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VARIANT

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Glasgow

THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL

Don't care in the community

A metaphor: At a ceremony concocted by the Scottish Media Group (a local monopoly) and a Swiss Bank, Scotland's first "politician of the year" was announced together with further endless awards for all the new politicians. The same day a conference was held by a new organisation set up in March, the Scottish Civic Forum "in the wake of it being awarded £300,000 by the Scottish Executive." The Forum will "encourage participation in the work of the Scottish Executive." Its funding has been secured for three years. Its convener (a known hustler) said "this is a step forward for making a difference to Scottish Government." Although they do not know what they will do they've got the money to do it. Organisations which question the Scottish Executive—and indeed their relationship with Swiss banks and the media—receive no awards.

State support, in its broadest sense, continues to be systematically politically allocated. This is disguised in political language which mimicks that of self-empowerment groups. The emphasis on individual 'self-help' puts the accent on the guilt of individual failure and serves to relinquish the State of any culpability. As one of our writers notes: mental handicap is now termed " learning disabilities", largely because of the expediency of care in the community. Within bureaucratic culture the shutters come down on any reality —any potential heresay—which deviates from the culture imposed from above.

Public sector funding is administered by people who have conditioned themselves to think that culture is a game: they watch themselves lose their soul as petty bureaucrats obstruct and fabricate conditions. In the arts inventing priorities has become inventing basic exclusions. This year's qualifications are next year's disqualifications. There is no leadership from these organisations, there is no direction.

Tough on Art — Tough on the Causes of Art

The political fixation with the designated look, or designed reception of policy is discredited. The UK government is set to sustain its concern with 'correctional facilities' through its various obliging 'arms length' arts bureaucracies. Here this self-help goes as far as doing-in what actually exists on the ground and replacing it with a speculative clientele bidding. The effect on artists and their practices as directed through the mechanisms of the public funding system, and more importantly the communities and groups that are set to be targeted, has become an attack on freedom of expression. There are too many voices around and some of them are saying the wrong things for those who seek to imprison the mind.

The zombification will come in handy. We are being prepared—well bound and gagged—for the type of art which will inhabit the galleries of the future. Most big cities are having their big art spaces done up with Lottery money and if they are compliant enough... as one reader writes:

"The Dome should be seen a forebear of what we have to look forward to: nothing less than the monumental re-embodiment of the State, a theme park to Civic pomposity. It is time for artists, individually and through their organisations to get together and attack the cowardice of the Arts Councils. Or you can apply for some money. That's really what they are trying to make people think, that there is no sense that you can influence policy, simply subserviently trail their money."

The government have their attempts to control culture: their efforts are pathetic and deplorable. The meaning of life is not contained within a government edict or a grant. Why should we tolerate facile categorical imperatives imposed on freedom of expression, they are humiliating and degrading—the end product of years of materialistic priorities with entirely predictable inhuman outcomes. You can get a glimpse of another time (before all those years of wallowing in the mire of sheer ideological manipulation of the arts) by looking at what Roy Jenkins wrote in the early '60s:

"First there is the need for the State to do less to restrict personal freedom. Secondly there is the need for the State to do more to encourage the arts, to create towns which are worth living in, and to preserve a countryside which is worth looking at. Thirdly there is the need independently of the State to create a climate of opinion which is favourable to gaiety, tolerance, and beauty, and unfavourable to puritanical restriction, to petty-minded disapproval, to hypocrisy and to a dreary, ugly pattern of life. A determined drive in these three directions would do as much to promote human happiness than all the 'political' legislation which any government is likely to introduce... In the long run these things will be more important than even the most perfect of economic policies." *The Labour Case* (London, Penguin 1959)

Written some forty years ago (expressing basic liberal attitudes) this stands as an indictment on the present state of affairs. What progress has been made when people had greater freedom in the past? The Welfare State was set up when Britain was at its poorest, and owed millions, after a war which almost destroyed the country. What existed then was the political will. Today affluence is everywhere yet we are told we have less money. The result of all this is a worse quality of life; the demise of the public sphere altogether. Politics becomes deals done in a back room.

It is one thing to blame the ongoing crimes of bureaucracy on one or two stupid individuals who make up the rules as they go along; it is another to go along with it.

That which is termed responsible: official 'Culture', and exposure to it has been routinely represented as having a positive, corrective influence. Unfortunately today there is still scant questioning, let alone discussion, of what and who compete to constitute 'acceptable' culture, and what exactly are its ideological values.

There is going to be a history of this period and someone is going to write it. Who writes history has always been the privilege of the victor but there can never be only one voice. For if there is only one voice what need have we of truth.

An example of how the arts are covered in Scotland

Pathetic non-stories, inflammatory gibberish and a lascivious pouring over of weird fantasies are the hall-mark of most tabloid press attempts to cover the arts.

The Scottish Media Group decided in its *Glasgow Evening Times* to allege on its front cover that Lynn Ramsay's film *Ratcatcher* was an "underage sex movie". Ratcatcher (a work drawing on many Scottish, UK and European film traditions) opened the Edinburgh Film Festival. Instead of offering appreciation and encouragement to view the work Scottish Media Group contrived a mindlessly salacious headline implicating Lord Provost (Scotland's equivalent of a Mayor), Pat Lally, his image appears on a TV set in the film.

Thus the headline "Pat in under age sex movie" was part of an "exclusive" story dubiously written by Andy Dougan. Above the headline is a picture of a "Bonnie Babies" winner and below it is an advert for the "Ultimate Kids Play Area". News vendors were giving away a free bar of chocolate with the paper. Underneath the story on page four is one headlined "Boy's club sex fiend drops appeal". It is a fairly standard example of how sick and pathetic coverage of the arts has been in Scotland for as long as anyone can remember. It is also an example of the Scottish Media Group's cultivation of an obsession with child pornography.

The sub headings within the story are "Lally's movie shocker" and "indecent". The story was a bizarre contrivance made up to coincide with the film's premiere which opened the Edinburgh Film Festival a few days later. It is hard to imagine why Dougan provides such statements as: "The most explicit is one in which she frolics in a bath with a 12-year old ..." One paragraph (in bold italics) is little more than a parade of words such as full-frontal, young girl, topless. The only point of the article apart from Dougan's own distorted self-indulgence is to try to create/ test the waters for some kind of 'public outcry'.

There is a spurious quote from a spokesman (sic) for the British Board of Film Classification who says: "We cannot comment on a film before we have seen it. But we would always look very closely at any film which involves children in *such* scenes." [emphasis added] You can almost picture Dougan thinking "that'll do."

A is for Art
B is for Bureaucracy
C is for Cuts

The first in a series of essays designed to reach a younger audience purely to comply with funding criteria.

All Messed Up

William Clark

All Dressed Up (the Sixties and the Counterculture) Jonathon Green

ISBN 0 - 7126-6523 - 4, £12.50 (Paperback 482 pages)

Well he says it himself even in the introduction:

"...the Sixties have joined those other recent decades over which the survivors, decades past their prime, are scrapping like mangy mongrels, each determining to impose their own, sometimes self-serving vision upon history."

And, to echo the unoriginality by quoting Ecclesiasties, he even provides a quick review:

"Whatever the phenomenon known as the Sixties may have been, and however much that era would turn out to change the world in general and Britain in particular, there was, as ever, not that much new under the sun."

This particular mangy mongrel, Jonathon Green's knowledge of "the 60s counter-culture" was mostly Oxford University, then a very brief time with the British version of *Rolling Stone* magazine in the 70s, (bankrolled by Mick Jagger and based in the luxurious setting of Hanover Square). When all that collapsed a few friends moved down to Portobello Road and started the whole process of making an underground magazine/smoking dope all over again. Then the magazine produced there collapsed, because the people behind it got more into making money out of listings magazines. Green actually stopped someone beating up Richard Branson and made minor contributions to *Oz* and *International Times (IT)* as they went into decline. He is thought of as representing the less political, more hedonistic end of hippydom.[1] This does not excuse his sarcastic dismissals of those who did actually try in their daily lives to counter what they took to be repressive aspects of mainstream culture.

When suggesting some antecedents of "the sixties," he demonstrates his class bias:

"For the Teds, less cerebral than those who followed them, it was a gut reaction to the denial of free choice. Unimpressed by education, unlikely to transcend the low-grade jobs for which they were destined, they sought release in the exploitation of their leisure time."

He also believes the Teds "expanded into the metropolis and thence to the provinces...they were, ultimately, too prole, too mindlessly violent...inarticulate, lashing out at whatever they saw."

So the book is a familiar collection of snippets from other books including his previous one, *Days in the Life (Voices from the English Underground)*. Why it bothered with the "English Underground" when so many seminal figures (Alexander Trocchi, William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Tom McGrath and so forth) were not English, one can attribute to the usual reasons.

Ideas are not limited by geographic space, but this book would be properly subtitled—the tiny bits of London counter culture. It is also difficult to say what exactly this adds to Green's previous book which featured a list of quotes from various middle-class chums, or indeed what it adds to the bibliography he cites at the end. Mr Green is also—according to the first page in this book—"England's leading lexicographer of slang". My opinion is he hasn't got a Scooby. [2]

Most people would be better writers if they were aware of their own bias. Should the 1968 'Night of the Barricades', with 9 million on strike and most factories occupied have been given as much attention as the invention of the trouser suit? Its all very well for Green to say this is a personal account but does that mean bias and distortions are allowed to come to the fore, is that objective history? Are not huge gaps in his knowledge revealed?

There are very phoney comparisons between the 'Angry Brigade' and the IRA:

"...and while the IRA campaigns that would soon be getting under way in the wake of the renewed 'Troubles' would be far more spectacular, this outbreak of what looked like a low intensity urban guerrilla war was disturbing enough."

I don't really understand that, but he immediately derides the Angry Brigade by saying they had a "Just William" level of melodrama. There is just no comparison between the two. The IRA are a highly disciplined and organised army which has held off the worst the UK armed forces and intelligence agencies has flung at them. To this day nobody seems to know who the Angry Brigade were or what they were up to.

There are also problems of reversal of perspective. During the 'Angry Brigade trial' we are told that the *Evening Standard* stated:

"The guerrillas are violent activists of a revolution comprising, workers, students, trade unionists, homosexuals, unemployed and women striving for liberation. They are all angry...Whenever you see a demonstration, whenever you see a queue for strike pay, every public library with a good stock of socialist literature...anywhere would be a good place to look. In short there are no telling where they are."

The Angry Brigade should have been using that as a press release—its better than anything they ever wrote. Green himself wanted to break into Fleet Street, but couldn't get in, whereas many of his friends now work in the upper echelons churning out much the same shite the papers will forever print.[3]

Many of the later passages (*very* little more than a re-hash of previously published writing) run out of steam or have no focus. Passages on King Mob show him—the greatest lexicographer in England—with no notion of where the name comes from (the mobile party); others with no notion of the nature and history of Nihilism, which is simply used as a pejorative term (he went to Oxford but he hasn't even read The Devils).

It is difficult not to see King Mob's exploits as outdone by contemporary comedy:

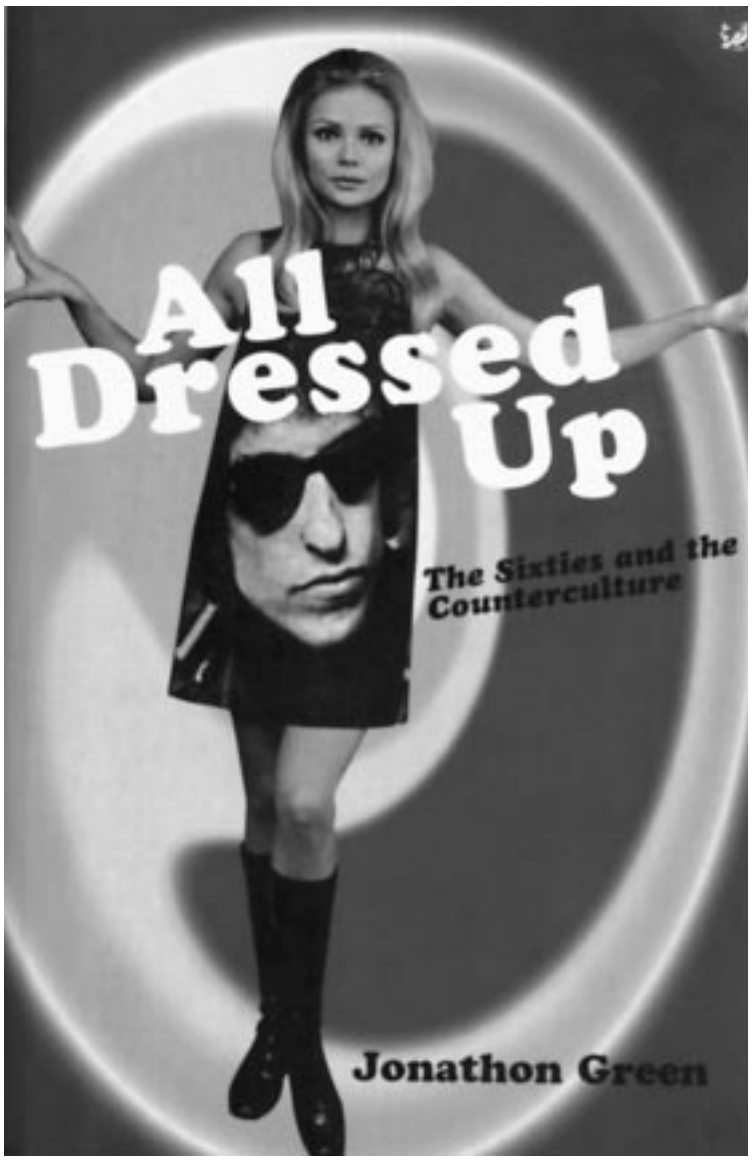
..."A waterfall in the picturesque lake district was to be dynamited and the slogan 'Peace in Vietnam' sprayed on the rubble; Wordsworth's house, a shrine for literary tourists, was to be blown up; in this case the caption would read 'Coleridge lives...'"

And now for something completely different.

He States on page 286 that after the police framed the Angry Brigade (AB):

"Within a very few years the police would be steam-rollering through the trials of a variety of alleged IRA bombers, using very similar tactics."

This and its extrapolation in the text is weak writing. If he had read (and not just cited) Tony Bunyan's "The History and Practice of the Political Police in Britain" he would know that the Special Branch were originally named the Special Irish Branch. Trials of Irish political dissent have a long history. The state's perversion of the course of justice (where and when it was bothered with) with the fabrication of evidence in political trials did not stem from the 70s, but can be seen as a direct result of the creation of the Special Branch (the clampdown on Liberalism and the dawning of the secret state at the turn of the century). The



Special Political Branch was the other name they tried. [4]

"This is not a political trial" said the Judge in the AB trial and Green thinks he was fair. He could fucking well afford to be. At the end (250,000 words) of his summing up of the imaginary conspiracy he directed the jury:

"As long as you know what the agreement is, then you are a conspirator. You needn't necessarily know your fellow conspirators, nor need you be always active in the conspiracy. All you need to know is the agreement. It can be effected by a wink or a nod without a word being exchanged. It need have no particular time limit, no particular form, no boundaries."

One can imagine some stoned freak in the public gallery suddenly leaping up and shouting: "Yeah man—the dude in the wig's right on—I wanna be a part of that shit—lets do it!" And the judge's words could by extension be imagined to refer to implementation of the class system, the old boy network; and they are a great interpretation of the mood (what it was to be part of) of the counter-culture. But Green doesn't pick up on any of this—guess why?

He has obviously put a lot of work into it—but there are just so many annoyances that its strength as a resource and reminder—in these days when people are falling over themselves to utterly comply with the dictates of the status quo—of 'utopian thought' is overshadowed. So many figures such as Arnold Wesker were (and probably still are) derided for what was utter common sense:

"Centre 42 will be a cultural hub which, by its approach and work, will destroy the mystique and snobbery associated with the arts. A place where artists are in control of their own means of expression and their own channels of distribution; where the highest standards of professional work will be maintained in an atmosphere of informality; where the artist is brought into closer contact with his audience enabling the public to see that artistic activity is a natural part of their daily lives."

When was the last time you heard someone talking about de-mystifying the arts in a meaningful way? Due to reluctance and conservatism on the part of the art elite the project—which centred on the Roundhouse—did not fully come to fruition... how different things were in the 60s.

The place was used by *IT* for an "All-Night Rave Pop Op Costume Masque Drag Ball Et Al", ten bob on the door. As with many figures he mentions (coupled here with no analysis of the event's significance or spontaneity), Green indulges in comments which are poorly disguised jealousy. Jim Haynes, the organiser of the event is "some escapee from a Mickey Rooney/Judy Garland vehicle", a put down which steps on the heart of the counter-culture.

His knowledge of art is thin, a weak point. The Young Contemporaries show of 1961 included such figures as R.B. Kitaj, Peter Phillips, Patrick Caulfield, Derek Boshier, David Hockney and Allen Jones. Green in an allusion to how reactionary the response to new work was cites one critic: "John Russell writing in 1969, who described Pop art as 'classless commando...directed against the Establishment in general and the art-Establishment in particular...'" There is no source mentioned. This is a confused passage. Is Russell writing on the 61 exhibition, Pop art?

It is important to understand the hostility that progressive ideas will always receive from the poverty stricken imagination. These days we have whole bureaucracies devoted to perverting freedom of expression. If a press release arrived which said that the Arts Council of England were starting a committee of Pharisees and Sadducees would anyone notice anything?

With his account of Michael Abdul Malik (p.298)—who is now considered a disreputable conman[5]—he hides his personal involvement and transfers gullibility elsewhere to aid a process of demonisation:

"The underground press, in particular, was swamped with pro-Michael pieces. *Friends* offered a lengthy interview...with nary a doubting syllable."

No mention anywhere in this book that he was one of two or three guys working on *Friends*. This is just very poor history. A bit dodgy, Johnboy. A big deal is made out of this contact and promotion of Malik—who is presented here as the first dishonest man he had ever met.

