall tax on the banks in 1981; but that was back in those far-off days before the Government handed power to set interest rates, perhaps the most powerful single economic tool and the surest means of regulating how much banks earn, to the people who stand to gain by putting them up! Just before the 1997 General Election Roy Hattersley wrote in his *Guardian* column of meeting one of the then Labour shadow economics team, who told him that in the new global economy it was not possible for a government to increase taxes.<sup>40</sup>

On his visit to the beleaguered Bill Clinton in February 1998, Tony Blair told *Guardian* journalist and long-time Blair ally, Martin Kettle, of the 'five clear principles of the centre-left'. The first of these was:

'...stable management and economic prudence because of the global economy.'<sup>41</sup> (Emphasis added.)

The acid test for Labour 'modernisers' has become how completely you accept the powerlessness thesis. The line sounds immediately plausible to those, like New Labour economics spokespersons, with little economic knowledge: it is what they keep reading in the newspapers and being told by their advisers from the City. The powerlessness thesis also has the advantage of being a popular line with Labour supporters of the European Union who can argue, as the Labour Party has done since it became Euro-enthusiasts, that we need Europe to control capital ('the speculators'). A decade ago Gordon Brown *et al.* believed that British

membership of the ERM would do it; when that failed they concluded that only a single currency would do it. But the propositions that nation states are powerless against capital movements, or that the free market model is the only one possible (or successful) are immediately falsified by the experience of Norway, and the Asian variants on corporatist, producer alliance, restrictive, trade barrier and exchange control-laden, nationalist economies of the Far East. These so-called 'tiger' economies had developed and grown in defiance of Anglo-American free market theories.<sup>42</sup>

Why have New Labour adopted the powerlessness thesis? In part, it is simply that they are in the grip of theories; and like most people in the grip of theories they exclude information which might challenge them. The theories are reinforced by the fact that they are those currently approved of by their mentors in the United States and the British overseas lobby. In so far as alternative views are perceived, they are offered by people who for one reason or another, are regarded by New Labour as either discredited, such as the Labour Left, or beyond the pale, such as the Tory Europhobes. Thirdly, and most importantly, New Labour politicians *like* the belief that they are powerless against the world's financial markets. Powerless as they are, a range of things that Labour leaders used to have try to deliver — growth, economic justice, redistribution — have ceased to be rational expectations of them. Nothing can be done short of the European-wide level; and maybe not even then.<sup>43</sup> Life is infinitely easier for Labour economic ministers when all they have to do is follow the City's line.

## Notes

1 Martin Kettle, the *Guardian* 3 February 1996

2 The *Observer* 14 April 1996. This visit is missing from John Rentouls's biography of Blair, *Tony Blair*, (Little Brown, London, 1995).

3 Gordon Brown, with the late John Smith, attended the 1991 meeting at Baden-Baden. (This is not included in his 1998 biography by Paul Routledge.) The full list of those attending was published in the US magazine *The Spotlight* 22 July 1991. This article with others from the same source on the Bilderberg group and Trilateral Commission can be found on the Net at [http://www.real.net.au/insurge/politics/global\\_power/nword.htm](http://www.real.net.au/insurge/politics/global_power/nword.htm) *The Spotlight* is undoubtedly a racist magazine. Nonetheless it is the only magazine which consistently prints articles about transnational forums like Bilderberg and Trilateral. Monks attended the meeting in 1996. The list of those attending the 1996 meeting was published in Canada and then put up on the Net. Tony Blair's Bilderberg meeting is in his Parliamentary declaration of interests.

4 The *Guardian* 3 October 1994

5 Ken Coates and Michael Barrett Brown suggest in their book *The Blair Revelation* (Spokesman, Nottingham, 1996) that Powell's job in the British embassy in Washington concealed a role as the liaison officer between British intelligence and the CIA, but they have no evidence. Powell's career summary as given in *The Diplomatic Service List* for 1995 contains nothing from which to directly infer an intelligence role. He was born in 1956 and joined the FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) in 1979. Since then he was Third later Second Secretary in Lisbon, 1981; Second later First Secretary at the FCO, London; UK delegate to CDE Stockholm 1986; UK delegate at the CSCE in Vienna 1986; First Secretary FCO, London 1989; then First Secretary (Chancery) Washington 1991.

6 The *Guardian* 3 October 1994. Balls was profiled in the *Guardian* (G2) 16 March 1998.

7 The *Sunday Telegraph* 24 March 1996. Davies was an adviser to the Callaghan Government as a member of the Downing Street Policy Unit, headed by (now Sir) Bernard Donoghue. He was included in the party which visited President Clinton in early 1998.

