

# PUBLICity

edited by John Hutnyk

*PUBLICity* is an experiment through which, in a kind of *Zamizdat* publishing style, a journal can bring varied examples of writing to attention so as to publicise aspects of global public life. The idea is to supplement our efforts with attention to things that may or may not have registered notice previously in the usual academic forums. Somewhat circular in intention and execution then, the *Zamizdat* style papers over the cracks in an uneven but dynamic global public sphere—this is an effort to pick up on what has been missed, to learn lessons from events that have not yet been covered, to renew our curiosity by exploring the gaps and venturing over new terrains. What may seem an eclectic kaleidoscope of pieces—diverse, short, writerly interventions and reports—is meant to bring examples of planetary publicity into focus where perhaps social science has often been rather more parochial, or unable to comment with a rapid enough response. The section bypasses the usual referee process of the journal so as to comment on contingency now, rather than in the year or more structured by the necessary delays and relays of scholarly publishing. We are interested to tamper with the ways knowledge production might lag behind a thinking on the move that trawls through the detritus of urban life for evidence, rumours, trinkets and news, that we will then take seriously and consider as the luminous and revealing produce of our times.

Unilaterally, the section editor sought a diversity of writing in terms of content, location, orientation and intention—always aiming to make more visible, and to think more creatively, through issues and concerns that might otherwise be missed, might be buried in the conventions or reportage, or be passed over without murmur. I'd like to think the kaleidoscopic here is a viewfinder for the souvenirs of global public culture. A prism house of language (giving publicity/mainstreaming news). Our contributions are from a wide range of places, angles, and come in varied styles. The choice of topics and authors is not neutral, indeed the selections are structured by personal choice and evaluation (rather than by dictatorship of the secretariat), and though some effort was made to mix known authors with unfamiliar topics, or to juxtapose pieces in implicit dialogues of content and tone, any unity of format remains accidental. How should you read this section? Perhaps we could imagine that the articles are meant to work through curious correspondences as a kind of planetary arcades project (still awaiting its Benjamin) through which the readerly flaneur may browse. The section will morph and mutate as it grows, this is the first and feedback is welcome.

Future versions of *PUBLICity* may or may not take the same shape, they may or may not be published in a special issue next year. With uncertainty then, suggestions for topics to be covered from potential authors should, in the first instance, be sent to John Hutnyk at [John.Hutnyk@gold.ac.uk](mailto:John.Hutnyk@gold.ac.uk) by September 1st, 2005. Usual length will be approx 1000 words. In the section here individual authors are identified, where appropriately, by name, city and email address to encourage correspondence.

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## The Oriental and the Occidental

Saurabh Dube (*México City*)

In 2004, the Centro de Estudios de Asia y África de El Colegio de México in Mexico City completed forty years as a research and teaching centre. Set up with the support of the UNESCO and modeled on the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, the Centre is widely regarded as the most important locus of scholarship on Asia and Africa in Latin American and Spanish-speaking worlds. The Centre's fortieth anniversary has invited vigorous celebration.

The anniversary opened with events organized by the India "area" of the Center in the month of April.<sup>1</sup> It kicked off with the inauguration of an exhibit on the *Ramayana* in the foyer of the library. In the midst of a decor of colourful Indian fabrics, an eclectic collection of books and materials on the epic, mutely

faced a television screen. On display were short sequences from a tele-epic of the *Ramayana* story, preserved on videotape, that was serially broadcast in India during the 1980s and garnered an enormous viewer following, arguably also feeding middle-class Hindu fundamentalism. In less than thirty minutes, the celebration had shifted to the main auditorium. Now there were more presentations, especially two on the linkages between India and Mexico, both nations projected as impressive ancient civilizations that were also formidable modern polities. Yet, preceding these rather formal statements, the leitmotif of the gathering was a recitation of ancient, classical Sanskrit verses by a renowned scholar of the language.

Indeed, such braiding of distinct dispositions equally constituted the remain-

ing academic events through April. On the one hand, a day after the official opening, the inaugural public-talk dilated on the mystical dimensions of Yoga. Moreover, out of the three roundtables based on the participation of faculty and graduate students, two focused on the *Ramayana*—although one of these partially discussed the gendered and political implications of the epic—and the last one reflected on vernacular literatures as articulating the civilisational attributes of India. On the other hand, the remaining public lectures turned on critical considerations of the linkages between caste and gender; ethnographic readings of the art of an expressionist Dalit artist, and an imaginative biographical account of an eighteenth-century Fransican monk in northern India. Further, three films from the subcontinent, screened as part of the

festivities, each acutely undercut lingering projections of a spiritual India. Taken together, the celebration was a success. For most of the audience, the disparate nature of the scholarly proceedings did not so much reveal mutual tensions as they registered a coalescing of multiple expressions of a seductive land, which could only be known by accepting its mysteries.