Now that Malik has been extremely dead for about 25 years he feels safe to go on at length about how 'liberals' (i.e. not him) were taken in by the big bogeyman Malik. Putting Colin McInnes to the fore he scores some points from a distance of 30 years or more. The passage on Malik gets progressively worse:

"Malik was a creature of the media".

If Green was on *Friends* when they did the story then he was probably at the front of the queue boasting about his paper getting in on it first, until it all turned sour:

"Like every hustler he was an actor, relying heavily on the credulity of his audience..."

That kind of stuff cuts both ways. For Green ripping off Notting Hill dope dealers and frightening hippies who do underground mags are Malik's big crime—he casually mentions he was hung for murder in Trinidad. Which makes him—to Green's likening—just yet another lower class demon like those nasty Teddy Boys.

Friends office was on Portobello Road. At the time Green lived with Rosie Boycott (who later started *Spare Rib* and now edits one of the papers frequently cited here as an example of atrocious journalism) and he subsidised his income producing pornography[6]. One would have thought that porn would have been a bigger part of the book, since it was a big part of the counter culture (then it wasn't, then it was again in the mid 80s), there is not much left of *Oz* if you take away the bare bums. And Green would have as much inside knowledge of it that he has with the Underground Press.

Notes

1. I draw my remarks on him from "Underground (The London Alternative Press 1966 - 74), Nigel Fountain, Comedia, 1988".
2. How one would achieve the status of "leading lexicographer" (note not even living lexicographer) beats me. Did they all battle it out in a mud wrestling ring and he knocked out Ambrose Bierce in a close-run final? The dictionary mind-set—encapsulation and elocution—in that language is an expression of consciousness—and certainly when written by one person, propel their makers towards a political orthodoxy, with its disguised proscriptions and prohibitions. Green has compiled some five dictionaries, one seems to be a dictionary of 'jargon', another is a 'Dictionary of Dictionary makers. I suppose it passes the time.
3. He is quoted in Fountain's book as saying: "my CV—had I had one—would have been completely meaningless ...as far as Fleet Street was concerned I'd never done anything. I was writing 20,000 words a week for *Friends* and it was great and it ruined me for ever, because it ruined me for editing." [emphasis in the original].
4. There is no mention of *Time Out*'s relation to the Agitprop Collective and the whole area of investigative journalism which stems from the period. In both the USA and the UK, towards the end of the '60s and into the early '70s as the counter culture lost its earlier 'coherence', there was a noticeable move towards underground newspapers concerning themselves with the issues of particular communities, both geographically and interest wise. This had happened before, but with the increased fragmentation of the counter culture, local concerns took on a new importance. This can be seen more clearly with the rise of community presses, as collectives formed throughout the UK. Community presses engaged and mobilised around issues that affected their immediate community, within a broader web of national and opposition media. Beyond London numerous magazines/papers came into existence: such as *Mole Express*, *Rap*, *Grass Eye*, the *Liverpool Free Press*, the *Manchester Free Press*, *Grapevine*, *Mother Grumble*, *Inside Out*, the *Aberdeen Free Press* and the *Brighton Voice*. Even my old home town of Easterhouse had '*The Voice*'.
5. Many activists supported Malik when he went on trial. This is not in Green's book but Darcus Howe stated in *Race Today* that Malik "was denounced by the revolutionary movement in Trinidad. He was lined up with government ministers and he was doing land deals with them." "Two old members" of *It* published a souvenir programme for his hanging.
6. Fountain page 191; "It left Green, and others, in the curious situation of having to hustle for money from skin mags. while his one-time partner Rosie Boycott worked for feminism and *Spare Rib*, Green hit the typewriter, anonymously, for its diametric opposite." I don't believe pornography is necessarily the opposite of feminism, but the situation does resemble BBC 2's recent 'Hippies' programme.

Not so groovey, Bob

Groovey Bob (The Life and Times of Robert Fraser) Harriet Vyner

Faber & Faber, ISBN 0571196276 (317 pages, £20 hardback)

There is no explanation of who the people who contribute to this book are—the majority of whom are not that well known, this is a festschrift, a tribute by pals for other pals.

Robert Fraser was the son of a slightly loopy banker. He failed at Eton and was thus sent into the King's African Rifles (a soul destroying combination). He got into the art world by spending his early days in the US where he visited the Betty Parsons gallery and took a few notes. The sybaritic pleasures, were all the more tasty for him when spending other people's money. As he grew sick of NY's early 60s bondage bars, the idea came to him to start a new gallery in London and punt fairly established US artists in the UK. A lot of the west coast and east crowd hadn't then exhibited in Europe.

His father (a Christian Scientist) offered uselessly lenient advice—and was talked into parting with the cash for the gallery (an early white cube designed by Cedric Price—who said he was the ideal client). He did seem to pay the money in those days, a habit he would grow out of over the years as one turns the pages.

Enjoyment or interest in reading this book is reliant upon the reader making their own amusement—at the expense of the parade of various old hippies—but it has none of the art of epistolary novels like Smollet's *Humprey Clinker*, although it does have some connection to Stoker's *Dracula*. Early indications paint a cute picture of him as a cross between the Fast Show's Swiss Tony and Rolley Birkin QC. Later ones are not so funny as he descended into forms of abject depravity, which would disgust and anger most people: including nights out with Gilbert and George preying on young boys—or 'chicken' as they liked to call them.

The problem with unleashing a parade of old roués regaling us with tales of their sad exploits and pathetic existence—the cast of this book does lean towards Norma Desmond's old card pals, and I know this is the London art world in all its glory—is that as we are ultimately invited to smell waft after waft of their own emissions—they all end up talking about themselves:

"Dave Medalla: there was a Picasso exhibition at the Tate. I'd been acting pretty funny and got thoroughly drunk, drinking all this red wine and sherry—I was so young! My uncle, the ambassador, had taken me along to this big benefit supper. They wanted to invoke Spain with flamenco dancers, so I jumped on the table and had done an odd version of Flamenco. Robert had really loved it! he and Sir Roland Penrose and his wife, the photographer Lee Miller. So I was just zonked out of my head, that's all I remember."

That one gets worse—it's all just such blundering bathos:

"Anita Pallenberg:...Whether the drugs has anything to do with it I don't know".

"Jim Dine: I thought his views of art were great, although I was never very clear what they were."

The period is thought of as one of a lowering of class values—and Fraser is presented as an example of this. The liberation was exclusive—reinforcing aristocratic values albeit those of the Hell fire club.[1]

When Fraser's gallery closed down as he awaited trial, a group of his artists got together in support to stage an exhibition; and to bitch about not being paid. This is Richard Hamilton (one fairly sensible voice throughout) talking to the Press (at one point I thought it was on the invite):

"We are not going to have any kind of statement sympathising with his habits. A number of artists have suffered materially at his hands over the last year or so. Some of the exhibitors have sworn never to show in the place again..."

Fraser influenced the cover of *Sgt. Pepper* and Peter Blake's contributions tend towards telling us he is still pissed off about not getting paid royalties which he was stupid enough not to bother to negotiate properly at the time. Also it still rankles him that it came out looking like a collage rather than a photograph of a full size set. More than thirty years later he's still counting up imaginary sums of money in his head like some Beckett character.

The author Harriet Vyner had a tenuous alchohol relationship with Fraser and makes the pretty hopeless admission that:

"He didn't reminisce at all or talk in depth about anything, but when I was with him there was an atmosphere of glamour."

Right. And that through the haze of booze has qualified her to lash this together.

The book has very little to offer on Fraser and the 'Railing Stains' (as he no doubt referred to them) arrest and subsequent trial[2], it repeats chunks of previous books, such as that of the Stone's em ...Substance Technician, Spanish Tony. This is Keith Richard's memory of events:

"When you're on an acid you take things in a different way...There's a great thundering at the door and we're all relaxing in front of a big raring fire. George Harrison had just only left. I think they were waiting for him to leave. It was some tip-off from a chauffeur, a newspaper, shabby stuff.

Knock at the door. And we looked through the window. There's all these little people, wearing the same clothes! We took it with a sense of bemusement: 'Oh, do come in.' Then they read the warrant. 'Yes, that's fine, OK, please do look around.'"

There are one or two passages which are mildly related to the times, mildly informative if you flick around and compare things. Malcolm McLaren after noting that it was Fraser who encouraged the V&A to collect Punk memorabilia talks of the 80s:

"High culture was about to become low culture. I think by the eighties it was ...if it wasn't a product that was useful, it wasn't worth being on the block. That was the Thatcherite philosophy or, in fact dare I say it, a fucking mandate. Suddenly art schools were being closed down, suddenly you couldn't get grants to go to art schools. You know, what's the point of studying art if you can't use it to get a job? I could see that was having an effect. Bob was part of an old era that was not wanted on location any more."

This comes a page after testimony by the man running the system who obviously is no judge of character, old mendacity himself:

"Lord Palumbo: I trusted him because he was my friend, always someone I could talk to, to define/refine my own tastes. He was wonderful from that point of view. He was ideal. If you think of gallery owners of today, good though some of them are, none of them have his taste, his eye, his instinct and ability to spot a trend or a talent ten to fifteen years in advance of its time."

The UK didn't produce a really good writer on, and who was part, of the counter-culture of the 60s (if it exists I'd like to read it). Not someone who truly remained an outlaw. Some who should reflect on the past are reluctant to be seen 're-living the past' as if that was a sufficient definition of history.

Notes

1. Apologies to The Club, which never really called itself the Hell-Fire Club. Its founder, Sir Francis Dashwood termed it 'The Knights of St. Francis of Wycombe', or 'The Monks of Medmenham', but seems to have attracted the 'Hell-Fire' label through the organisation's reputation, echoing that of earlier groups. They were a small group of selected members: Dashwood—a Member of Parliament being the leader. Other members included Lord Sandwich (who at one point commanded the Royal Navy), the politician John Wilkes, William Hogarth and poets Charles Churchill, Paul Whitehead and Robert Lloyd. Benjamin Franklin doesn't seem to have been at the core of any 'Hell-Fire' activities, despite the more spurious books written about the Club. The current Sir Francis quotes John Wilkes describing the group:

   "A set of worthy, jolly fellows, happy disciples of Venus and Bacchus, got occasionally together to celebrate woman in wine and to give more zest to the festive meeting, they plucked every luxurious idea from the ancients and enriched their own modern pleasures with the tradition of classic luxury".

   The Hell-Fire Club's Sir Francis was also founder of the Dilettanti Society.

   I draw these remarks mostly from the wonderful Irish electronic magazine Blather devoted to the spirit of Flann O'Brien.

2. Although some points (such as the presence of all the Beatles) are disputed, there is an interesting account of the punitive use of drug busts against the 'rock elite' and the general development of drugs policy, in Steve Abrams "Hashish Fudge, The Times Advertisement and the Wooten Report" (7 April 1993) which is available on the net:

   "The News of the World replied to the article in the People by accusing the Rolling Stones of abusing drugs. (February 3rd) The same night Mick Jagger appeared with Hogg on the Eamon Andrews talk show. Jagger told Hogg that he too had been to university, and seemed to get the better of him. Then, I thought, he got above himself and announced, impulsively, that he would sue the News of the World for libel. The newspaper panicked and went to the Scotland Yard Drug Squad. The head of the Drug Squad, Chief Inspector Lynch later told me that he refused to act. He said that he was not expected to stamp out cannabis, but to keep its use under control. If he arrested Mick Jagger every lad in the country would want to try some pot. He was, after all, head of the drug squad, not head of the Lynch mob.

   As is well known, the News of the World had more success with the local police in West Wittering, where Keith Richards lived. In the subsequent trial, Jagger's counsel, Michael Havers (later Lord Havers, also Mrs. Thatcher's attorney general in the "Spycatcher" case) alleged that the newspaper used an agent provocateur. The arrests were made on February 12th, but the story did not break until the 19th. Only the Telegraph named those arrested, Keith Richards, charged with the absolute offence of permitting premises to be used for smoking cannabis, and Mick Jagger, charged with possession of amphetamine. George Harrison has said that the Beatles were at the party that was raided, but the police waited until they left.

   Perhaps the beginning of the entire sequence of events was the arrest on cannabis charges on December 30th 1966 of... John Hopkins (Hoppy), a member of the editorial board of the underground newspaper "International Times". The "underground" was a literary and artistic avant garde with a large contingent from Oxford and Cambridge. Hoppy, for example, was trained as a physicist at Cambridge. The underground had found an enemy in Lord Goodman, Chairman of the Arts Council, who went over the head of the Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, and appealed directly to the Director of Public Prosecutions to mount a police raid on the Indica bookshop where International Times was edited. Goodman had an animus against (Barry) Miles, co-proprietor of the bookshop with Peter Asher, and also a member of the Editorial Board of IT. In December 1966 Eric White nominated Miles to serve on the Arts Council Literary Advisory Panel. Goodman had been infuriated when his appointment was announced to the press on January 30th, and had him thrown off."

Marshall Anderson

Playing with Fire

Fire is a potent force. If we are to believe in genetic memory then fire transports us back to our prehistoric origin: to feel our primeval hairs stiffen as we are caught off balance between primitivism and contemporary science and technology. For the artist, fire is an element that can be immediately evocative and provocative. Its magic lies in the alchemic fusion between destruction and creation. To watch the unleashed force of destruction at work is thrilling. It is easy to understand, therefore, why Stirling Council's Department of Leisure and Cultural Services, when charged with the task of providing an appropriate millennial spectacular, opted conveniently for fire to entertain and thrill its citizens.

The *Stirling Observer's* : 'Blaze Of Glory For Millennium' (9/6/99) was the first public announcement of the Council's intentions that a 60 foot sculpture of Scottish hero Robert The Bruce would be set ablaze at Stirling Castle as part of a £1.2m programme of events. The idea had been commissioned from Regular Music, project manager for Stirling Council's millennium events. Writer Fiona Wilson explained that the origins of such hero worship-cum-sacrifice stem from a Spanish tradition of fire festivals. Barry Wright, Regular Music's impresario, said he hoped the idea would capture the imagination of the people of Stirling. The Council's Chief Executive, Keith Yates, said the festival is part of a two year programme aimed at involving everyone in the marking of a new millennium. Most significantly, he hopes the event will attract 20,000 visitors to Stirling and generate £2m.

Fire festivals are likely as old as our upright passage on the Earth and the true origins of many fire customs are long-since obscured. Such customs are believed to have their beginnings in heathen times when our ancestors worshipped Bael, the Sun-god and Ashtoreth (Astarte, Queen of heaven) with certain mystic observances chiefly connected with fire. In Druidic times, there were four great fire festivals: May day or Beltane deriving from Bel-tein: Bel in Gaelic signifying sun and tein, fire; Midsummer's eve; Hallowe'en, 1st of November when all fires were extinguished apart from those of the Druids, "from whose altars only the holy fire must be purchased by the householders for a certain price": and Yule. As soon as administrative hierarchies, whether Druid or town councils, come onto the scene some sort of financial implication is brought into play.[1]

But folklore and customs belong to the people who have developed them across the centuries. They are kept alive through practice and commitment. Many of these were founded on basic superstitions and beliefs that, with the rise of scientific knowledge, have become out-moded. Who today would pass their children and cattle through flames to protect them from disease, and who would kindle great bonfires near to cornfields to secure a blessing on their crops?

Although many such practices have died out some Scottish communities have kept their fire festivals blazing and appear not to have relied upon town councils and bureaucracies in order to do so. The potency of local customs is all the more intense when these observances are perpetuated by people-power and not imposed by a higher authority.

A rerun of the Fiona Wilson (11/6/99 *Stirling Observer County Issue*) piece printed a photograph of the two artists commissioned to design a sculpture of Robert The Bruce for incineration. Whatever the citizens of Stirling might have imagined a sculpture fit for burning might actually look like they were probably surprised to discover that the maquette for such a 60 ft structure was nothing more than a scale model of the heroic bronze statue by Pilkington Jackson, which stands proud on the site of The Battle of Bannockburn. The sculptors, Andrew Scott and Alison Bell, were possibly breaking copyright laws by so-doing.

Another *Observer* piece by Fiona Wilson (16/6/99 *Town Issue*) told us that there was, "concern amongst residents who don't agree with the idea of setting a hero on fire." Surprisingly, the first letters of disapproval did not appear within the *Observer's* pages, but in the the (Glasgow) *Herald*. It may well be the case that if the *Observer* is over-critical of Council policy it might lose the privilege of first option on press releases. The first published letter—demonstrating that *The Herald* might have an easier relationship with Stirling Council—came from Ian Scott, Director of The Saltire Society, who was not only writing on the behalf of incensed Society members but also personally: "At a time when we have recovered a measure of control over our own affairs we should be honouring those like the Bruce who helped create and sustain our identity as a nation throughout our long history rather than allowing an

ignorant 'mob' in Stirling to shame the rest of the country." Scott's prime objection was a cultural one he told me, not a debate about modern art. There was, he felt, a debate as to how The Burning should be handled. There is a fine line, he explained, as to whether a drawing or illuminated image or outline image created by fireworks might be more acceptable than a well-known embodiment of a much-loved hero.

The next letter to appear in *The Herald* of June 18th was from Alexander Stoddart of Paisley who is an established Scottish sculptor. His statue of David Hulme was unveiled on Edinburgh's Royal Mile earlier this year. Entitled, 'Revolting fiesta in Stirling', Stoddart's letter was a passionate and angry response that might have been improved by the writer taking more time to consider his argument and moderate his use of emotive language. For the better informed dilettantes and observers of the Scottish sculpture scene it is common knowledge that Stoddart had proposed a large scale sculpture for Stirling Castle esplanade which was vetoed by The Council in 1997. His letter could easily be interpreted as coming from someone with an axe to grind. However, it did close by

stating a valid point: "the Bruce statue is more than a logo, or a sodding 'icon', or any fun thing at all, and is rather a cherished component in a War Memorial, placed on or near some blood-soaked ground."