8 *Who's Who* 1992

9 Peter Hennessy, 'The View from Here', in the *Independent* (Education) 1 May 1997

10 Mandelson 'flunked first year exams because he was spending all his time working as president of the United Nations Association's youth and student branch.' *Independent* 1 July 1989.

11 On WAY see the scattering of references in Joel Kotek's *Students and the Cold War*, (Macmillan, London 1996), Joseph B. Smith, *Portrait of a Cold Warrior*, (Ballantine, New York 1981) and Jonathan Bloch and Patrick Fitzgerald, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, (Junction, London 1983).

12 The *Independent* 29 July 1995. McIntyre is reported (1998) to be writing a biography of Mandelson.

13 See Tom Easton's 'The British American Project for the Successor Generation', in *Lobster* 33.

14 On which see, for example 'The AFL-CIA' in Frazier (ed.) and Peter E. Newell, 'The International Centre of Free Trade Unionists in Exile' in *Lobster* 31.

15 These paragraphs on TUCETU are taken from David Osler's 'American and Tory Intervention in the British Unions since the 1970's' in *Lobster* 33.

16 The *Times* 17 July 1995.

17 The non-EU section of overseas UK capital, located chiefly in the US, the Commonwealth and the Republic of South Africa, is less enthusiastic about EU membership. Their views are expressed most clearly in the *Sunday Telegraph*.

18 An unnamed 'businessman close to the Labour leadership' said in the *Observer* (Business) 13 April 1997, p. 5: 'The big companies - the ones who do the most trading with Europe - are really worried about the xenophobe right.'

19 See his review of *Defeat from the Jaws of Victory: Inside Kinnock's Labour Party* by Heffernan and Maquese, in the *Guardian* 15 December 1992.

20 Cited in Eric Shaw's 'The Evolution of Labour's Campaign Strategy 1987-91: some Preliminary Notes and Comments', a paper presented at the Conference of the Political Studies Association, Queen's University, Belfast 7-9 April 1992. Thanks to John Booth for this.

21 Faber and Faber, 1996, p. 12

22 Frank Blackaby, 'Exchange Rate Policy and Economic Strategy' in *Three Banks Review*, June 1980.

23 Ridley p. 71

24 Parkinson pp. 238 and 9

25 In the 1000 plus pages of Nigel Lawson's memoir, there are only four indexed references to the manufacturing sector, in the last of which he comments that if North Sea oil has 'crowded out' manufacturing, then as North Sea oil declines, it will spontaneously 'crowd back in'. See p. 196.

26 *Guardian* 8 January 1992

27 The 'Treasury knights' are the Permanent Secretaries. I asked Pearce who he was quoting but while he did not identify the Treasury official, he commented: 'I'm pretty sure that factory-despising attitudes are common in the Treasury though not universal.' Letter to author 14 January 1992.

28 See Nick Cohen's 'Why is CIA ex-agent setting our interest rates?' in The *Observer* 19 October 1997. Ms Julius, now with British Airways, worked as an analyst for the CIA.

29 The *Independent* 12 May 1997

30 7 February 1998

31 See for example Neil Kinnock's *Making Our Way* (Blackwell, 1986)

32 *Guardian* 7 July 1997

33 *Guardian* 11 July 1997

34 *Guardian* 5 December 1997

35 *Guardian* 18 February 1998. She repeated this central 'line' in an exchange of letters with Austin Mitchell MP. See Larry Elliot, the *Guardian* 9 March 1998.

36 See, for example, the leader 'Manufacturing a recession' in the *Guardian* 20 January 1998.

37 See, for example, the arguments by Labour economics adviser Gavyn Davies, in The *Independent* 12 May 1997, and the replies in the Letters on 14 May.

38 On this see Seamus Milne, 'A French lesson for the left' in *Tribune* 26 March 1993.

39 Neil Kinnock's assistant at the time, Neil Stewart, commented that the reason Kinnock did not express his belief that pound was over-valued was, 'It's a dickhead says it before the Tories.' Rintoul p. 267.

40 Hattersley declined to tell me the name of this person. My guess? Alastair Darling. This was an echo of Tony Blair's 1996 comment in Japan that, 'We also recognise that in a global economy.... our tax rates need to be internationally as well as nationally competitive.' Blair p. 123

41 *Guardian* 7 February 1998.