Why should this have been the case? In scholarly sentiments, quotidian conceptions, intellectual apprehensions and their institutional manifestations in the Latin American world, India and Indonesia—or Iran and the Ivory Coast—frequently appear as innately different, all too distant. Such representations are articulated by pervasive dualities of the Occident and the Orient. Here Latin America appears positioned, uneasily yet readily, as part of *el Occidente*. On the one hand, Asia and Africa embody marvelous difference from the West, the mark of enchantment. On the other hand, they concretize contaminated distance from the West, the sign of backwardness. At the same time, these twin dispositions rest on hierarchical oppositions of a singular modernity, which split social worlds into enchanted spaces and modern places while holding them together through the exclusive trajectory of universal history. It is hardly surprising that distinct expressions of India could readily coalesce into a curious yet comprehensible whole among the audience that attended the events of April.<sup>2</sup>

What are the lessons to be learnt here? First, it is important to acknowledge that widespread binaries—between

myth and history, ritual and rationality, emotion and reason, East and West, community and state, and tradition and modernity—are much more than analytical phantasms, readily undone by anti-foundational and postcolonial interventions. Rather, these dualities inhabit the interstices of theoretical blueprints *and* social worlds, spilling over from the one to the other. Second, while registering that imperatives of empire and fabrications of nation have followed different chronologies and intimated distinct trajectories in Latin America and (much of) Asia and Africa, it is equally critical to recognize that in these distinct contexts the passages from imperial rule to independent state(s) nonetheless crucially reflect the precepts of the colony upon the work of the nation. The influences extend from distinct idioms of social advance under empire through to differential imaginings of the nation in the likeness of Western progress. Third, at stake here are two sets of scandals. To begin with, the scandal of the West, entailing pervasive projections of an imaginary but tangible Europe, of a reified yet palpable West, as the primary *habitus* of the modern—the enshrined space of modernity, democracy, reason and history. And related to the first outrage, the scandal of the nation, involving persistent propositions regarding state and nation as harbingers of progress and development, substantial or ephemeral, realized or failed, that anxiously elide and shamefully deny the broken promises of freedom and the undemocratic foundations of democracy under regimes of modernity—in the colony, the post-

colony and the modern West. Fourth and finally, it is essential to register that, far from being mere ideological aberrations patiently awaiting their inevitable exorcism through superior knowledge, such scandals—and the routine binaries and essentialisms that they sustain—have pervasive worldly attributes. These call for our eschewing protocols of ready dismissal and rapid rebuttal, and approaching the scandals through procedures of careful questioning, critical affirmation and ethical elaboration.

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#### Notes:

1. El Colegio de México was established mainly for Spanish Republicans who were fleeing Franco's regime, and modeled on the Collège de France. It is divided into different centres and programmes which function as autonomous units, each with its own Director, under the overall administration of the President of the Colegio. The Centre for Asian and African Studies not only acutely reflects the wider, vertical and hierarchical structure of the Colegio de México, but it is equally divided into different "areas"—namely, Africa, China, the Middle East, South Asia, Japan and South-East Asia. As between the distinct centres and programmes of the Colegio, there are severe limits to the dialogue among the different regional "areas" at the Centre. Unsurprisingly, the Centre's ongoing fortieth anniversary celebrations consist of its constituent "areas" being each apportioned a month of its own during the year 2004.
2. It would be disingenuous if I claimed total distance from the celebrations and their organisation. Apart from delivering one of the public lectures, I suggested the films to be shown, also acting as a moderator during the cine-debate that followed one of the screenings. Conversely, considering the vertical nature of decision-making at the Centre, the discussion with faculty about the nature of the celebrations occurred only after the primary decisions had been taken.
3. The issues raised in this paragraph and the next one are elaborated in Saurabh Dube, *Stitches on Time: Colonial Textures and Postcolonial Tangles* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004).

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## Coffee, conservation and complicity.

*Imogen Bunting (Newton Abbot, England)*

I would like to public-ise a small "action" that took place on 8<sup>th</sup> May outside a Starbucks coffee shop in Clifton Village, Bristol, Southwest England.

Clifton is the wealthy end of Bristol—built around Brunel's suspension bridge over the Avon River that used to carry ships loaded with slaves and spices from Africa into the docks to be unloaded and traded for trinkets. This particular Saturday morning in May brought a lively interruption to shoppers idling over their cappuccinos and colour supplements.