The Battle of Bannockburn memorial stands on a raised area hemmed in on three sides by urban development. It was the threat of this encroaching housing that compelled a national committee led by the 10th Earl of Elgin and Kincardineshire, head of the Bruce family, to raise funds to purchase the 58 acre site in 1930. Arriving by car one is met by a hideous 1967 visitor centre with 1980s additions housing a shop of 'tasteful' souvenirs, the Bannockburn Cafe, and an interpretative display. One then walks a short distance up to the site itself. This is marked by a mish-mash of ill-placed shapes. The largest of these, a rotunda approximately 35m in diameter, is composed of a continuous wooden beam raised about 10 ft off the ground on steel pillars. Two sections of this circle contain curved walls of ugly, uncompromising concrete blocks cemented to a height of 8 ft. This 1962 rotunda encloses a flag pole (erected in 1870) flying The Saltire, and a dour-looking stone monument erected by public subscription and inaugurated by the Merchant Guild of Stirling in 1957. Dwarfed by this arena and standing some 100 meters away is Pilkington Jackson's larger than life-size bronze of The Bruce on horseback. The statue is set valiantly high on a 12 ft plinth of granite blocks and stands about 25 ft in height. The whole being unveiled by the Queen on 24/6/64, the 650th anniversary of the battle.

A far more valid, and sustainable, investment of £1.2m would have been a millennium project to redesign the site of the Battle of Bannockburn retaining as its centre-piece Pilkington Jackson's empowering, iconoclastic Bruce. What the sculptor would have thought about his work being copied in wood at two times original scale only to be set alight is anyone's guess—he died in 1973.

Andrew Scott of Scott Associates, a business partnership of six sculptors based in Glasgow's Maryhill, defended himself against Stoddart's accusations of dishonour and treachery through *The Herald's* Letters Page. As protest gathered the *Stirling Observer's* editorial made no comment. The front page of 23/6/99 did notice that: 'Outcry grows over burning of King Bob'. Inside 'Feat of Flames' by Fiona Wilson stated that the indifferent organisers are backing Bruce's burning. Stirling Council's leader, Corrie McChord, acknowledged that the project would be controversial but, "urged people not to be shy." In a display of mock heroics he declared: "We are entering a new millennium. We have chosen this powerful figure from our past to lead us into the future. Let's celebrate confidently." McChord carried on in a more defensive tone. "The cost is certainly not the £50,000 suggested in the press."

Andrew Scott informed me that his cost to make the replica Bruce was £45,000 and that once fabrication costs, labour, engineers' fees etc. had been subtracted the company would be left with a 'tiny' profit. He implied that the project was being undertaken for the fun of it and that his company had more important projects on its books. On the subject of copyright he believed it was The Council's responsibility to check the legal position as regards copying Jackson's work. In the *Observer* of 23/6/99 he said, "It will be created with respect to honour the life of Bruce and will be true to the original monument. It is a wonderful opportunity for Scottish art to be showcased and to see Stirling join the ranks of European cities like Barcelona and Paris famed for their bold public art projects and celebratory events." A few lines further on Barry Wright was exercising hyperbole: "The model that artists Andy Scott and Alison Bell have created is breathtaking. What a tribute to Bruce, to the designer of the original monument and to Stirling—home of Scottish kings." Maybe some of Scotland's kings would have liked the symbolism, as for the citizens of Stirling, they were venting their ire. In the same issue the letters page was blazing.

A week later a letter from Bob McCutcheon, historian, archivist and antiquarian book dealer, appeared condemning The Council's "crass stupidity and total lack of sensitivity towards the history of the area." "Scots do not burn effigies of their heroes" declared McCutcheon. Had the Council taken pains to research the tradition of fire festivals and burnings in Scotland they might have reached the same conclusion. The Council's chief spokesmen during the debacle were very keen to point out that they were emulating a Spanish tradition in Valencia where local heroes are torched as part of *Las Fallas*. This popular fire festival had been visited in March of the year by Barry Wright in the company of Alison Bell of Scott Associates. Obviously they were over-awed by the spectacle that they witnessed for, without cultural considerations, they automatically presumed that it would transport to Stirling. What they failed to recognise was *Las Fallas* had evolved as a folk art custom under particular cultural circumstances that could not be transported with the same meaning—especially to Scotland. It is a sad reflection that they did not think to develop strands within Scotland's fire-rich tradition. Had they done so they might have come up with a less offensive and more culturally acceptable concept.

Under the banner, 'Big Man, Big Sword, Big Fun', Stirling Council had popularised history to mark the 700th anniversary of Wallace's defeat of the English army at Stirling Bridge. Evidently the millennial event was an excuse to similarly celebrate The Bruce. The Council's distinctive trivialisation of history and heroes attracted few supporters on this occasion. One letter only from an anonymous "working artist" thought that the project was "wonderful".

By Wednesday July 7th Stirling Council and Regular Music were looking desperately for friendly support. The *Observer*'s front page announced, "Bruce Backlash Forces Council To Rethink Fire Stunt". An ally of Regular Music in the form of Chris Kane, DJ with Central FM, who writes a weekly music review column in the *Observer*, cantered lamely to the rescue. His attempt to place the Burning of Bruce in an historical context was shallow and feeble: "Robert The Bruce disliked the government of the day and decided to remove them. He was successful and today is our most popular hero." Kane poses the question—were Guy Fawkes and Bruce all that different? His final flurry is a pathetic attempt at patriotic spin, "Bruce set the nation on fire 700 years ago. He lit a burning desire within us to be free of oppression and that fire may have smouldered over the years, but its never gone out. By setting fire to his image we are acknowledging that the fire Bruce started has now done its job. Symbolically the fire is healing the wounds of the last millennium and lighting the way forward to the future." No one rallied to his cause, not even his teenage readership.

Next to attempt to turn the tide of public disapproval by placing a letter in the *Observer* was Councillor John Hendry, Deputy Leader of Stirling Council. He commenced thus, "When the council agreed to proceed with a spectacular millennium celebration centred on ancient Celtic traditions of fire festivals, we knew it would provoke debate and discussion, but we were confident that Stirling was mature enough to cope with it." He was surprised that "no-one has come up with an alternative celebration." However, The Council's authoritarian role as purveyor and designer of culture via an extravagant spectacle was a clear, "we know best" message. Their arrogance being a declaration that no one could, or was more equipped, to do it better. Hendry said: "Officers have worked hard to provide the people of Stirling with the opportunity to celebrate the millennium in spectacular style... The £100,000 Community Chest is already opening up to provide local organisations with help to plan their own festivities." In a cack-handed way the Council was trying to lavish money on the community and provide a service, but surely the history of celebration is a complex intertwining of spontaneity and custom brought about by community action and not through the agency of some bureaucracy.

Above Hendry's somewhat superior letter appeared the first 'Editorial Opinion' on the subject by Colin Leslie, Chief Sub-Editor, who adopted a similar tone: "Let sensible alternatives now come forward from the public of the town, so that Stirling's millennium party can give Scots something to be proud of—not ashamed of." The pages of The *Observer* then went quiet in anticipation.

Monday 26th July: a critical day for the Council who had obviously rallied and put a plan of action into effect. That day a "planned" article by The (Glasgow) *Herald*'s Arts Editor, Keith Bruce, appeared adopting a matter-of-fact approach. He did little more than asked of him and we must conclude that his heart wasn't really into the scam that had been arranged at a more senior level within The *Herald* and Stirling Council hierarchies. Bruce had been given 'access' to key players so one can assume that what he reported was not word-of-mouth rumour. There are "Other figures

under consideration as the potential local hero", he informed us. These being, "the legendary Wolf on the Craig, currently used as a marketing symbol by the MacRobert Arts Centre at Stirling University, and contemporary figures such as footballer Billy Bremner, rugby's Kenny Logan, and actor Robbie Coltraine and actress Diana Rigg, who both live locally." That same evening The Council held a 'private' meeting at their headquarters which, in conjunction with Keith Bruce's limp article and a 'briefed' interview by STV with Council Chief Executive Keith Yates afterwards, was designed to turn the tide of public opinion. The next day "Coltraine saves Robert the Bruce from fire" appeared in *The Herald*. It had been penned by a local freelance who door-stepped the 'private' meeting on the behalf of Central Scotland News Agency. It concluded, "A Stirling University spokesman said [Diana] Rigg was filming in England." He added: "It must be April 1st again."

Wednesday 28th July: The *Observer* declared, "No U-Turn On Burning Bruce". Journalist Clare Grant tells us, "Stirling Council are sticking to their guns". The indefatigable Keith Yates once again came to the fore, "We had people from the BBC up on Friday to discuss what we were doing here and they were delighted about it." Yates then went on to "refute" the story that the Bruce could be replaced with Diana Rigg, Kenny Logan etc. forgetting that he initiated the story in his interviews with Keith Bruce and STV.

Bob McCutcheon, also in attendance at the meeting was quoted, "Those who objected were more or less told that they were being parochially minded." The Council were now playing that tired old joker, the parochial card, setting themselves up as worldly sophisticates. Parochialism is all too often interpreted as being narrow-minded, whereas a more accurate meaning might be, defence of the parish. The *Observer*'s editor, Alan Rennie issued a timely warning, "I would advise the council voluntarily to abandon their plan ...If they don't, public opinion will stop this proposal in its tracks."

The *Observer* held a telephone poll on Wednesday August 4th and a week later published the result: 32 were in favour of Burning Bruce, 1076 were against. The parishioners had defended well.

Monday 9th August: the heavy artillery arrives. The Saltire Society organises a 'public protest meeting' in Stirling's Golden Lion Hotel to discuss the Council's decision to burn a wooden statue of King Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland from 1306 to 1329. Our Scottish hero could never be described as a paragon of virtue for on the 10th of February 1306 he arranged a meeting with John 'The Red' Comyn, his only rival to the throne, in Greyfriars' Church in Dumfries and, in circumstances which have never been fully explained, murdered him in front of the altar. Bruce's allegiance to Edward I likely cost William Wallace his life and his own self-arranged coronation at Scone further divided Scotland making it all the more vulnerable. The strong mix of hatred and love that The Bruce invoked in Scots demonstrably contributed to his hero status. It was this that the Saltire Society met together to protect. Although absent Scotland's historical novelist, Nigel Tranter, sent a message: greatly deploring the proposal. His sentiments were echoed by Dr Fiona Watson of Stirling University and Professor Geoffrey Barrow who addressed the assembly saying, "the burning of an effigy was meant to dishonour the name and reputation of the person involved."

Forces were now gathering on all fronts to discuss The Burning. Stirling Council held another 'private' meeting on Wednesday 11th August. This time sculptor, Andrew Scott was invited to assist Barry Wright in his presentation of the project and to explain the full extent of the entertainments package. According to Scott there was a very positive agreement to the overall event but a very negative disapproval of burning The Bruce. Every one of the thirty community council representatives present was against the action. Bob McCutcheon told me that a petition raised at the close of The Saltire Society meeting was signed by 100 people within 2 days at his bookshop alone and if the Council had not backed off they would have received 75,000 emails in protest from all over the world.

Friday 13th August: The *Stirling Observer*, banner headline, "WE'VE WON".

The Battle of The Burning had been a resounding victory for the democratic process or people power. Stirling Council had been backed into a corner but Andrew Scott told me that no formal contract to build a 60 ft copy of Pilkington Jackson's statue of The Bruce had ever been confirmed.

Wednesday 25th August: *Stirling Observer*, "Bruce Still Invited To Millennium Party!" Although it will definitely not be burnt, the Council, in a comic display of mock heroics, decide to go ahead with the construction anyway so that it can, "go on display at the Stirling Castle esplanade where it will be illuminated and seen for miles around." Astonishingly, Councillor John Hendry tells us that the wooden Bruce "could be a prototype for a permanent statue after the millennium celebrations."

Before the end of September Scott Associates had been officially appointed by Stirling Council to produce a large fire spectacular. The honour of replacing The Bruce was to go to The Wolf on The Craig, an afore mentioned heraldic device. Local legend has it, "One night, long ago, when Viking raiders were sneaking up on Stirling they disturbed a wolf. The wolf howled, awoke the sleeping townspeople and saved Stirling from attack." Now in a defiant and resolute display of pyromania Stirling Council would thank that legendary guardian by burning it.

Notes

1 *Old Scottish Customs* by E. J. Guthrie, published in 1885. A Miss Gordon Cumming is quoted.

Comic and Zine reviews

Mark Pawson

First up in this issue's selection of reading material you definitely won't find in the local W H Smiths is **Crap Hound**—a picture book for discussion and activity, 92 pages crammed-full of clip-art culled from innumerable sources and several decades worth of graphic imagery. **Crap Hound** #6's themes are the inevitable—death, the inescapable—Telephones, and the indispensable—scissors. For each theme there's pages of painstakingly arranged image tableaux, not an inch of valuable space has been wasted or left empty—look closer and you'll realise that it's all assembled manually with scissors and glue —not a scanner or Mac in sight, no wonder it took two years for this issue to see the light of day. **Crap Hound** is the equivalent of a Dover pictorial Sourcebook for the post-slacker zine-producing generation. Seeing **Crap Hound** for the first time is a visual onslaught, I can imagine being totally overwhelmed by it and being deterred from ever picking up scissors and a glue stick again. **Crap Hound** is the image bankers' image bank, all your image requirements are in here, leaving us to play spot-the-source. I'd advise buying three copies, one to cut up and use, one to file away intact and another to lend to friends which you'll never see again.

Book Happy and **Comic Book Heaven** both take forgotten and neglected books of yester year for their subject matter, they have lots of fun rescuing and rehabilitating old books that most people would be happy to forget ever existed.

If you like the idea of discovering cheap secondhand books, but are put off by dusty bookshops with strange odours and equally strange proprietors, then help is at hand. **Book Happy** is the latest publication from Donna 'Kooks' Kossy, your guide to the world of incredibly strange books and loopy literature —none of which is ever likely to appear in 'collectors

price guides'. In **Book Happy** #4 Donna owns up to her internet book auction addiction, she's reached the stage of checking several times a day to see if she's still in the bidding, 'Epidemic of Bad Drug Books' looks at the genre of 1950's and 1960's drugs education/exploitation titles, there's a great article about Theodore L Shaw's thirty year war against Art Critics, during which he published eight books with titles such as 'Precious Rubbish' and 'That Obnoxious Fraud: The Art Critic'. In 'Book Hell —where bad books go when they die' Dan Kelly tells how he staked out and tracked down a cache of serial killer and true crime books. There's plenty more on self-published autobiographies and the worst science fiction novel ever written. Get **Book Happy**—where enjoying cheap books doesn't mean getting the latest bestseller for 50% off at the local supermarket.

Comic Book Heaven celebrates the world of weird and absurd comics from the '50s/ '60s. A fanzine that revels in the sheer ridiculousness of these empty-headed entertainments! This issue has *Advice for Girls,* some spurious *Helpful Hints Ripped From the Pages of Actual Romance Comics of the Fifties,* a hilarious section of plot summaries from some of the most bonkers comic book stories ever! *Facts about Commies* is a collection of words of cold-war wisdom from fightin' men in the comics.

The three page list of comics with the word 'Death' in the title is wonderful found poetry, and deserves to be heard recited —

Death Relay

Death Rides High!

Death rides the 5:15

Death Rides the Guided Missile

Death rides the Iron Horse!

Death Rides the Rails

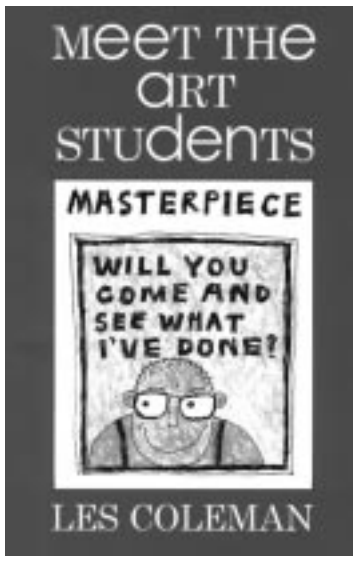
Death Rides the Stagecoach!

Death Rides the Storm!

Death ridge!

Death Rises Out of the Sea!

After two magazines devoted to old books what next? How about two comic books about Art Students...

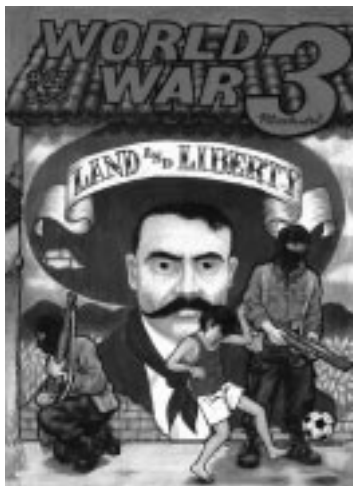


Art School Superstars by Grennan & Sperandio and **Meet the Art Students** by Les Coleman are both collections of art student portraits, they approach similar subject matter from different continents and vastly different perspectives.

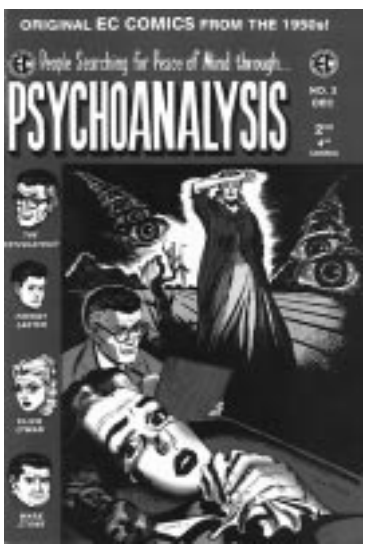
Grennan & Sperandio interviewed students at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, and then selected sound bites to represent them and accompany their portraits. The 28 privileged SFMA students are happy and proud to tell us what they like and how long they have been at the school, they're all-positive all the time. Grennan & Sperandio's full page portraits of photogenic students, in flat bright colours adorned with speech bubbles look like a collaboration between oral historian Studs Terkel and Andy Warhol's portrait screenprints.