42 This was written just before the 1998 collapse of the so-called Asian 'tiger' economies. As far as I can see the collapse is chiefly the result of those economies *reducing* the restrictions which used to exist, in pursuit of the western free market model, thus encouraging speculation (aka 'investment') by their domestic and Euro-American financial sectors - with the usual disastrous results. On Norway see Larry Elliot in the *Guardian* 6 April 1998.

43 General Secretary of the TUC, John Monks, called in 1996 for 'world works councils for each major international company', *Guardian* 31 January 1996. International capitalism did not noticeably tremble at this absurd prospect. Against the globalisation-nation-state-is-powerless thesis, see for example Martin Wolf 'Far From Powerless' in the *Financial Times* 13 May 1997; 'Grand National idea produces winners', Larry Elliot, the *Guardian* 20 October 1997; 'Don't be fooled: multinationals do not rule the world', *Independent on Sunday* 12 January 1997 and 'Globaloney', Paul Hirst in *Prospect* February 1996.



# Ian Brotherhood

# Tales of the Great Unwashed

This is me just getting in. Honest to God, this has been me since yesterday, that's, what, oh my good god, twenty-eight hours? No, no way, aye, that's right enough, can you believe that? Honest to God, I'm pure like that so I am. What? Eh, I shouldn't really, ach I might as well then, aye, well, make it a double, and give us a can of that bulls balls or whatever it is, what? Aye, red balls then, that's it, ach, red balls, big balls, bulls balls, bulls eyes, who cares, you know what I mean anyway, so one of them and two of the other and that'll be fine. Honest to god, I'm pure like that so I am—Cheers doll.

Jesus that's good.

Aye, so that was us last night, that bowling club, right, mind? So it was the usual right, I calls Eddie for the cars and we get dropped off about nine or something, just round the corner by the shops, you know where I am, there's that late co-op right, so out we get and there's all the girls, about ten of us or something, Julie, Shell, Wee Mags, Assumpta, Kelly, Diane, the two Kylies, most of the girls turned up, only Queenie couldn't make it with her man being in with his legs, aye, they're away on him again, so we're already charged up a wee bit you know, just a couple down at mine before we left but we were alright, and we get out and start giving it laldy going along that big hedge outside the club right, and it was a laugh so it was, and we finished off what we had and planked the bottles in the hedge cos you know what it's like now with having bev in the streets and that, but we ditched them and starts up the path into the club right, and this wee thing comes out of the club right, I mean, he was no bigger than my Tam right, honest to god he was up to there right, and he's a sort of janny or security guy right, he's got this wee uniform on right, and he starts giving it these are private premises and all that shite and I was pure like that right away I was just going to give him one but Wee Mags gets him first right, and honest to god it was a pure laugh so it was cos she just pure grabbed his tie and yanked it like that and you could hear him panicking and she's like that, if you don't get out of my face I'm going to tear the nuts off you right, and he's pure like that, honest to god, so she lets him go and he pure runs inside. So we get nearer and you know how it's like off the road a wee bit so when you get away from the street it's a bit weird cos it gets sort of dark like maybe you're in the country or something, and you can see the big lounge bit where the band's on and they're playing crystal chandeliers I think it was, and Wee Mags starts joining in and the two Kylies were going pure mental so they were, and we all got back on the pots and that and it was a pure racket man, honest, and then you can see them sort of coming up to the window and that but by this time it's too late for them to stop us so we're in the door and there's not even anyone at the reception bit, like the wee janny guy, I suppose that's his patch but he was just pure vanished you know, offsky, so in we go and you should see their faces I mean, honest to god they're all pure like that. So Shell's got the potty right, and she's doing the bride bit, all shy and all that eh, I mean, come on, Shelly shy eh? I know, I was gutting myself. But we start getting into it right, and the band just pure grinds to a halt you know, they're just started doing that one, that sultans of swing right, and it must've been with us banging on the pans and that put them off cos they pure lost the rhythm and this guy that's singing gets really mad with the guitarist and starts giving him pelters so that makes us shout and bang more you know, so the whole place is a pure uproar and I dumps the potty on the deck in the mid-

dle of the dance floor, like it's not that big a floor but it's pure cleared you know, and we're all giving it yooha about the potty and Shell's sitting there and she drags out a sneaky wee quarter bottle from her dress and starts getting into that. Honest to god, I was like that so I was.

Aye, might as well doll. No, I've still got some left here. Another double then. You know how to charm a lady so you do by the way.