With banners reading "coffee for the rich, coffins for the poor" and a subverted Starbucks logo "Starbucks Sucks," 15 or so people participated in the action. Inside the store they leafleted and propagandised. Outside they served free organic coffee from the autonomous communities of Chiapas, Mexico. The action was to highlight what activists have termed the "corporate green washing"<sup>4</sup> by Conservation International of large-scale multinational investment and bio-prospecting in the Montes Azules region of Southern Mexico. It was also in soli-

arity with the Zapatista communities of Chiapas who are currently being forcibly evicted from the Montes Azules, after fleeing there as refugees from military and paramilitary repression.

My publicising of the action is a way of taking seriously these kinds of events that mostly are organised outside of academy. It provides a possible point of entry into a palimpsest of narratives and struggles. I don't want to juxtapose "theory" and "action" or profess that writing about political action amounts to "doing" it; rather, in this soundbyte of a space, I

want to draw out the connections and complicities of global corporations, nation states, academia, and environmentalism of a certain ilk. Not because there is anything new in these relationships,<sup>5</sup> but rather precisely because it is an all too familiar tale in the seeming seamlessness of a global capital economics. Citing this action, and beginning to unpick the warp and weft of what lies behind it, I want to reassert the need for cultural theorists to engage in these kinds of struggles, that are always already a part of their own academic context. As the editor of PUBLICity has noted elsewhere, “From these beginnings it is possible to move to relate various contemporary struggles both politically and theoretically, to pursue internationalist work that is more than just publishing.” (2004:105).

Conservation International<sup>6</sup> was set up in 1987 to conserve and rehabilitate the natural environment. It operates in more than 25 countries and runs projects to protect flora and fauna and *certain* indigenous groups, with the capital and strategic investment of a number of corporations, including Chiquita Brands International, Exxon Mobil Foundation, McDonalds Corporation and Walt Disney Company.<sup>7</sup> Its President is Gordon E. Moore of the Intel Corporation. Among the Board of Directors, made up of representatives from companies such as BP Plc, Gap Inc, United Airlines and Starbucks Coffee Company is Edward O Wilson, godfather of socio-biology. The naturalisation of cultural phenomenon, such as marriage, the nuclear family and “continuous female attractiveness” (1971:553-554) are paramount in Wilson’s work and sit comfortably with the “Edenic narrative” (Slater 1996) of Conservation International.

Interestingly enough, another key partner of Conservation International is MEXFAM (the Mexican Foundation for Family Planning) which works in the “Population and Environment” project “with the goal of combating overpopulation in the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve.”<sup>8</sup> Again, our attention must be turned to the nexus of morality, femininity and environment that so skilfully hijacks the feminist argument for the right to birth control whilst retreating to the Malthusian narrative of overpopulation. The Eurocentricism of many global ecological movements has been noted by Gayatri Spivak, who writes, “The blame for the exhaustion of the world’s

resources is placed... upon the poorest women of the South. This in turn—making women an issue—is taken as a justification for so-called aid, and deflects attention from Northern over-consumption: the two faces of globalization” (1999:385).

The brief action outside a coffee shop in a small city in southern England must be noted because it also returns our attention to the North. It snags the cloth of the neo-liberal project, and might enable us to pull at the threads to see what is being woven—“feminism,” “ecology” and a de-politicised indigenism are strung together, to cloak a much more sinister project of mapping, bio-prospecting and strategic evictions.

In his writing on the Zapatista movement and subalterneity, Jose Rabasa has noted that “Newspapers (especially those in the metropolitan centers of power) reify the local as universal inasmuch as they make sense of the world selectively, according to particular interests” (2001:192). The local is indeed in focus here, both in Bristol and in Chiapas. However, my localocentricism is precisely an attempt to elude that perspectivalism, and to sustain an analysis through the connections and complicities that are already woven through and across local/disciplinary contexts. Whilst the action in Bristol was momentary and small, from a well-known repertoire of “anti-capitalist” protest, it is significant because it makes the links between the here and the elsewhere, between the quotidian and the emergency. This publicity too is a way of exploring those connections and of making new ones—between the corporation and the academy, and between a green revolution and a red one. These issues can become problematic to work with in the academy, but as Spivak reminds us, “that this complicity is, at best, unknown to the glib theorists of globality-talk or those who still whinge on about old-style imperialism is not secret to the initiative for a global movement for non-Eurocentric ecological justice” (Spivak 1999:380).