Les Coleman's caricature observations are based on his 20 years lecturing experience in art colleges around the UK. Drawn on endless train journeys to and from Newcastle and printed in graphite grey on newsprint, they

are partly intended as a critique of the educational establishments funding cuts, his class of forty-eight are each represented with a portrait, quote and title that gently mocks and sums them up. Immediately recognisable characters include: 'inner conviction', 'traditional values', 'the new philistinism' and 'art rage'. Compared with the Americans, British art students are mostly ambivalent, most of the time. With his wobbly lines courtesy of British Rail rather then Grennan & Sperandio's smooth-rough line style achieved via custom computer software programme, Coleman's student portraits say much more in less space, than Grennan & Sperandio's, and as inert and lacking motivation as they are I somehow have more time for the hapless British Students than the over-confident Americans, one of whom gladly admits "I'm studying Art because I didn't do well in Physics".



Born out of Manhattan's lower east side residents struggle for affordable housing and the right to exist free from police and state oppression **World War 3 Illustrated**'s commitment and political agenda remains just as sharp and focussed as ever after a decade of publishing. Issue #27's theme is *Land and Liberty*, with comic strips and illustrated stories about Shell Oil in Nigeria, M11 Road Protests in East London, the historical struggle over who controls the land in Mexico, Reclaim the Streets New York style and the fight to keep a lower east side neighbourhood community centre. Whilst the strongest work in WW3I will always be the stark agitational graphics of founders Seth Tobocman and Peter Kuper —equally suitable for a spray-painted wall or the printed page, the editorial board put their beliefs into practice by setting up workshops and playing an active part in community education programmes, thus nurturing new artists and writers and providing a forum for



them to see their work in print.

Mentioned briefly last time, and on comic shop shelves now is the reissued EC comic '*people searching for peace of mind through* **Psychoanalysis**', truly one of the unlikeliest comics ever published. Each issue has three, long, inaction-packed on the couch strips. Speech balloons take up so much of the frame that the patients seem obliged to lie down on the psychiatrists couch at bottom of the picture. Each session opens with 'The Psychiatrist', an archetypal pipe-smoking authority figure whose name we never learn, opening the case notes for a monthly session with one of his patients. How many therapy sessions does it take? As many as the subject's problems take before they are resolved when 'The Psychiatrist' pronounces "We've gone as far as we can! You know the cure of your problem! You know the facts about yourself! Do you think you can go ahead now without my help!" and then proceeds off to write 'therapy completed' on the case notes and thus closes the file. **Psychoanalysis** doesn't go so far as to have a big red star on the cover saying "All-Freudian" but it may as well have done.

Robot Publishing Co put out a series of two-dollar minicomics which they call 'lunchtime stories'. I've seen two so far, **The Envelope Licker** and **Binibus Barnabus**—they're both printed in stylish midnight blue, with oh-so-strokeable matt-laminated covers.

The Envelope Licker by Ante Vukojevich is a meandering tale of a family equally blessed and cursed with talented tongues. After a wild youth the youngest settles down and makes his fortune as a champion envelope licker, buys the company, then looses it due to modern envelope-sealing technology, then he starts a new life and finds love with a stamp-collector who works at the post office. In

Binibus Barnabus by Robert Goodin, we meet **Binibus Barnabus** an everyday stevedore whose life revolves around working at the dock, the baseball game, and dreams of a brand new cadillac. One day at work he sees a "mer-mare" in the docks, falls in love and jumps into the water after her: turned into a merman when they kiss, we leave them happily swimming off to a new life together, far away from the docks of New York.

There's probably more 'lunchtime stories' out by now, if they are as enjoyable as these two they're well worth looking out for.

Beer Frame—the Journal of Inconspicuous Comsumption, a consumer products review magazine that asks 'What the heck is this? rather than just 'Which?' Raising product reviewing to an artform, Paul Lukas searches for the most unlikely and superfluous products he can find on supermarket shelves. In **Beer Frame** #9 we get a round up of products with suggestive names: Mr Long Candy Bars, Cock Soup and Meat Sticks —they're all real, with photos to prove it, this could easily turn into a long-running feature. We also learn more than anyone really needs to know about pizza box lid supports —those little white plastic three-legged things that look like dollshouse coffee tables. **Beer Frame** celebrates their status as functional yet innocuous items that we rarely pay attention to, and warns they could disappear forever if pizza companies upgrade their cardboard boxes. There's also a look at advertising characters who take their responsibilities to the extreme, they don't just want to publicise their products, they want to be eaten themselves! — think of the old Birds Eye Country Club adverts with skinny peas and wrinkly runner beans being turned away at the gates as buffed beans parade around inside.
(Reviewer's declaration of interest: a Heinz Meat-Free Ravioli label which I sent to Beer Frame is mentioned on page 9)

Very little is known about Mexican Masked Wrestlers outside their homeland, **From Parts Unknown**, the mexi-mask-pop-culture magazine! is a great way to find out more. The tag-team of masked editors have plenty of fun putting their magazine together. **From Parts Unknown** #5 has articles and interviews with Blue Demon, Zebra Kid and Super Astro, there's a mexican tour diary, behind the scenes report with the men who make the masks, japanese masked wrestlers, a comic art gallery with some esteemed contributors and there's plenty on silver-masked El Santo the most famous lucha libre star of all, veteran of innumerable Z-grade films and his own series of photonovellas. **From Parts Unknown** keeps the photonovella tradition alive and up to date with their Stacked Grapplers supplement.

Contact Details

Comic Book Heaven #1
36 pgs $1.95
SLG Publishing
http://members.aol.com/scottjava

Crap Hound #6
A4 92pgs $6+p/p
PO Box 40373, Portland)OR 97240-0373 USA
available in UK from disinfotainment

Book Happy #4
A4 36pgs £3.00
Donna Kossy, PO Box 86663, Portland OR 97286 USA
http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/bookhell
KOOKS WEBSITE?
www.teleport.com/~dkossy/giftshop.html
available in UK from disinfotainment

From Parts Unknown #5 A4 £2.95
PO Box 54-1133, Waltham, MA 02454-1133 USA
http://people.ne.mediaone.net/frompartsunknown
available in UK from disinfotainment

Beer Frame #9
A5 48 pgs £1.95
160 St john's Place Brooklyn NY 11217 USA
http://www.core77.com/inconspicuous/index.html
available in UK from disinfotainment

Psychoanalysis #3
$2.50
gemstone PO Box 469 West plains, MO 65775-0469 USA
http://www.gemstonepub.com

Meet the Art Students
£4.95
Arc Publications, Nanholme Mill, Shaw Wood Road, Todmorden, Lancs, OL14 6DA

Art School Superstars
A4 28pgs No Price Given
Fantagraphics Books 7563 Lake City NE Seattle WA 98115 USA

Lunchtime Stories
$2.00
Robot Publishing Co, 542 s.los robles, pasadena, CA 91101
http://www.robotpub.com

World War 3 Illustrated #27
68 pgs $3.50
PO Box 20777, Thompkins Sq Sta, NY NY 10009 USA
available in UK from AK distribution POBox 12766, Edinburgh EH8 9YE http://www.akuk.com and *Tower Records*

disinfotainment
PO Box 664 London E3 4QR
www.mpawson.demon.co.uk

Ann Vance

Who's Afraid of Film & Video in Scotland?

The Exhibition of Single-screen Film & Video: Cafe Flicker, Museum Magogo, Canadian Fall

I would like to discuss a few recent events involving the exhibition of single-screen film and video which have sharply brought into focus for me, somewhat ironically, the *lack* of an existing infrastructure for the presentation and dissemination of such work in Scotland. The following introduction gives a concise outline of circumstances that have contributed to the current drought of regular screenings. It frames an urgent context for the appreciation of work and efforts that do still prevail in spite of a funding climate characterised by erratic and contradictory decision-making. I should say that my thoughts and feelings expressed here, though subjective, are informed by my experience as an artist/ producer of experimental film and video and as a voluntary co-ordinator and curator for *New Visions Film and Video Festival* since 1993.

Scotland has never experienced a continuing and stable level of commitment from arts funders in the film/ video sector, unlike our neighbours south who can boast a number of organisations and agencies embedded and fully established in a wider cultural nexus.

Many temporary and longer term projects and events have been initiated in Scotland and have actively and successfully promoted film and video by Scottish-based and international artists over the past ten to fifteen years. *New Visions* based in Glasgow, and *Fringe Film & Video Festival* (FFVF) in Edinburgh, were two key organisations with similar aims and objectives but differing histories and life spans. Each undertook the organisation of international festivals of experimental film and video art, the bulk of which comprised single-screen programmes alongside installation and related events.

FFVF did this on an annual basis and *New Visions* biennially as well as providing a series of regular screenings and events. Each established a reputation on the circuit of international festivals as well as a platform in Scotland for the support and promotion of home-grown talent. I should say that my focus on these two organisations, not intentionally at the expense of mentioning other projects and ventures, serves the purpose of this introduction.

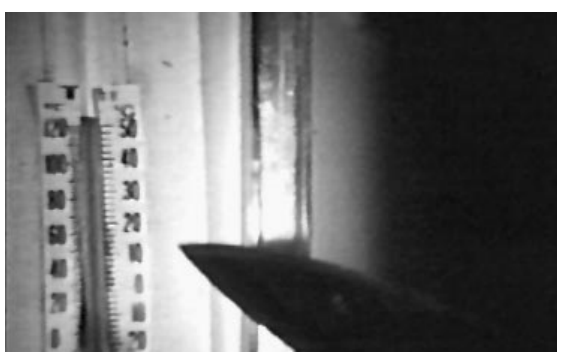
Speaking for *New Visions*, public funding was never secure and less money was awarded for each subsequent festival until our final festival in 1996 when we received nothing from the Scottish Arts Council (SAC). The decision then from SAC was that Scotland's two festivals of film and video were two too many, and a preference was expressed for a single organisation with the insistence that FFVF and New Visions go into talks about merging. In spite of our desire to continue working seperately, this option was not made available to us and consequently SAC and The Scottish Film Council (SFC, now Scottish Screen) ploughed £9,000 into two consultancies, the result of which were the reports produced in August '97: '*The Strategic Development of Creative Video, Film & New Media*', undertaken by Positive Solutions, a private firm based in Liverpool; and '*Equipment Technology Resource for Scotland*', undertaken by Clive Gillman and Eddie Berg of FACT.[1] This consultancy process was overseen by representatives from SAC, Scottish Screen, FFVF and New Visions and managed by Paula Larkin of New Visions.

The report furnished by Positive Solutions was built on the efforts of many, not least those artists, organisers and educators who gave up time and energy, voluntarily, to contribute. It took, as a springboard, the models of practice developed over the years by both organisations and put forward a number of possible options for the development of a single new organisation. These reports have since been shelved, the funders under no obligation to act upon any of the key recommendations. However, in true hypocritical fashion, they are able to quote the reports and indeed SAC have done so, in my own experience, as proof of their commitment to the issues they raise.

None of this surprises me, government bodies govern and are themselves governed by their own constrictive discourses. Arts Officers with changing agendas come and go and often fail to respond to or nourish the forms of cultural challenge already in existence. Recognising and acknowledging this makes for contestation. Neither am I surprised, only disheartened and embarrassed, at the show of blatant self-interest and divisiveness put on by a few individuals, who seem to be busy building empires and carving out careers for themselves without acknowledgement or respect for other people's efforts.

Within this scenario, the climate has not been exactly ripe for the exhibition of challenging film and video work. In spite of this however, new work can be viewed, though not always in a concentrated form —events/ exhibitions occur in isolation as one-off projects, poorly funded or not at all, often with film and video appearing as an adjunctive element or token inclusion.

Three recent artist-initiative presentations of film and video in Glasgow demonstrate different levels of interest and commitment to this field of practice.



RIGHT: *Le Mourir—Apocalypst d'un cook* Ghislain Gagnol

Cafe Flicker has been running since around 1993 and has survived for that time without public funding. Its long life-span is no doubt linked to this fact. The un-funded organisation ethic was not a driving force unlike other groups springing up around the same time e.g., Exploding Cinema in London. Flicker (as it was then known) aimed to serve the community of makers in and around Glasgow by providing an informal platform for the screening and importantly the discussion of film

RIGHT: *Time Passes* Nelson Henricks

and video work. Some events were pre-programmed but on the whole makers turned up on the night with work in tow. All organising was and still is done on a voluntary basis using ready resources of host venues (presently, Glasgow Film & Video Workshop plays host with fully equipped screening facilities). Flicker has evolved over the years with the efforts and vision of numerous people including Shazz Kerr, Martha McCulloch, Paul Cameron, Jim Rusk and presently Russell Henderson, Iain Piercey, John Fairbairn, Abigail Hopkins and Iñigo Garrido.

These days Iñigo Garrido takes a firm stance against funding, rejecting the restrictions and demands it brings to bare on the creative freedom of an organisation. Although Cafe Flicker has changed much since its seminal years, for him, its defining qualities are its freshness, openness and most urgently its "low profile".[2] Unlike other high profile organisations who find themselves inventing their public and manufacturing evidence to justify public funding, Cafe Flicker has no interest in serving any remit other than the provision of support for the makers who pass through its doors.

Its atmosphere has swung from the awkward formalities of the first screenings with few hesitant attendees to the more convivial social night, replete with simulated cafe interior and lots of audience interaction. It now sits comfortably between the two extremes and is not as daunting for first time screeners tentative about being grilled in public.

The standard of work varies constantly and the range of styles and genres is limitless: Experimental film (which means different things to different people), drama and documentary (in all its mutant forms), comic, travelogue, home movies, found footage, video art all from first time makers, seasoned enthusiasts, hobbyists and those who call themselves artists and almost all produced on low or no budgets.

That said, the most recent screenings I've attended have been dominated by the short, straight drama. The proliferation of this genre is a reflection of Scottish Screen's overwrought focus on The Industry as the mecca for new talent. The emphasis is firmly on entertainment value; the formulaic mimicry of conventional cinema being embraced at the expense of seeking out new, challenging forms of creativity expressed in a more experimental, innovative approach to film and video production.

It is to Cafe Flicker's credit that all works are screened on a first come, first served basis, irrespective of style, genre, politics, and that criticism is constructive and genuinely helpful. An ongoing database of every work exhibited dating back to 1995 is a valuable resource open to anyone researching this area. All visitors passing through Glasgow on the first Wednesday of every month are always welcome —bring your own bottle.[3]

Museum Magogo was a recent exhibition of both pre-selected and open-entry work housed at the Glasgow Project Room. Curated, or rather fashioned, by artists John Beagles and Graham Ramsay, it showcased two hundred artworks, among them a cluster of works on video. The Project Room is an open-submission, artist-run exhibition space, self-sustained through a studio complex and premised on the basis that it is somewhere for artists to try things out.

Museum Magogo saw the overall space, not excessive in itself, divided by slim partition walls into smaller territories, each area parodying an aspect of museological and curatorial drill —the Sculpture Garden replete with grocers turf, the Lidl wing (the cheap-and-cheerful rebuttal to the Tate's Sainsbury's wing), and, amongst others, the cuby hole that was the Video Lounge.

Here, videotapes were shelved with an accompanying list of titles and artists (running times and production dates were not listed but could be found on some individual tapes) and could be selected at random and viewed on the borrowed domestic monitor and video set-up.

While excess rather than ease was the order of the day, for me, this form of monitor presentation is not always suitable. Here the artists' work suffered to some degree in comparison with the other instantly viewable exhibits —the wanton cacophony of wall embellishment in truth looking more spacious and deliberated. Spectatorship and reception are, in these circumstances, entirely dependent on the effort made by the viewer and although it doesn't take much to stick a cassette in a player, in my experience few people bother to do so.

Overall, there has been a massive upsurge in the use of video as an art medium over the past five years. The proliferation in the use of loops and the projected image, with its attendant seductive and monolithic qualities have allowed video easy entry into the gallery site, a relatively clean, quick and easy space filler. And the reverse of this being, since the gallery now accepts video in ways it seldom did before, there is now more typecast production. Video, in all its varied forms, has not been fully embraced by the gallery, and film exhibition is virtually non-existent. Single screen work, i.e. that which requires to be viewed from beginning to end, irrespective of style, genre, format or running time seems to suffer most in this environment.

While some of the works in Museum Magogo sat comfortably with the single screen label, notably Alan Currell's dryly comic '*Lying About Myself in Order To Appear More Interesting*', and Tim Cullen's animation pieces which both suited this particular presentation method, others did not fair so well. Cath Whippey's eccentric ten-second animated loop '*Bear Tries on His New Bear Outfit*', and '*Blue Moon Over Alabama*' by Geeta Griffith were two most obvious candidates. The '*Be Er Monsta*' compilation of '96 put together by Glasgow-based artists for pub screenings is a record of activity at that time and it would have been valuable to see it again as a one-off, sit-down screening in the environment it was intended for. Chris Helson's '*Chat Show*', a documentation of Orchardton Television's live broadcast at the '98 Orchardton Arts Festival included some quirky features and topical discussion but, at two hours in length, proved impossible to view in the discomfort of the Museum Magogo set-up. While Smith and Stewart's '97 piece '*Dual*', a characteristically tense play of performed action, and Wendy House's oddly anxious '*Untitled*' were compelling enough in entirety, I found myself losing patience and tiring with the obvious lack of cohesion of works.

I am not advocating a strict approach to the construction of "sense" as is witnessed in the curatorial obsession with theme. Accounting for the curators' intentions, as I understand it, the video works were treated no differently from the other exhibits —pre-selected or gleaned from open-submission with an express aim of parodying the strictures of the art institution, while perhaps at the same time bringing to the fore a near-neurotic obsession of artists to exhibit at any opportunity, regardless of circumstance. For me, though, this edge was lost in the Video Booth, where the unnecessary effort required to view the works was questionably as much a result of a real lack of available resources within the artistic community as any intended irony.

The presentation of film and video in or out-with the gallery must always be an issue and concern for those choosing to exhibit such work, whether they be artists, curators, gallery managers or attendants. In the case of Museum magogo, the small amount of project funding they did acquire did not cover equipment hire and as such cannot be ignored as a factor that impacted on the choice of presentation —wishfuly slack or not. In fairness the resulting set-up, I'm sure, was also partly due to the non-existent support network which the commissioned reports, referred to above, identify as a prerequisite for the establishment of an effective infrastructure for film and video exhibition in Scotland.

Choice and preferred options of exhibition are all too often compromised, however there can be no excuse for well funded galleries and organisations not addressing these consequential issues.