So you can see these old things all giving it oh dear what a palaver and all that, and pure panic stations so it is, and this one comes over, I'll tell you who she is, you know him that was done for the expenses thing at the council, aye him, the furniture and all that, well this is his missus right and she's a right bruiser by the way, looks like Jocky Wilson, remember him? My cousin almost got off with him once. Anyway, she comes over and she's pure like that so she is, all veins and all that pure red, and she's like do you mind, this is a private club, and she's giving it pure eyeball right, growling at me, and I don't take that right, I just do not take that, so I was like that, boosh, just like that, pure cracker and down she goes and somebody shouts out and they all come ahead and it was a pure Barney honest to god, all these things with frocks on and those shitey dummy pearl necklaces and all that and it was about two minutes we're all rolling about and what a tanking we gave them right, so eventually they sort of group and back off a bit so we've still got the floor. Thing is right, we've still not got a penny, so I'm like that, where's the men? and the girls start giving it like this mad war chant or something, where's your men? where's your men? and we head off for the bogs cos you know that's where they'll be right, so we find the bogs and it's like honest to god the door was pure shut tight but it's not like one with a lock on it it's them inside trying to keep us out so we're like that, all against it giving it pure heave and the door opens a wee bit and you can hear them shouting at each other and all that but eventually they give in and the door flies open and we all dive in and honest to god there's like about twenty five guys crammed into this wee bog all giving it pure climbing over each other and all that trying to get away so we piles in and I was like that, right lads, who's first for a kiss for the bride and they all go like pure mad, all trying to get through this wee window up on the wall, so I starts flinging them back out and the girls get them in the corridor and Shell's got the potty and we started getting through them good style, and it was all paper going in there, a good few tenners and loads of fivers, no shrapnel at all right, they were glad to get away so they were, and you could hear the sirens coming so we speeded up and Wee Mags helped me get out the one that was stuck in the window and we gets back into the hall. So there's all the wives up at the bar giving it a big conference about what's going on and trying to make ice packs and all that and the big one that I clocked, she's sitting with her head between her knees right, or as close to her knees as she can get it right, and the men's all kind of milling about and straightening their ties and all that. So we're just about to get out right, and Assumpta's like that, Jawwwwwn and we're all like that, who's John by the way? and you can see this guy pure dying off, old guy right, and his wife's looking at Assumpta and looking at him and he's trying to get behind the bar right, maybe wanting to nick through the back somewhere or down the cellar, and Assumpta's pure like, oh my god I don't believe it and all that and she's pure smiling and she heads over, she's pure pushed by the way, and the guy's just pure

white as a sheet right, and we all head over cos he wasn't one of the ones that was in the bog and I stick the potty in front of him and he's like that, boosh, two twenties right in there and he's nearly greeting and he's like that, please leave, please leave now, and I'm just pure ending myself honest to god it was brilliant right, and his missus goes to have a smack at Assumpta but she's game for her anyway, and that's when the cops come in.

Sorry son, it just came back on me a wee bit there. It's alright, I'll get it. It's getting mopped anyway. No thanks. A cup of tea and I'll be brand new.

So the cops right, well that was a pure laugh right cos it's the usual right, they're about twenty if they're a day, a guy and a lassie, and the guy's like that about a disturbance, an anonymous tip-off and all that, so I'm like that, this is Shelly and all that, giving it big licks about the wedding and how it's her second time around and she's really looking forward to it and all that and Big Kylie's already spotted the lassie cop right, like she knows one of her sisters from school and all that so they're started chatting but then it turns out that your man in charge is this guy John, he's like the president or something, so he's like that, yes yes yes, these ladies are guests and there's no problem, he's on about a bit of high spirits and all that, and you can see his missus is pure ready to go off you know, but he's got her arm and he's like that, so the cops are like that, are any of you girls members of this club and all that, and we're giving it what do you mean and butter wouldn't melt you know, so good old John's like, well, the girls will be signing the guest register officer, so everything will be in order, no problem, and then the one I belted right, she appears and starts mouthing and the cops are like oh-ho, here's someone with a burst lip but her man moves in smartish and god only knows what he whispers to her but she shuts it and that's us, no bother. Cops go into the back for a cup of tea and a wee sarnie, we stay for a drink on the house and end up having a great night. Almost two hundred in the pot, memberships all round, and I end up getting off with the wee janny guy. He's alright actually, looks a wee bit like Neil Diamond.

Anyway, I'll put that kettle on. It's not too bad in here this morning. Quiet night was it?