Canadian Fall was a programme of recent single-screen film/ video work from across Canada shown in a number of Scottish venues in November and December. The project and tour was co-ordinated by Paula Larkin of New Visions and the programme curated by video artist Holger Mohaupt after a visit to Canada. In his words it is "an insight into the anthropology of video creation in Canada."

It is the second leg of a loose exchange initiated by Canadian video artist Nikki Forrest who, on a trip to Scotland, compiled a selection of Scottish work, Video d'Ecosse, for exhibition at the Articule Gallery, Montreal in 1998.

The curatorial slant in both programmes reflects the notion of the chance meeting, the

LEFT: *Joan & Stephen* Monique Moumblow

experience of being out of sync in a foreign land, searching for signs of familiarity and shared perceptions.

Scottish cultural links with Canada stretch far historically, specifically the link with Quebec, where many of the artists in this programme are based, in our common experience as countries within nations and the struggles for independence.

This current exchange between artists and enthusiasts looks set to continue with further projects and contact. This is not purely by chance but is rather motivated by genuine interest and the energies of individuals in both countries as opposed to the vagaries of institutions with short-term agendas.

This energy was much in evidence at the launch of Canadian Fall at Glasgow Film & Video Workshop. Nikki Forrest and Nelson Henricks, accompanied by Cindra McDowell[4] showed a selection of video work and gave a slide presentation and talk on the Montreal scene, the flurry of artists' initiatives, galleries, video workshops and distributors. Canada has a very rich history of independent film and video activity stretching back to the introduction of video technology in the seventies, with a solid infra-structure of organisations supported by government money.

"If such an underpopulated country produces an overabundance of video work, it is because a government obsessed with communications technology chooses to sustain it, via arm's length funding."[5]

The issues pertaining to Scotland's lack of that infrastructure are perhaps woven not only with the short-sightedness of government-backed funders, but also, from a wider cultural perspective, with our geographical position in relation to the United Kingdom as a whole and the Westminster government. Now that we have a devolved parliament, the rhetoric of Members of the Scottish Parliament abounds with optimism and promise of cultural/political transformation. This rhetoric raises serious questions concerning the concoction of a new, national identity. Inane definitions of Scottishness, which we have long suffered, prevail alongside prescriptive definitions of The Modern Scot. Coloured with a new corporate cosmopolitanism, these discourses are extolled with the risk, or even the aim, of smothering the indigenous voices of marginalised and alienated communities, who also contribute to the landscape of Modern Scotland.

The struggle to retain some sense of self tied to personal/ political histories un-limited by suspect nationalisms, emerges recurrently in Canadian Fall. The thirteen works "tackle the question of marginal identities from a position of instability"[6], that is with a tolerance and bias in favour of flexibility and nuance.

As a whole, the programme is a finely balanced mix of styles and approaches and gives a good overview of production methods characteristic to artists' film/video—a key requirement which benefits audiences new to such work. This balance allows each work the space to speak its own language and although the theme of identity is clearly a concern, it is gradually emergent as opposed to definitive, as is the case in many themed programmes.

Canadian Fall opened with Nikki Forrest's *Shift*, a poetic expression of loss where perceptions of time and place impress upon memory and the autobiographical to shift and de-stabilise any sense of a unified self. *Stravaig-Errance*, also by Nikki Forrest, journies through landscape and the city seeking this sense of self or a consciousness of self and finds only, that with movement and passing time, the notion of absence inscribes itself throughout. The treatment of time as an intrinsic element of the video medium characterises both works by Nelson Henricks, *Window* and *Time Passes*. Through a sensual manipulation of imagery, time is condensed and moments of detail expanded as the artist creates impressions, as opposed to clear-cut representations, of his personal interior and exterior space.

Though many of these works tell stories of some sort, different approaches to narrative and the diaristic form are evident in Ghislain Gagnon's *Le Mouroir*, Rhonda Buckley's *Matter Over Mind* and *Joan And Stephen* by Monique Moumblow. *Le Mouroir*, which received its world premiere in this programme, is a tragi-comic tale of a gay couple who get stuck in a heat wave while working as cooks for a tree planting camp in northern Canada. It has a beautifully dark, filmic quality which contrasts nicely with the previous work *Operetta* by Laurel Woodcock, a more conceptual video piece showing a close-up of a fly struggling to the sounds of a crashing HAL from Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In *Matter Over Mind*, Rhonda Buckley uses her own body to explore notions of seduction and the representation of femininity as stereotype and Monique Moumblow constructs for herself a fantasy involving a lover who lives inside her video camera.

Looking, as voyeur, and being looked at form the basis of Paula Levine's three-minute *Mirror Mirror*. A male figure, posing with naked torso is caught in slow motion returning our expectant gaze as if to challenge our preconceptions. Steve Reinke's *Excuse of The Real*, exposes, with sinister effect, the voyeuristic detachment often deployed by the documentary film maker. A male voice speaking in the first person is layered over repeat-cut home movie footage. He tells of his interest in making a documentary about Aids and how this would involve taking a "close personal look at a guy dying", concluding that his film would not be complete without his death.

Yudi Sewraj's *Rut* lightens the tone with its more humourous approach to the question of identity. We see a man in a bear suit, entering a room and shaving his fur belly. Overlayed text tells how he sees himself as a bear but how everyone else sees him as a man in a bear suit! Finally Cathy Sisler's powerful *Stagger Stories* is a personal account of her past alcohol and drug addiction and how she came to surrender her fantasy that "deviance is necessarily an effective form of resistance". We see her moving through busy city streets, staggering, almost a danse macabre, as she asserts her right to difference, to be an "alcoholic", to be "inconsistent", to be a "lesbian".

Canadian Fall[7] will hopefully create a demand for more single-screen, experimental film/ video throughout Scotland. Paula Larkin, who also initiated the tour, sees it as a "prime opportunity to create links with new audiences who, whether familiar or not with these methods of practice, are sophisticated enough in their tastes to develop interest in such work and recognise its intrinsic value."

This article is a record of my experience and interest at this point in time. It is, more importantly, a record and assertion of the energies and unpaid efforts of many involved in short-term projects whose histories end up lost and distorted or viewed in isolation, in deference to a writing of history and culture that fails to take account of the complexities and facts that comprise their making.

Notes

1. Both documents are available from SAC.
2. Iñigo Garrido—In the sense that Cafe Flicker is not duty-bound by funders to market itself.
3. Cafe Flicker @ GFVW, 3rd Floor, 34 Albion Street, Glasgow G1, 7pm.

   Works over 10 min. in length must be pre-booked. Flicker database available for researchers. Call Iñigo 0141 552 9936.
4. Cindra McDowell & Nelson Henricks were also exhibiting at the Gallery of Modern Art as part of the Glasgay festival alongside Steve Reinke and Tine Keane.
5. Nelson Henricks, Canadian Fall brochure.
6. *ibid.*
7. For information and tour dates contact 0141-5720958 or 0141-4243369

ARTIST'S CHALLENGE

..OUR THEME TODAY IS MENSTRUATION LET'S SEE HOW THEY'RE GETTING ON ...

HI ~TODAY OUR ARTISTS MUST PRODUCE A PIECE OF ART WITHIN 4 HOURS & THEY ONLY HAVE ONE HOUR LEFT..

KEEP YER 'AIR ON OIVE NOT BLAHDY FINISHED YET!!

TRACY EMIN

IT'S GOING REALLY WELL THANKS

BERYL COOK

KLACK KLACK KLACK KLACK KLACK KLACK

FRIDA KAHLO BACK FROM THE GRAVE

TO JUDGE THE CONTEST WE HAVE HAMISH M'CLOOTY FROM GLASGOW ART SCHOOL

BURP

AND A VERY SPICY LADY INDEED SINGER SONG WRITER AND MOTHER MEL G!

GUULL POWAH!

NOW HAMISH~ YOU ARE FAMOUS FOR YOUR PAINTINGS OF DEAD FISH ~ YOU HAVE BEEN PAINTING DEAD FISH FOR THIRTY YEARS~ CAN YOU TELL ME~ WHAT IS THE ATTRACTION?

AHM NO REALLY SURE~ AH THINK AH LIKE THEM BECAUSE THEY'RE ALL WET & SLIMY

WHEN AHM NO PAINTIN' THEM AH LIKE TAE RUB THEM OAN MA BIG BALDY HEID!

FLIPPIN ECK MATE YOU'RE OFF YOUR ROCKER HA HA

LADIES~ PUT ALL YOUR IMPLEMENTS DOWN ~ YOUR TIME IS UP

KLACK KLACK

TRACY~ WHAT A LOVELY PIECE OF ART

IS THAT REAL BLOOD?

WELL-YOU WOULDN'T BLAHDY BELIEVE IT BUT OI GOT ME BLEEDIN PERIOD TEN MINUTES AGO SO OI JUST SQUATTED OVER ME PICTURE~ BUT OI COULD ONLY SQUEEZE AHT A COUPLA BLAHDY SPLODGES

MY BLOOD IS RED

AND THEY ARE LOVELY BLOODY SPLODGES TRACY

NEXT FRIDA~ OH THIS IS LOVELY~ HOW DOES BEING DEAD INFLUENCE YOUR WORK?

KLACK KLACK KLACK

WELL I'M SO MUCH HAPPIER NOW~ MY CAREER IS GOING REALLY WELL AND HEAVEN IS A GREAT PLACE TO BE~ WOMEN GET THE BEST DEAL BECAUSE GOD IS ACTUALLY A WOMAN!

WELL~ I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT FRIDA BECAUSE MY LIFE IS A LIVING HELL!

OH BERYL THIS IS LOVELY!

BUT WHAT HAS IT GOT TO DO WITH MENSTRUATION?

I HAVE NEVER AND WILL NEVER PAINT A WOMAN HAVING A PERIOD!

OOH~ RADICAL WORDS FROM BERYL~ BUT WE EXPECT SOME OF OUR CONTESTANTS TO BE CONTROVERSIAL!

WE HAVE DECIDED THAT THE WINNER IS

BERYL COOK!

THE BEST

HOW MANY NORMAL PEOPLE ARE WATCHING THIS SHTUPID BLAHDY PROGRAMME?

I'M F******* LEAVING NOW!

Living in the margin

David Appleman

It was about nine years after the closure of the old wards at Woodilee psychiatric hospital, while walking in the disused grounds that I remembered and finally understood the words of Wilbert Rideau "The Wall Is Strong". The wall is strong refers to the metaphorical walls that psychologically incarcerate the human mind and its will. Even though this institution had closed, its walls still held its captives. The institutional wall was indeed strong, too strong for any individual.

The holed roofs and the bricked up windows of the dilapidated hospital buildings did little to mask their previous role, if at all, the buildings looked even more intimidating. I sensed that the boarded window frames and sealed up doorways were a poor attempt to silence the buildings' chaotic past. Continuing by these old ward buildings I could still hear the sounds of daily life going on inside. Having assessed the structure, taking account of its unworthy state, it screamed at me for some reassurance for its uncertain future.

As a child my father would take myself and my brother for Sunday walks in the nearby countryside. Across from our house was the "Wudlie" as folk called it. Our walk would start by passing through the massive green gates that acted as a sign of demarcation and announced; you are entering a hospital.

On every walk we quickly detoured to avoid the main hospital, I would break away and climb up a steep embankment, which would bring me to the RH wards. Creeping up slowly to the lime green huts (everything in the hospital was green) and by skilfully stretching myself an inch or two above the window, I was able to peer inside and steal a glance at the forbidden world. As soon as I had done so, I was tearing down the hill in fits of excitement and puzzlement. "Dad" I asked, "why are all those beds in the same room? Who lives here?" I could not understand why everything I had just seen was identical. The beds, pillows, sheets and towels, even the lockers were positioned uniformly. My brother and I were identical twins; we also shared the same bedroom. I can remember my side of the room looked so different from Stuarts. I thought to myself that the people in that grey room must have been all the same.

Strolling home, we gazed at the regimented façade of the main hospital complex. Flanking the stolid buildings and running the entire length of the hospital grounds was a sea of rhododendron bushes, which the whole hospital appeared to float upon.

We never stopped nor spoke with those who lived within. On the brief occasions I did see the people, they looked terribly sad. I wondered if it was because of where they lived, not having things like houses, shops, cars, children, cats and dogs; all the things that I knew so well. I thought that if I had to live here without these things, I too would be sad.

As I grew older, the Wudlie and its people remained frozen as if in a time capsule. It stayed like a film set of a late 19th century town: an institutional municipality.

When Erving Goffman wrote *Asylums (essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates)* in 1961, the "mental hospital" was already over 200 years old. In its various shapes and forms the "total institution" has in time become the stalwart appliance of the mental health profession. Hidden from sight and rarely spoken of, the institution has become symbolic of society's failings: the ultimate deviation from the norm. For the men women and children whose lives were shaped by physical/ mental disablement and mental illness or whose social circumstances made them disadvantaged; an institutional life would reinforce the stigma felt by many against those with a prevalent social disposition and disability.

To truly understand the institutional system we must examine the ideology of those who created them. In medico-social history, the path walked by those diagnosed with a mental handicap or a mental illness has often been traumatic. The ancestry of the intentions in those charged with the care of the "afflicted" have long been rooted in fear and mistrust. Within our hieracachial, social spectrum, some of the most excluded groups were those labelled as mentally handicapped or mentally ill*. The negative attitudes, mostly homogenous in nature have been transferred down through the ages by social interaction. Cultures at any period in history, have in some manner or form, abused those who have a mental or physical disability.

Few of us are familiar with the internal system and workings of a total institution. The majority of us would not be comfortable in an institution because we would not recognise it for the world we know. To understand the institution and its ways, one must ask; where did the hospital institutions originate and why were they built?

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century the ruling (Victorian) classes began to feel some responsibility towards those misfortunate in society. As society in general continued to progress, the need for social institutions to facilitate this advance became apparent. Government legitimised a wave of social reform bills and in tune with this development two principals of welfare legislation were created, which in turn would have

a lasting effect on the fortunes of mental welfare provision. In August 1845 the Scottish poor relief laws were amended by Parliament to give new Parochial Boards authority to build pauper lunatic poorhouses. In England Lord Shaftsbury introduced a series of bills (1845), which paved the way for the erection of lunatic asylums throughout the counties. With its dual role, the poorhouse asylums, unable to cope with the demands of both the destitute and the lunatic, had by 1855 fallen into disrepute. A Royal Commission report drew attention to the inadequacy of all Parochial Board asylums. In 1857, the Lunacy (Scotland) Act set up a General Board of Commissioners. The General Board of Commissioners along with the Poor law Guardians in England, decided that separated and specialised asylum were required for the care of the mentally ill. From the 1870s onwards, institutional lunatic asylums were built outside most major cities. This offer of fervency was not all that it seemed. Hidden behind the pretext of assistance to the vulnerable, was the desire by the elite to control and eliminate the weak from society. The state viewed these lower classes, especially the physically deformed and the destitute insane, as the vehicle to penury, poverty and madness. As with all diseases, if allowed to spread it would in time contaminate the decent man. The institutions, an extension of the dreaded workhouse, now began to fill up with those deemed unfit to live in society.

The Victorians' use of ideological purity to justify a conviction to punish imperfection had more than laid the foundations for the lasting institutional matrices; upon which mental-health care would develop its role. Shortly before his death, the ailing Lord Shaftsbury, who had tirelessly campaigned for the rights of the individual, was politically overpowered. Lord Salisbury, aided by powerful governmental allies introduced the Lunacy Act of 1890, which, claims an historian of the lunacy laws, "was to hamper the mental health movement for nearly seventy years".

Its important for us to have an insight into the origins of the institution for this allows us to further question: why have we retained a system which today is over a hundred years old and has its legitimacy firmly attached to the exclusion of certain social groups? Did the institutional system work so well as a medical model, that a lasting example remains apparent today?

When I first began to research the subject of psychiatric/ mental handicap hospitals, I had expected the project to revolve around a main theme, that of the individual. The reality of institutional life I have so far discovered is about control. Controlling minds, bodies and lives. It is this simple. The politics of a whole organisation which will take you, from birth if need be, and throughout your life, whilst overseeing every single experience you have, has at its heart the need to control.

On arriving at the institution, and in an attempt to arouse the opposition. I looked at every corner of the building. As an individual with my own identity and my own personality, I felt no match for the institution's multi-faceted disposition. As I approached a psychological confrontation ensued. "Can I protect myself?" I find reassurance in the fact that I'm six feet tall and around thirteen stone. The door to the dentist at Woodilee hospital is around eighteen feet high and half as wide again. One gets the impression that the institution remains at all times larger than the individual.

I was directed by a sign, which told me which way to go to find the wards. "What if I don't want to go this way, what if I chose my own route?" The institution reminded me to follow the sign. I conformed and followed the sign, as if the whole world depended on it. Standing in front of a red brick building, I felt menaced by its small, square, uniform windows, which like numerous suspicious eyes seemed constantly aware. The building's architecture was confused. From the front it looked like an army barracks, but the sides resembled a church. I later found out it was the patients' cinema.

This was such a large institution even walking quickly around its perimeter would take over an hour. All the buildings looked so identical, it must have been really difficult to remember exactly which ward was which. At night with no one around it would have been deadly quiet. A shout or a cry probably would not have received an answer, yet if one had searched the darkness, eight buildings stood back to back like mirror images.

I thought about this and a wave of immense detachment swept over me. The weather was poor, and as the rain started, the hill side mist had also lowered to enshrine the institution completing its isolation. The only comfort now was the hospital's architecture. Its dark flat shapes had receded into itself further, thus allowing its architectural insincerity to become openly visible. To avoid the rain, I entered a ward. The corridor of the ward was long and wide. Large swing doors with safety glass segregated the many rooms, which branched off in opposite directions. As I passed through the doors, my nostrils were filled with a strange smell. It's not a human smell, as one would naturally expect. This is the smell of an institution. It's the unique odour of a chequered linoleum floor, which has been religiously polished. It's the starched scent of the floral designed DHSS fire proofed curtains, which after treatment in the hospital's laundry are often hung up in a different ward from whence they came. It's the impenetrable, icky fullness of three daily meals, which although dished in the servery, invade and occupy the dayroom like a constant unwelcome smell. It's also the aroma of a human life contained within the dry temperate limits of just four walls. Existence as a substitute for a life, which now cornered, reverberates between the floor and the high ceilings. All this, and the rest, is encapsulated by the institution, which monitors the living space. These wards were not attached to the main hospital, but seemed to exist as separate, subservient identities. By comparison, Gartloch hospital had a maze of corridors, which branched out like bony fingers reaching to infinity. I felt as if the real world itself has been exiled from the premises, the clinic had taken over in its place. It was sterile to the point that its totality had excluded all ordinary life.

Looking at the day room, with its large square domain, lit up by a front facing panel of windows, it is here that I remember, (how can I forget ?) the whole room packed with patients. It was not Bedlam as you may have thought. There was no wailing or visible distress in those that sat here. Instead around thirty adults with mental and physical handicaps sat grouped together. It was a sea of chrome contraptions illuminated in the summer sun. Walkers, wheelchairs, sticks, and other specialist equipment, some I had never seen before. If a patient wished to move around within the confines of the room, it was inevitable that a collision would ensue. Those alone, not seeking companionship would pace the passageways or attach themselves to their favourite nurse. Those who could not walk sat. Those who could not sit down, because of agitation, walked. Those who could not speak sat silent. Those who could not stay silent made noise. It was a complete jumble of individuals with so many varying degrees of needs, that it would appear difficult to direct any form of constructive care towards them. And so the people sat, walked, talked or did nothing that day and the next.

My mind moved quickly away from this and I entered the bedroom. The male bedroom is on the left and the female bedroom is on the right of the building. This was a single length dormitory, divided into individual cubicles. Each bed space was separated by a single partition to its right side. There was no screening to the front. At night the inhabitants of the ward slept here. There was no privacy and little peace and quiet. One's personal property would be borrowed, moved, lost and stolen. The individual accommodation differed only in its décor. The single wallpaper borders traced a multitudinous coloured line that changed as it passed each bed. A metaphor of the system: one of these bed spaces had fallen between a window; the partition allowed each patient a half share of the window.

I now entered a locked ward, these were locat-

ed at the periphery of the hospital. After ringing the bell, a face peers through the window of the inner security door. The door was unlocked and I entered an environment, which did not conceal its gloominess. The dim, glow from the ward lights were quickly evaporated by the dark, blue carpet beneath. The corridor and day room were virtually empty, suggesting they were sparsely furnished, would have been a total exaggeration. Not even the reflection from the blue shiney walls created any stimulation. There was little, if any feeling of human attachment in this place. It was also deadly quiet.

I immediately noticed, sitting on the floor, a young, "child like" woman who was naked from above the waist. I didn't know whom to feel more embarrassed for, her or myself. The two male members of staff were sitting smoking and talking, they seemed totally unaware of this woman's predicament. Maybe she didn't want to wear clothes, maybe they were tired of re-dressing her; maybe that's what she did: that was her life. It seemed that everyone who entered the bare incarcerating walls of this ward, would in time, like the ward, also become naked. The metamorphosis of the medical paradigm was now complete, the individual had become the institution.

Today the institution is empty of the individuals it contained, if it could ever have been described as having contained true "individuals".

This was where it happened. This was where thousands and thousands of people over the last umpteen decades were literally processed through a medical machine: diagnosed, prognosticated, treated, cured or not cured, passed on to another institution, or just kept for ten, twenty, thirty years or more. Ironically in a building sterilised and bereft of emotions, today this is such an emotional place to be. There are very few places that generate these types of emotions. Prisons and concentration camps also contain this ambience of sadness and despair. One can see the connection, it's all to do with people and the fact that so many impersonal acts went on in here.

In bringing together so many people, the one way to govern and regulate the life of the individual was via the architecture of the institution. They were built to hold a lot of people and they did contain a lot of people. The total institution was the unaccountable authority, and the primary starting point from which every activity that followed would catalyse. Contained within the institution, was an ideology. It was this institutional ideology in which the system was contained. It was an ideological system that far from representing the patient represented its own identity. The institution was the authority and the authority was contained within the institution.

During the early 1980s, the medical profession knew that the institutional regime, being deficient, was failing patients terribly. As the decade drew to a close, the system had progressively deteriorated to the verge of near collapse. When the Government's large financial life-lines ceased, the health service found itself disconnected. It wasn't just the hospital services which had been left. Thousands of patients languished in various institutional settings, which looked more like antiquated country houses rather than modern hospitals. The reality of the situation, which had been slowly lumbering up on the institutions, finally delivered its blow around 1989.

The medical profession, like the added transitional eras of the psychiatric and mental handicap hospital, has finally, in partnership with the institution, turned in on itself. The bureaucracy which once removed those with mental handicaps/ mental illnesses, and who now returns the individual to society are one and the same. Modern psychiatric and psychological medicine is telling us that it does not have the answer. It tried, it failed and now it's someone else's turn.

The new focus is on supported care in the community. The contradiction in terms between living in one's own home, with one's own identity or living as part of a NHS industry with a shared identity could not be more opposed to each other. In saying that, the concept of independence is heavily circumscribed in political manipulation: community care was the cheaper alternative to the expensive and morally bankrupt "total institution". The remaining hospital institutions now have target datelines to decant or discharge as many patients as is practicable before the hospitals close.

With this and other closures, an exodus of institutional legacies will follow. Society will inherit thousands of people who were products of a medicalized system. It was the hospital institution which facilitated the opportunity for medicine to attempt to create perfection. Housed in special units, the handicapped and the mentally ill were tested and experimented on. From scientific research, and its own generated hypotheses, medicine provided society with possible solutions.

In the future, the politics of social control will be raised again. Society, no longer having the reliance of the custodian institution, will look to the advancements of medical science to perform these tasks. Through the harnessing of eugenics, physical and mental disability resulting from a medical condition will now be socially engineered out of existence. The new institutions will be laboratories, the test tube and the petri dish replacing the hospital ward. Human genetic matter, not human beings will be trained and controlled for life within society. Society will be able to select the healthy and reject those it does not desire.

As this century draws to a close, the psychiatric/ mental handicap institutions will be quietly allowed to slip away into history. It will be remembered by many for its levels of dysfunction, substantiated by its inability to cope with the short falls of its own model of pathology. A pathology model wholly obsessed with function and illness, which turned people from real life individuals into curios of nature and conditions in textbook references.

Today there are still mentally handicapped and mentally ill adults shut away in the old style institutional hospital. It is not a world they chose to be part of, but a world we have placed them in. To be locked up in a world of one's own body or mind, is pain enough. To be removed, locked up, and kept excluded from society is unforgivably cruel.

By the year 2002 the last of the large institutions in Scotland (Lennox Castle Hospital) will have been closed by order of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

*With the new culture of change "mental hadicap" is now termed "learning disabilities".

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–Somebody's falling

Jeremy Akerman

I'm sitting on a plastic chair in the dark.

I can see lines of light around where the windows are every time a draft makes the blackout blinds breath.

Every ten to fifteen seconds another picture appears on the white painted wall ahead of me.

The pictures come from the whirring projector on the stand behind my right shoulder. The projector makes a ker-chunk noise with every new frame, another picture appears, cutting a relief into the solid wall.

Reflected light falls back into the room revealing a class of students all staring up at the makeshift screen.

The students are in various states of boredom, their heads are tilted up at the light but their bodies are slouched individually into the comfiest positions their chairs afford, positions as close to lying down as possible. One young man who is not looking at the screen is intently doodling in a notepad on his chair's fold down writing rest, the slide pictures are reflected in the two lenses of his rectangular framed glasses.

Our tutor, Chris, is standing, occasionally pacing, the remote control cord trails and flicks behind him in the way a crooners microphone lead does as they amble around on stage waiting for the instrumental to finish. His pacing and the droning projector fan provide the only movement of air in the room, it is stifling hot and the drift towards sleep is in earnest.

Chris, marking time with his carousel of slides asks, 'what does anyone think of this?' The question casually murmured into the airless dark slips through the vents between sleep and waking. The words enter my consciousness as though spoken by the voice in my head, echoing just out of reach in various remote chambers before ringing alarm in my brow. I answer 'it's terrifying,' uncertain why I can hear myself out loud.

'Yes it is, isn't it,' says Chris, his voice rhythmic, emotional, soft, disturbed, suddenly tender...

'Is that someone falling?' I ask, looking at the glowing wall.

The room is lit up by an old black and white documentary photo from the American depression years. A horizontal figure is mid way on a descent, five floors and more to the ground, flapping clothes, skirt and jacket and the body lying so still in them. She is falling past lines of regular blank windows outside an imposingly high and opulent government building. My question is unnecessary, the answer is more than evident, I feel a bit annoyed for stating the obvious, strangely it feels disrespectful to her.

'Uh huh,' says Chris; he clicks onto the next slide unwilling to indulge my feeble conversation further, which is far more like him than his uncharacteristic confession of feeling from a few seconds ago.

The class and I return to the dark, it's still stifling hot and more than a few have closed their eyes.

Tales of the Great Unwashed

Make it a double then. It's for the pain. The ankle's swole up awful bad so it is, that's three days now, I'm telling you, it's getting worse before it's better, all that liquid in there. It's a muscular thing, you know. Just as well I knew what was happening right enough, how to fall right and all that, cos it could've been a lot worse. No, that's not a rash, it's, well, it's a bit hard to explain how it, well, thing is, see, right you are, cheers. Aye, well, it was this way right.

Before I tell you, you know the high road over to Southill? Know that bit where you come off the carriageway and it goes into the country road for like two, maybe three mile along by the golf course? Know the bit I mean? No streetlights, no nothing. You could be right in the middle of the country there. Might as well be. There's that bit right in the middle of that stretch where the road's like a roller-coaster so it is, all those bumps, blinds hills and suchlike. That's where it was.

Well, way it was right, I was in the town for the reunion. Well, we call it a reunion, but it's not the likes of your formal set-up and that, it's just me and a few of the old squad meet for a pint, and it's not even a regular thing, might be once a year, might be twice in one year then nothing for three, you know the score. And it's usually me that does the phoning and the chasing up and that. Anyway, it was in the Halterneck, just down by the river there, aye, well, you know what it's like Jack, I mean, I would, you know, if I could, I would take the boys in here you know, cos there's a right few quid get spent when the boys are out right enough, but it's just with the way they get when they've had a few you know, cos sometimes they get the old squad songs going and that you know, six-para, we're a bit boisterous when we get together, even now you know, and it's not every crowd you can be doing that in without someone taking offence you know, I mean it's all plenty water under the proverbial now and all that, but it's just a wee trip you know, nostalgia and that, doesn't mean to say we haven't grown up or that.

Still, it was in there for a few, and that was alright, but I had to leave just a bit sharp to make sure of that last bus cos you know what it's like if you miss it, I mean, that's fifteen quid easy in a cab if you're after midnight you know, so I got myself out and grabbed a sausage supper and off down to the bus stop, and right busy it was too, loads of folk with the same idea as me, make sure they get the last one, and wasn't the bastard late as ever, twenty minutes by this time he was, I was shivering like that so I was, and the wind was getting up too, so even when you're below the bit, you know, that canopy over the Woolies there, the rain's coming right in so it was, and I was getting wet as well. Pure drookit, so I was.

So the bus eventually turns up, but there's only about ten or something get on it, and that was good cos I always like getting a seat at the back if I can you know, I think it's maybe a left-over from when I was in the forces you know, just that idea that you always want to cover your back like and with being on the bus you can sit at the back there, and it's a bit more secure. Even when I'm out on the street or in the shops or that I'm always aware of what's happening behind me, who's there you know, cos it never really leaves you, not once you've been out there you know. So I got that seat at the back on the left hand side, cos that way you can see who's coming on as well, see who's on the street. And they're nice as well those new buses, you know, the ones with the one deck but they've got the stair that goes down so folk can get on easy, maybe if they're in the wheelchairs or that, and they're right broad inside so they are, plenty of room to get up and down and that, very nice, and the cloth seats too, none of that plastic, remember it was always that plastic stuff that made your arse sweat?

So anyway, we gets to the end of Alby Road, and it always stops there by the depot, so the Hector comes on, but he doesn't even bother checking the tickets and that, he just has a word with the driver, maybe about him running so late or whatever, I don't know, but there's about fifteen get on there, and it's mostly women you know, cos a lot of them must've been at the bingo down the road, and by the time they get a couple after, they're waiting on the last one as well, so they all pile on, but I've still got the back seat to myself you know, and that's fine, cos sometimes these women come up and start gabbing you know, and it's like when you get a few of them together and they've a wee bead in them, you know they get a wee bit carried away, and with me being a single man and all that, they can sometimes start giving you the eye and all that, you know, I suppose they've got out for the night and they see a guy on his own, so it's usually just patter and that but I don't really like all that type of thing you know, much rather just sit on my tod you know, with my own wee thoughts you know. But that's the bus about half full anyway, so eventually the Hector gets off and we're away again, and by this time the rain's really on for the night you know, really pelting down, and it's that way you can feel the bus shifting a wee bit with the wind cos it's strong now, but off we go, down by the park, and then you're at the toll there, and it's the last stop before the Southill Road.

I don't know what it was made me sort of sit up a wee bit when we stopped at the Toll, but I knew right away there was something up. It's just that way. I've never been able to explain it, it's maybe likes of the veterans and them who go on about getting a sixth sense from being in the field and that, I don't know, but there was just something not right, and even before the bus stopped I was up like that, you know, watching, and there's no-one in the bus shelter, but just up from it there's these three guys standing up on a wee grass bank sort of thing behind the shelter, and they're shouting the odds to this someone that's on the pavement but you can't see who it is with the angle of the bus, and with the rain being that heavy you can hardly make out what's going on, but this one on the pavement must be shouting back, and you can see the guys are giving it the viccy and all that, so the bus does stop right enough, and on gets this woman.

Now, I'm not one to be talking folk down and that without knowing anything about them, I mean, you know, going by the old first impressions and all that, cos it's just not right, but as soon as she got on you could tell right away she was bother you know, she just had that kind of cut about her. She was a right big lass too, not that tall mind, but broad and heavy, and one of those big big anoraks on her like the weans wear, like it's a quilt you've picked up and wrapped right round you, and the legs coming out the bottom with the sannies on you know, the big sannies with the thick soles on them. And this big jacket's like pure bright red, like not fluorescent or that, but dead bright red, like blood, and all this white writing all over it, but funny words, like maybe a german football team or something. I don't know where she got it. She takes the hood down when she gets on right enough, and the hair's short and blonde, all that spiky way cos she must've got wet before she put the hood thing up, but a right red face on her too, maybe she must have been running or that, but very puffed and flustered she looked anyway. I don't know what sort of age she was, she had one of those faces you can't really say age-wise, and with me not having the old specs on I really couldn't say if she was fifty or thirty or whatever, but on she comes anyway and then she's trying to get her face in the wee window bit to talk to the driver, and you can hear him shouting eighty-five! eighty-five! and she's giving it all this raking about cos she must have her change in her bag or her pocket or whatever it is that's under the big jacket, so she's starting hauling up the big jacket to try and get inside it, I don't know why she didn't just unzip the thing and get into it like that, but she starts hauling it up anyway, and you can see her legs and all that, and by this time the boys outside have come down to the bus and they're still shouting the odds, and honest to God, I couldn't even tell you the things these lads are coming out with, I never heard the likes of that, even when I was in the paras, you know, I mean, I know us lads get a bit of a reputation about the language and the behaviour and all that, but as far as I ever saw there was nothing like that when there was ladies in the company you know, or if there was, then it wasn't what you would call normal female company if you get what I'm saying, even then, it's not called for, its not right. But all credit to the driver, I mean, it's a dodgy situation for him right, cos he can either pap this woman off and leave her to these lads, and by the sounds of what they've already been saying you wouldn't leave man nor beast to them you know, so he shouts at her to make her mind up, and she starts raking again, so the driver gets the doors shut, and that's like a signal for these lads to start belting into the side of the bus, and they're like jumping up and banging on the windows and that as the driver pulls away, and he's only going slow at first right, cos this woman's still raking about and she's not got a grip on anything, so if he just shoots straight off she'll be on her arse, so he takes it easy, but they're up battering at the door and you can see these other punters down the front are getting a bit scared and kind of bowing down and away from the windows in case they start trying to pan one of them in, cos that's happening all the time you know, but when we get to the roundabout the lads have run out of pavement, so that's us, we're away.

So you know where I am right, we're just after the toll, and as soon as you're by past the roundabout you're onto that dark road, the long one over to Southill, and that's when it all started. I don't know what sparked it all off, it was maybe cos she didn't pay the man, I don't know, but she starts making her way down to get a seat, and you can hear the driver giving it ho ! missus ! and all that, but she's not caring, you know, she's just that way she's probably not even hearing the guy you know, and I was like that, oh ho I says, could be in for a spot of bother here you know, cos this wee old yin down the front, just a wee fella, maybe in his seventies or that, he sort of turns and says something to her, and she turns towards him, and I

Ian Brotherhood

couldn't hear his voice but you could see him sort of pointing up towards the driver, he must've been trying to say to her that she was still to pay and that, but whatever it was, it sets her off right, and she starts shouting about how they're all bastards and all that and she'll sort them, she'll no stand for it and all that, and you can see the other biddies are starting to talk to each other and shake their heads and all that, but this one isn't bothering you know, and she moves further up, and it's like you can see everyone pure shrinking away, you know, just praying she doesn't dump herself down beside them, and you can hear the driver by this time kind of shouting, he must be on his radio thing, and that's all we need you know, if the cops are getting called and all that, but I'm not caring anyway just so long as she doesn't sit by me, but she keeps coming right enough, heading for the back, and by this time we're starting over the hilly part of the road, and the driver's getting faster cos he must be thinking he just wants her off altogether, and it's another two mile to the next stop, so he's speeding up, and she's getting closer, by this time she's about halfway down the aisle. You're all a shower! that's what she's shouting, youse are nothing but a shower of this and that and all the names of the day, but it's not like she's picking on anyone, it's just like she's shouting at the world you know, then she starts hiking up the big thick jacket again, and right away, I was like, oh ho, here we go, and the folk right beside her is kind of pressing against each other, but there's nowhere for them to go cos she's stopping them getting out their seats, and then she grabs a grip of the seats either side of her and squats, and this is right when we're going over one of those hills there, and your guts give a wee jump when you go over them anyway, but she's got a grip there on either side, and the big jacket's up round her hips like a big red safety belt sort of thing, and, oh jeez, I can't even say it you know, but she does one there right in the middle of the aisle, dead fast as well it was, and right away, there's this wee wifie who's trapped right by the lassie, and she's up screaming, standing up, and she starts climbing over the seat in front of her trying to get away, and a fella on the other side further down, he looks back and sees this wee jobby lying in the aisle so he's up like a shot and makes for the front of the bus, and that starts everyone else, and they're all shouting and trying to push by each other to get to the front, and even the ones that was trapped with her standing there, they're all over and away, and they're all shouting at the driver, she's done it! she's done a mess on the floor driver ! and all that, and I swear the bus started moving about, like it was ready to go off the road, but it was maybe just with him speeding up more and the bodies all rushing to the front like that, I don't know, but this one's back upright again and she's coming forward again. So I was like that, looking about, and I says, oh here, this isn't right this. How will I get by her, cos she's looking right at me you know, and she's sort of smiling. It's all a bit hazy then, well, not so much hazy, I mean, I can remember it all, but it all happened so fast you know, it's like it's slow in my head cos I keep replaying it, I just can't get it out my head you know, but she comes nearer, and I swear she's looking right at me like she knows me or something, but I never clapped eyes on her in my life right, and she's singing something, can't even guess what it was, but she's trying to sing snatches of it, shutting her eyes for a wee second, then opening them again and staring right at me, and you can hear the driver down the front and he's shouting into the radio about a code whatever it was, he's like I've got a code twenty-four! or whatever it was, whatever the code is for there's someone done a jobby on my bus, and the wifies are like crying and all that with the panic setting in, and the old fella's shouting at the driver to open a window, and this other one's shouting that he wants off right now and all that, and now she's only about ten feet away, and she's still got her eyes locked on me, and I see the steel handle beside me, and the emergency instructions, not that I need the instructions mind, but I remember it dead clear, and that's like my only way out unless I tackle her straight on, but I don't fancy it at all, she just looks too mad, like she might do anything, and then she's by the wee step that goes up to the back seats, only feet away from me, so I slam down the handle and the wee emergency door flies open like that, and the bus is fair tanking along by now so it is, and I swear it was just like being back on a drop, the air blasting past the gap, the darkness outside, the fear and the smell, it was just the same. Then she grabs the handles again and starts making to do another squat, and the old yin down the front is shouting, and you can hear the fear in his voice, he shouts, watch it son, she's gonny do another one ! and he's maybe right enough, so I grab my bag close, shuffle sideways, then I chuck myself out and try to make myself into a wee ball.

Well, I don't know what speed he must've been going cos it felt like ages before I slowed down, tumbling and bouncing for, I don't know, fifty, a hundred yards maybe, but a good landing it was, quite soft what with all the bushes and that, and when I got up the bus was away over by the last hill before the interchange, this wee set of lights way in the darkness, and you could still make out a wee red blob where she was standing at the back of the bus, and the driver had all the hazards on so he did.

It took me about an hour to walk home, what with the ankle and that, but that wasn't too sore at the time cos of the adrenalin you know, but it was a right long walk anyway with the rain and the wind. Right state I was when I got in.

Aye, and the rash? It's not a rash as such, it was from these wee like thorn things I had stuck all over me, in my hair and my ears and all that, don't know what they were, but the nurse says I must've been allergic to whatever it was, they came off the bushes you know. They pulled out as many as they could you know, but they says I've still got loads embedded in my scalp, so I've to keep putting that cream on. Aye, it was some night right enough, I'll no forget it in a hurry.

Aye, another double there. Cheers.

Signs of the times

Robin Ramsay

"It's the economy, stupid."

'In economic and social policy, the Government accepts wholeheartedly the so-called "Washington consensus" —that deregulation, privatisation, hire-and-fire labour markets, balanced budgets and low taxes are not only the key to policy success but unopposable.'

Editorial, *The Observer* 5 September

Britain exports more of its Gross Domestic Product than any other country. We also import a great deal and pay for it with the exports, of which something like 70% are earned by the domestic manufacturing economy. Yet Labour has adopted economic policies, *which have nothing to do with the 'Washington consensus'*, which are damaging that domestic manufacturing economy. That a *Labour* government, whose supporters, roots and core constituencies are in the domestic manufacturing economy, has done this is very odd indeed and needs explanation.

The origins of the government's economic policies date back a decade to the period when the late John Smith was shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer. After the 1987 election defeat Labour leader Neil Kinnock and John Smith decided that putting forward alternative economic policies to those of the Conservative Party (on behalf of the City of London) was futile and/or mistaken (it isn't clear to me which). Smith and Marjorie 'Mo' Molam, who was then his deputy in the shadow economics team, set off on what became known as the 'prawn cocktail offensive' —touring the City of London's dining rooms telling the City's movers and shakers that Labour was going to toe the line —their line.

It wasn't the 'Washington consensus' Labour adopted: it was the City of London's consensus and that said, 'Leave everything to us; we know what we are doing. We are the success story of the British economy.'

In practice this meant Labour abandoning all its plans to regulate the City and to attempt to manage the economy.

'The British economy', it is not all of a piece. Different sectors of the economy serve the interests of different groups —and benefit from different policies. A 'strong' pound *damages* the makers and exporters of things but *benefits* the movers of money (and importers). Mrs Thatcher destroyed about 20% of the British manufacturing economy in the early 1980s with high interest rates, being 'tough' on inflation; but the City of London —the financial sector —boomed like never before.

Regulating the economy solely by using interest rates as the present government is trying to do, is what the bankers always wanted *because it makes them rich*. They tried to 'bounce' the Churchill government into accepting this in 1952 but were resisted, notably by Harold Macmillan, who—accurately—described the proposals as a bankers' ramp.

They tried again during Edward Heath's years, and succeeded in selling to the Heath government the idea that removing most of the regulations on banks would encourage 'competition' among the banks. Thus the Competition and Credit Control changes of 1971, which were implemented without political discussion as mere 'technical changes'. They got competition—but not competition between the banks to be more efficient or provide the best services. What they got was competition to see who could create and lend the most money. Inflation began to rise. At that point interest rates were supposed to rise to 'control inflation' —the system we have in place now. But Prime Minister Heath, who appears to have not understood any of this,[1] refused to put up interest rates. He was making the famous 'dash for growth' in the run-up to joining the Common Market in 1973, and wanted an expanding economy. The result was the boom of 1972/3. Inflation began to increase. It was Heath's —and this country's —misfortune for his inflationary boom to be in progress when the price of oil quadrupled, cranking up inflation and disrupting the world's economy. Taking office in 1974 the Labour government of Harold Wilson inherited inflation approaching 20% a year and rising.

The Labour governments of Wilson and then Callaghan, who succeeded him in 1976, bore the brunt of the great inflation created by the Heath government, the banks and the OPEC oil price rise, and in 1979 another Tory government duly took office. Prime Minister Thatcher and her Chancellor of the Exchequer, Geoffrey Howe —lawyers with little understanding of economics — proceeded to remove the controls reimposed by the Labour governments of 1974-79 and gave the bankers one more thing they wanted: the abolition of exchange controls, allowing the unhindered flow of capital in and out of the UK. This was an extraordinary thing for a government led by Thatcher and Howe to do because its economic policy hinged on controlling the money supply; which the abolition of exchange controls made impossible. It took nearly two years for this to dawn on Thatcher and Howe, illustrating graphically their tenuous grasp of the most elementary economic ideas.

Having got everything they had asked for so far, the bankers began arguing in the late 1980s that what Britain needed was a financial system *completely* free of restrictions, with the Bank of England removed from government influence at its centre. This was granted by Gordon Brown, to acclamation from the bankers, in his first week in office.

Gordon Brown's camp are now saying Brown got the idea from America (from whence, as we know, everything good must now come); but the idea came from Germany. We are now supposed to forget that in the 1980s it wasn't America whose economy Labour politicians looked at with envy but Germany, which had higher growth, higher investment, higher productivity, higher living standards —and an independent central bank which controlled the interest rate, the central lever in a capitalist economy. A decade or more later all that remains of the German model in New Labour thinking is the one part of it which the City wanted —the independent central bank.[2]

Using 'regulate' in its loosest sense, the financial system regulates itself: the flow of credit is unchecked (how many credit cards have you been offered this year?) and every once in a while interest rates will be increased 'to control inflation' or 'dampen down' the economy. This actually means the following: bankers can lend as much as they can persuade us to borrow and when they —the lenders —decide there is too much money in the economy, they put up the interest rates on their loans. This is a racket which makes loan-sharking look refined.

However, Gordon Brown didn't go *quite* as far as the bankers wished. He didn't just tell the Bank of England to run interest rates: he appointed a Monetary Policy Committee, on which the Bank of England has a majority, to decide them. And he gave them an official job specification: *using only interest rates*, get inflation in the UK down to 2.5% and keep it there.

The theory says that if prices are rising too much (inflation), the solution is simple: raise interest rates. We spend less and as demand falls prices fall —or don't increase. But life isn't this simple. Raising interest rates also makes putting money in British banks attractive to the world's financial speculators if the interest rates in the UK are higher than elsewhere. The pound becomes a 'good buy' —demand for sterling increases and up goes the value of the pound vis-a-vis other currencies. This is a 'strong' pound. A 'strong' pound does two things to the domestic economy: it makes imports cheaper and it makes exports more expensive. As a result there is less demand for things made in Britain and, ultimately, businesses cut back or close. Unemployment rises. The unemployed have greatly reduced incomes and so demand in the economy falls and prices fall.

The Labour government's official economic policy consists of a promise to make people unemployed (and money-lenders richer) if prices rise above two and a half per cent a year, the official inflation target. And this *does* work. Creating unemployment *will* reduce inflation —Mrs Thatcher showed this to be true in 1980/81. But it works in a particular way: raising interest rates makes people unemployed in the *sector* of the economy which makes and exports things.

The Monetary Policy Committee appointed by Gordon Brown was initially dominated by inflation 'hawks' —that is, people who are 'tough' on inflation. Running British interest rates at approximately 2% more than the rest of Europe, the Committee has pushed the value of the pound up to levels not seen since just before the UK joined the Exchange Rate Mechanism at the beginning of the decade. Another swathe of UK manufacturing jobs has gone as a result and the losses will continue so long as the pound is at or near its current value.

In the last twenty years of economic policy, since the arrival of Thatcher-Howe, the one near-constant factor has been an over-valued ('strong') pound, creating prosperity for the City and difficulties for virtually everyone in the UK economy but the City.

The last twenty years has proved that if you give money-lenders control of economic policy they put interest rates up.

The covert aim of the theory of controlling inflation using interest rates is to keep British

interest rates higher than that of other countries, benefiting the City of London.

It's still the economy, stupid

'The new intellectual and political consensus is that manufacturing no longer matters. The future is the knowledge economy and the service sector. Manufacturing is yesterday's story: very Old Labour, very uncool Britannia...'

Will Hutton, *The Observer* May 1999

Hutton is correct that this is the current consensus in New Labour leadership circles *but it isn't new*. These attitudes first began to appear in the late 1970s when the scale of North Sea oil revenues began to become clear. In 1980 the economist Frank Blackaby quoted 'a senior Treasury official' saying, 'Perhaps we can either have North Sea oil or manufacturing but not both.'[3]

The Treasury official was referring to what was then seen as the potential *problem* created by Britain becoming self-sufficient in oil in the 1980s. Not needing to import oil, and assuming the British economy continued exporting as much as it had before oil, would produce a trade surplus. In the absence of measures to counteract this, such a surplus would, in theory, push up the value of the pound, which would make British exports more expensive abroad and imports cheaper. British exports and hence British manufacturing, which produced most of them, would decline as oil pushed up the value of the pound.

This theory came into its own as the rise in the value of sterling between 1979 and 1981 destroyed a quarter of British manufacturing industry. Nothing to be done, said the financial experts employed by the City. It is merely the mechanism through which the balance of trade between this country and the rest of the world corrected itself. Importing no oil, we needed less manufacturing output.[4] Further, said the financial experts, the massive flight of capital *from* this country after the abolition of exchange controls in 1980 was a *good* thing. The outflows helped to balance the capital *inflows* from the North Sea, preventing an even bigger trade surplus, an even higher pound, and the destruction of even more British manufacturing! Senior Treasury official at the time, Leo Pliatzky, wrote later, intending no irony that I can detect, that:

'It is understandable that people are frustrated that more primitive (sic) countries which produce oil have used the revenues from it to finance industrial and social development while in Britain both have been cut back since the North Sea oil came on stream.'[5]

The theory followed the money

What happened is that economic policy and theory followed the money. This isn't supposed to happen. Economic policy is supposed to be a rational business carried out by experts. But that is what happened: the theory followed the money. Frank Blackaby noted in 1980 that:

'just at the time when oil output was building up, *there was a major swing in fashion in thinking about the exchange rate*. Up to 1977, the doctrine had been to use the exchange rate to preserve competitiveness [i.e. keep the pound relatively cheap] ...The doctrine was then changed to assert that (a) there should be no exchange-rate policy, and (b) that a high exchange rate was a good thing' (emphasis added).

Blackaby called this:

'one of those unfortunate *accidents* which have so bedevilled British economic policy since the war' [emphasis added].[6]

In the same year, the *Guardian*'s Victor Keegan asked:

'What happened to the oil revenues which, five years ago, led people to expect the dawning of a new age of prosperity? Most of it, in the *supreme irony of economic history*, has gone to pay out unemployment to those who would not have lost their jobs if we had not discovered it in the first place' [emphasis added].[7]

But wait a minute: we are supposed to believe that these changes in 'doctrine' on the exchange rate which led to the recession of 1981-3 and the loss of two millions jobs and the boom in the City of London, were the result of an 'ironic accident'? In fact these 'changes in doctrine' occurred in 1977, when, after some months of debate in the economic press and the pages of *The Times*, 'the core institutional nexus' —i.e. the City, the Treasury and the Bank of England —plumped for oil rather than manufacturing and tried to persuade the Labour government to do two things: allow the pound to rise and scrap exchange controls. Both were refused by the Callaghan government; both were introduced by Thatcher and Howe three years later. With exchange controls abolished, interest rates jacked up and almost all of the remaining financial controls scrapped, the pound soared and large chunks of manufacturing collapsed —as the core financial nexus knew it would.

In reply to the protests from the manufacturing sector at its collapse, the City, parts of the Treasury and Bank of England, and some politicians, replied that the loss of manufacturing capacity was unimportant because Britain was on some natural evolutionary path towards a post-manufacturing or post-industrial service economy.[8] Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson contemptuously offered this line in 1985 to a House of Lords committee looking at Britain's shrinking manufacturing base.

Mrs Thatcher bought the line. In his memoir the former BBC political correspondent, John Cole, describes asking Mrs Thatcher for an example of how this 'service' or 'post-industrial economy' would work:

'She cited an entrepreneur she had met the previous week, who wished to take over Battersea power station and turn it into what we both then knew as a "Disneyland", but subsequently learned to call a theme park.'

The next day Cole recounted this to the Economic Attaché of the United States embassy:

'He looked at me in genuine astonishment, thoughtfully laid down his fork, and exclaimed: "But gee, John, you can't all make a living opening doors for each other."'[9]

Former Treasury mandarin, Leo Pliatzky:

'It was a strange period to look back on. There appeared to be a great gulf between attitudes in much of the City and in industry throughout the country. In some quarters there was a Khomenei-like fanaticism about, a reluctance to see the connection between high interest rates and a crippling exchange rate. North Sea oil had made sterling a petro-currency, it was alleged; *the days of manufacturing were over*' [emphasis added].[10]

The political journalist, Edward Pearce, recounts how a 'Treasury knight'—i.e. one of the very senior civil servants in the Treasury—said of John Major's period in office, '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" ' [emphasis added].[11]

Fifteen years after they first appeared in financial circles, these attitudes have now been adopted by the New Thatcherites running the Labour Party; only they talk of manufacturing being replaced not by the 'service economy' but by the 'knowledge economy' —a vague mishmash of the City, computers, film production, rock music and the Internet. The difference these days is that unlike John Major, New Labour hasn't even felt it necessary to 'make friendly things' to the 'manufacturing people' as they go down the pan.

The knowledge economy

There was a supplement about 'the knowledge economy' in the *New Statesman* 27 September. Near the end of this a number of well known names are asked for a sound bite about the knowledge 'the world needs now'. James Dyson the inventor and manufacturer of the 'Cyclone' vacuum cleaner, dumped a bucket of cold water on 'the knowledge economy' idea.

'What I think we're losing is our intellectual property base, our know-how in both technology and manufacturing. We're losing the ability to make planes, cars, electrical appliances, in almost every traditional manufacturing area. That's a terrible thing. While you might think the world now depends on the software and service industries, in reality their output is a fraction of the traditional industries. I've had an argument with the governor of the Bank of England about this, *who thinks that software is replacing the need to make goods*' [emphasis added].

In the late 1970s and 1980s first the bankers thought it was oil which would replace manufacturing; then it was the growth of the City of London; now the Governor of the Bank of England thinks it is computer software.

In his comment Dyson concluded:

'If nothing is done about our dwindling technical know-how, we will end up as a very weak service economy. We'll have no manufacturing, few jobs and end up a very poor country. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown realise this....'

Do they? I wonder. There is little evidence of this. In his speech to Labour's conference at the end of September, Blair said nothing about this —though he did refer to 'the knowledge economy'.

In May 1999 the Monetary Policy Committee began to speak of the damage being done to manufacturing —by *their* decisions on interest rates over the previous two years.[12] Eddie George expressed himself as 'exasperated' by the pound's

strength —as if it was a badly behaved pet, rather than the result of policies for which he had voted on the Committee.[13] At the beginning of September we had a quarter per cent rise in interest rates, a compromise, after much discussion in the economic pages of the broadsheet papers, between the 'hawks', looking at the rising house prices in the South who wanted a bigger increase, and the others looking at the recession in much of the rest of the country, who wanted no increase at all.

But the Committee's job specification of 2.5% inflation remains and even with a majority now apparently worried about the effects of the high interest policy on manufacturing there is little it can do except chip the odd quarter per cent off rate rises called for by increases in inflation when they occur. Gordon Brown continually tells us that UK long term interest rates are at their lowest for forty years. Which is true but beside the point. UK interest rates are 2% higher than they are in the Euro zone. That is why the pound is overvalued and why Britain lost 150,000 manufacturing jobs last year. For the policy to change, the Committee's brief has to change and such a change will signal to the world that Brown made a mistake: and for Brown —like the rest of us — admitting he made a mistake will be last on the agenda.

New Thatcherites

Gordon Brown has the same problem that Thatcher and Howe had: reality doesn't match the neat model in his head. The model says that low inflation produces economic stability and that, in itself, will produce economic growth and that is basically all a Chancellor of the Exchequer really can or should do. Like Thatcher and Howe in 1979-81, Labour has no exchange rate policy. Indeed, Brown warns of the perils of having one. On 10 June this year Brown said that while he understood the concerns of exporters:

'Anyone who thinks that dropping the inflation target to replace it with an exchange rate target, or running inflation and exchange rate targets at the same time is the right way to achieve domestic stability is failing to learn the lessons of the 1980s.'[14]

Quite which 'lesson of the 1980s' he is thinking of is unclear to me. Certainly not the lessons of the early 1980s when Thatcher and Howe followed a policy identical to Brown's, with the same consequences —destruction of manufacturing jobs. Let me recap: Thatcher and Howe took office and put up interest rates. This pushed up the value of the pound, making British exports expensive and foreign imports cheap. Collapse of a large chunk of manufacturing. Brown got into office, handed over interest rate policy to the bankers, and up went interest rates, and the pound rose—but not as dramatically as it did in 1980/81. *New Labour's economic policy is simply Thatcherism mark 1*; but starting from lower inflation and thus not having —yet —to be as savage as Thatcher/Howe were in the early 1980s.[15]

As in the 1980s, the prosperous, City-driven greater London area can experience growth while large chunks of the rest of the country is in recession. In May this year the TUC reported that in the 106 constituencies where manufacturing employs more than 30% of the work force, half had recorded a rise in unemployment in the previous six months.[16] At present this has no political significance. Unemployment nationally is falling because the growth of the City/London/service sector has outpaced the lost jobs in manufacturing in the North, Midlands, Wales and Scotland.

Unemployment falling, inflation low —the garden is rosy. Or would be were it not for a huge structural problem which is not going to go away. The loss of manufacturing capacity since the 1980s has produced an ever increasing annual trade deficit on goods, actual *things*. This is now over £20 billion and heading rapidly towards £30 billion. At present this is counterbalanced by a combination of the surplus made by the service/financial sector and earnings from overseas investments; but it is entirely unclear how long this can be sustained. Pursuing 'the knowledge economy' Blair and co may now believe they are on the wave of the future, driven by technology and changing world markets; but the truth is they have simply swallowed whole the ideology of the City of London.

Alas for Gordon Brown, he (and Blair) have become enthusiasts for the free market, 'Washington consensus' with which I began this essay, just at the point when it is starting to be dismantled. The 'open source' intelligence group on the Internet, Stratfor, headlined its Global Intelligence Update of September 20, 1999, 'World Bank Reverses Position on Financial Controls and on Malaysia'. It quoted comments by Joseph Stiglitz, the World Bank's chief economist, who said on September 15,

'There has been a fundamental change in mindset on the issue of short-term capital flows and these kind of interventions —a change in the mind set that began two years ago...in the context of Malaysia and the quick recovery in Malaysia, the fact that the adverse effects that were predicted —some might say that some people wished upon Malaysia —did not occur is also an important lesson.'

Stratfor's analyst commented:

'These were not casual remarks. They were made during the presentation of a key World Bank annual document, the *World Development Review*, and were meant to be taken seriously. Indeed, Stiglitz's comments came a week after the International Monetary Fund (IMF) praised Malaysia for its skillful handling of capital controls.

....Stiglitz is following the new conventional wisdom: capital controls are chic.'

So Brown will have to start shifting his position again.

One final comment. The City of London has had complete control over British economic policy, and most British economic thinking, for over twenty years. So how important is the City of London to the British economy? According to the City-funded propaganda organisation British Invisibles, which may be presumed to be inclined to exaggerate, it constitutes only 6.4% of the UK's Gross Domestic Product.[17]

Notes

1. The competition and Credit Control changes are not referred to in his recent memoir.
2. In his memoir French banker called Emile Moreau, Chairman of the Bank of France, described Montague Norman, Bank of England chief in the 1920s and '30s, advocating an independent, autonomous, bank. This would, Norman argued, 'remove from the political arena... monetary security, credit allocation and price movements'. Cited in *Around the World on a Trillion Dollars a Day*, Gregory J. Millman, Bantam Press, London, 1995, p.52.
3. Frank Blackaby, 'Exchange Rate Policy and Economic Strategy' in *Three Banks Review*, June, 1980.
4. Hamish MacRae in the *Guardian*, October 13, 1981: 'As the energy sector grows, something has to shrink.' In this curious universe it is unclear how countries ever get richer, for as one sector grows, another, apparently, has to shrink. Did the Saudis grow fewer dates after they found in oil?
5. Leo Pliatzky, *Getting and Spending*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1982, p.194.
6. Blackaby op. cit.
7. Victor Keegan, *Guardian*, 16 May, 1983.
8. Lawson used to believe that as oil revenues declined, manufacturing, wrecked in the early 1980s, would spontaneously regenerate itself. See Nigel Lawson, *The View From No. 11*, pp.195&6. Not so far, Nigel!
9. John Cole, *As It Seemed To Me*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1995, p.209.
10. Pliatzky op. cit. p.128.
11. *Guardian*, 8 January, 1992.
12. Discussed in William Keegan's column in *The Observer*, 23 May, 1999. The Bank of England likes to refer to manufacturing as 'the internationally exposed sectors of the economy'. Sounds so much better than manufacturing, doesn't it?
13. *Daily Telegraph*, 15 May, 1999.
14. *Guardian*, 11 June, 1999.
15. The oddity is that Brown appears to believe that something new is going on. Yet in the 1950s and '60s the policy of putting up interest rates as soon as a little inflation appeared was derided by Labour spokespeople as 'stop-go' economics.
16. Will Hutton, *The Observer*, 2 May, 1999. The Labour Party is now the two economies grafted together: Old Labour/ New Labour; centre/ periphery; industry/ City; national/ transnational.
17. *Guardian*, 6 January, 1999.

Something For Nothing is a personal account of how recent changes in the funding of Art Schools are invoking a culture of academic research that is in turn having a forcible effect on individual artists' practices.

Originally *Something For Nothing?* was given as a paper at the *Research and the Artist: Considering the Role of the Art School* conference at The Laboratory—the separate research arm of the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art—on 28.5.99.

One purpose of this conference was to look at how what constitutes 'research' within Art Schools might be fashioned to be seen to formally ratify practicing artists' work.

Changes to the way government establishes and distributes funding for higher educational institutions, through what are termed Research Assessment Exercises, have resulted in conspicuous attempts by Art Schools to associate themselves with particular practicing artists.

A central element of the Research Assessment Exercise is peer review. An Assessment Panel, consisting of staff members from across the institutions, rate the research excellence of each institution in turn through an appraisal of the staffs' artistic activity using criteria set by government.

In general these criteria have been based upon a practising artist employed by the institution having a visible presence within the international commercial marketplace, the more prolific the better. In this version of the generation game research points accredited to the institution via its employees are then translated into stratified levels of funding. Those with the most points get the most money—or rather, those who have been best able to comply with the government's directives receive their incentive payment. Here points really do mean prizes.

Brighid Lowe

Something for nothing?

At 34, I am an artist who is technically part of the Young British Artist generation but not of its phenomenon. As a result my perspectives are bound up inside the history of this period whilst, like many of my contemporaries, also feeling outside of it. I have managed to support myself and my practice by part-time teaching on BTEC and then on degree courses. However, my work as an artist which, because I teach, is currently classified by the higher education system as my research, has had to situate itself and survive in the current art world. The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has now institutionalised this fact and I now have to be validated as active in the professional art world in order to, as a part-time lecturer, keep a toehold in the art school.

In many respects this is the way it should be; the academic world should be neither inside or outside the art world but in an engaged, yet ambivalent space. Why then does it feel that art schools (and their respective research policy) are being held hostage by this funding shift and are warping internally in order to accommodate their captivity rather than their creativity? And why do many of my generation feel a sense of closure in all of this, of a diminishing of possibilities which seems to us to characterise both the art school and the Brit Art world?

Of course, the entrepreneurial Brit Art phenomena is as much manufactured as it is real. However, myths feed off their cultural and political context, either fattening themselves or being starved according to conditions. It might seem perverse, then, that in the hostile environment of cuts, cuts, and more cuts certain myths can thrive and that the Contemporary Art world is actually perceived as a British success story.

But whose success story is it, and who defines success?

I want to give you two very current models of success within the contemporary art scene. The first model could be termed a Careerist Model, and the second could be termed a Purist Model. These two models are crude and familiar but nevertheless I think they are worth repeating.

A Careerist Model of success: on leaving college the artist is included in the graduate New Contemporaries exhibition and participates in self-curated group shows; work is bought by Charles Saatchi and shown in highly profiled exhibitions; the artist is featured in magazines such as Frieze and Art Monthly and signs to a commercial gallery; work is exhibited widely within the contemporary art world and purchased by private collectors and the Arts Councils; the work also circulates internationally, aided in part by the British Council. The result is that a national and international reputation is generated, often occuring over a relatively short time of a few years.

A Purist Model of success: on leaving college the artist is included in group shows of varying significance, the work continues to develop and change; whilst maintaining the momentum of the work the option to make uneven or challenging pieces still exists; the artist manages to be intellectually speculative in an environment of financial speculation. The result is that a national and international reputation might be generated over a variable and unpredictable period of time.

It is necessary to point out that these two rather crude models of success within the contemporary art scene do not by definition exclude each other: they could, in principle, apply to the same work and the same artist. That they often do not, provokes several questions: which model, or models, of success do the art schools and their research policies desire and/or encourage? And to what extent do these two models of success militate against each other or, to put it another way, how does the artist reconcile internal and external pressures in order to pursue his/ her work?

Firstly, it has to be openly acknowledged that the art world and the art schools are operating within a neo-liberal capitalist agenda which promotes immediacy, bureaucracy, and populism. The pivots are money and sponsorship, lavishly lubricated by the oils of marketing and PR. This fact should not be tiptoed around any longer. I am not gazing back at some notion of a '70s idyll of untainted public funding; but nor, I believe, does there have to be such an absence of debate or such a passive acceptance of the implications of this cultural context.

The result is that competition, rather than cooperation, threatens to consume artists, colleges, galleries, and curators as everyone struggles to survive in this neo-Darwinian careerist world. Competition and rivalries have always existed but have rarely been enforced as cultural ideology and public policy. Strangely, however, intellectual rivalry is not considered as part of this competitive culture. Instead it is seen as negative and as divisive sour grapes threatening the consensus culture.

The Universities have to be more vocal in this critical and intellectual vacuum and their research policies should be aiming to support initiatives which challenge this consensus. Instead the fear of dissent, taking risks or asserting independence in case it jeopardises funding, or puts off private commercial patronage, or fails to maximise the RAE funding outcomes, or fails to attract sponsors, or fails to bring in larger audiences, and so on, too often infects Fine Art both inside and outside the art school.

Art schools ought to be able to provide a powerbase from which to remind the art world of the difficult, the different, the unknown, and the historical. Curators, public galleries, and funding bodies seem to have difficulty in locating and considering artists that are obscure, time-consuming or complex, or worse all three at once. It is as if there is an attitude that there are too many artists and far too much art, and being more aware will somehow make selecting work even more confusing and time-consuming. So it seems much safer then, to rely on information from private galleries or catalogues, contacts, collectors or any Goldsmith's show around, to cut down the workload and make it 'manageable'.

This is perhaps a harsh caricature but one that nevertheless illustrates the laziness that can become standard when programming is determined by external factors rather than internal dialogue. This potential for laziness is exacerbated by

the 'Cult of Visibility', a cult which operates with almost absolute power, in which visibility is synonymous with critical and professional success. This is an intellectual abdication: status and visibility should never be confused with a work's or artist's critical or creative value. The deforming pressures that this 'Cult of Visibility' induces have profound effects on artists and their work but also on the curators, funders, universities and public galleries desperate to maintain their own visibility and to align themselves with success. In this myopic world it is only 'success' that breeds 'success'.

The result is that everyone colludes in the relentless pursuit of the same, of the middle ground, of the recognisable. Small ideas are given enormous funding while many artists of different generations are invisibly cut out of the cultural debate. Artists' work which is deemed commodifiable, reliable (in terms of a linear notion of progression), or that fits a familiar frame of reference becomes a guarantee in an uncertain world.

University research policies could provide credible alternatives, something particularly useful to artists who wish to maintain an independent position or a space in which to reappraise their practice. Ironically, given the institutions' singular ambition, there is no consensus within the Universities on what ought to be their intellectual philosophy i.e. research policy. The new and old Universities at which I have regularly taught have wildly different approaches: either top-slicing all the research monies, or initiating ambitious exhibition programmes, or inviting single-sentence applications for potentially huge funds. All of these approaches are open to distortion from internal favouritism and discrimination. Research policies have to be transparent and accountable in order to side step the complacency and cronyism of the institution. Many Universities have a policy which matches University funds to those projects that have already secured external funding, a policy which prioritises projects with funds from other sources. This fails to acknowledge the limitations and censorship inherent within these external contexts. Research has to be considered in terms of intellectual value rather than cash value or the academic space will simply perpetuate the problems that it is supposed to address and, ultimately, will be defeated by them.

Why is it that most Universities currently provide little or no alternative to these problems?

It is because they too need highly visible artists with international profiles for their RAE returns. Fellowship appointments which attempt to buy artists such as Louise Bourgeois (that's the Louise Bourgeois who is 88 and never leaves New York) are blatant transactions. Soon Universities will want to appoint dead artists purely because their research and cash value can be fully guaranteed.

In the past, to be employed as a young artist by art schools provided a feasible income and some security and independence from the commercial art market. This is actually the simplest, and the most effective way for universities to support artists' research: give them proper teaching opportunities, improved pay levels, decent terms and conditions, and research provision written into the contract. Instead part-time teaching for all generations is now characterised by serial redundancies, no time or resources to develop rewarding teaching, pressure to deliver an international research profile coupled with levels of responsibility more suited to full-time positions, all in the context of some of the worst employment practices in the UK; and this is available only to the lucky few. No wonder, then, that there is an increasing divide, even hostility, between those artists of my generation who try to teach in order to survive and the artists of my generation whose international status ensures they can't or won't teach. This has clear implications for art schools, and is mutually victimising for all artists in that it reinforces the false polarities between the Careerist and Purist models that I initially outlined. Even more significant, it seems to me, is that the whole scenario is regarded as inevitable.

Except that I do not agree that it is inevitable. It is only in the absence of resistance that inevitability becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. When under siege or held in captivity, it is necessary for the captives to understand the psychology of their captors. However, this understanding must never define you or prevent the internal independence required for genuine survival. The same logic applies to the art schools: they need to build an innovative, autonomous space to act as a critical balance to the consensus culture which drowns them. Art schools should be ambitious and approach external agencies with ideas and projects, but these collaborative projects need to be undertaken without sacrificing critical debate or rigour. In short art schools need to have ambitions beyond the art school.

I believe we require a radical pragmatism—a combative energy which engages with the current world, rather than capitulating or becoming ghettoised. 'Radical pragmatism' sounds suspiciously Blairite, but should not be rejected for that reason alone. My generation was raised under the value system of the '60s and '70s but we became adult in a world which was, and is, dismantling this value system beneath our feet. Straddling this process, with one foot always on each side of the rift, has become increasingly difficult as the crack has widened into a chasm. The past political positions of Left and Right have been overwritten. Given this situation we do need new (but definitely not third) ways to reinvigorate art schools.

From an artist's point of view (which, given their remit of support, should by implication also be the funders' point of view) funding for work/research should allow artists to advance their ideas, aspirations and creativity. This means allowing artists to create their own impossibilities and thereby create possibilities. This takes time and involves making and taking the time throughout every aspect of the funding process in order to get things right: time to include practitioners in the policies and procedures of funders, time to select the selectors, time for the selectors to consider the artists (all the artists) and time for the artists to generate the work. Funding should enable an artist to position their work for themselves, rather than being positioned by the funding criteria or the agenda of the funder. Replication, duplication and regurgitation are all outcomes of funding policies which are market-led. There are many more artists out there some of whom inhabit a world of rejections and frustrations, not because their work is invalid, but simply because their status is regarded as too low.

There are, of course, some precedents and exceptions to this analysis. Perhaps I should be considered as one: in the last year my personal situation has been transformed by a £30,000 award from The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, a job at the Slade School of Art (on a proper salary and with very good research provision), and a Rome Scholarship. So, does my current position totally undermine my prior arguments? After all, the financial anxieties have gone and many of the associated emotional anxieties have gone too. Why then does my intellectual anxiety still remain?

What is of concern to me are the collective conditions; the contexts in which I have to make work and have it exhibited, collaborate with colleagues, and teach. Tony Blair is very fond of saying that his government is determined to end the 'something-for-nothing culture'. Ironically, at some point all artists have to make something for nothing, while the art schools and the artists that teach in them all too often have to make something out of next-to-nothing. Making art can involve imagining something from nothing but it rarely takes nothing (in resource terms) to produce that something. Perhaps funding-bodies ought to reconsider the relationship of their 'something' to the artists' 'nothing', and imagine that they might need us as much as we might need them.