In 1994, when the Mexican Government signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Zapatista rebel army came out of the Lacondan jungle and seized control of key towns in Chiapas, telling the world “Ya Basta” (Enough is enough!)<sup>9</sup>. It is perhaps no coincidence that in the same year, Conservation International initiated a research project to monitor the vegeta-

tion of the Mayan jungle. The project entailed over-flights and visual analysis of satellite images of the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve—it is not hard to imagine the strategic importance of such high-tech mapping data. Indeed, similar mapping exercises have continued in the region. Most recently, the attempts to evict Zapatista support bases from the Montes Azules region have been mounted, on the grounds that these indigenous groups were not the authentic original inhabitants of this region. A divisive inter-ethnic conflict is being sparked, using mapping data and satellite images that Conservation International has handed over to the government supporting Lacondones.<sup>10</sup> The process of knowledge production in the research work of Conservation International is one inextricably linked to hegemonic powers/archives/propagandas—the ideological (state) apparatus. This is the nexus of my academic/scholarly concern.

The action in Bristol also sat in the shadow of two significant deaths in Mexico. The first was that of journalist and publisher Don Amado Avendaño Figueroa, whose newspaper *Tiempo* was the initial stream for Zapatista communiqués. The second was Pavel Gonzalez whose tortured body was found hanged on 24<sup>th</sup> April in the forests that skirt Mexico City.<sup>11</sup> Pavel was an anthropology student at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and was an active supporter of the Zapatista struggle. I mention these deaths only so that they are noted as part of this archive of an event that was necessarily international(ist). Boundary, border and territory, all shift as the fault line of global capital shudders through the world. Things happening here and there are inextricably linked, and ‘theory’ and ‘action’ are not discrete or consecutive. “Once again, the writer’s plea is for the recognition of the agency of the local resistance, as it is connected with the peoples’ movements that girdle the globe” (Spivak 1999:415); only this time, the local was closer to home.

#### Notes:

4. See report and photos of the event <http://bristol.indymedia.org/> posted 05/08/04.
5. See an essay by John Hutnyk; “Resettling Bakun; Consultancy, Anthropologists and Development” in *Left Curve*, vol 23. 1999.
6. An excellent report on Conservation International has been produced by CAPISE (the Centre of Political Analysis and Social and Economic Investigations) based in Chiapas, Mexico. The report is titled “Conservation

International; The Trojan Horse" (2003) and is available in Spanish and English via the CAPISE website: [www.capise.org](http://www.capise.org)

7. A full list of Corporations and Foundations can be found on the Conservation International website: [www.conservation.org](http://www.conservation.org)

8. CAPISE report "Conservation International: The Trojan Horse" 2003, p. 20.

9. The nexus here is of the Mexican state and global free trade—the State's complicity and collusion/corruption in the plunder of the forests and lakes of Chiapas is significant, though the politics of this is another story and not one that can be told here. To begin to understand this it is important to look at the histories of peasant struggle and landowning structures in Mexico. A really useful introduction to this is by the autonomous Marxist magazine *Aufheben* and is titled "A Commune in Chiapas? Mexico and the Zapatista Rebellion." It is available at [http://www.geocities.com/aufheben2/auf\\_9\\_zaps.html](http://www.geocities.com/aufheben2/auf_9_zaps.html).

The article is one of very few that manages to elude both a cynical derision and an exoticising of the Zapatista movement. With reference to

my PUBLICity I would like to reiterate a point made in their article: "Our interest in the struggle in Mexico is how it expresses the universal movement towards the supersession of the capitalist mode of production. One needs to avoid acting as judge of every manifestation of this universal movement, dismissing those manifestations which don't measure up, while at the same time avoiding uncritical prostration before such expressions... Our task is to understand, and to be consciously part of something which already truly exists—the real movement that seeks to abolish the existing conditions." For a literary and historical look at the history of peasant struggle and government corruption in Chiapas, the novels of B. Traven (a mysterious figure, reputed to be a German anarchist who came to Mexico at the time of the Mexican revolution) provide a suitably internationalist introduction to the political, racial and economic relationships in Mexico.

10. CAPISE report "Conservation International: The Trojan Horse" 2003, p. 31

11. More details of this case can be found via

Independent Media Centre Chiapas  
<http://chiapas.mediosindependientes.org/>  
 story posted 30/04/04

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## The Monday Sirens

*John Grech (Amsterdam)*

**I. It's Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> of April. The year is 2004.** But by the reckoning of time today, we should speak of this April as the thirty-first month since our age began. That was when the yawning hole at Ground Zero opened up in New York, unleashing the sirens of a blazing dawn, and *elf september* awakened us from our peaceful slumber. Today we still hear the sirens.

The *Gemente Amsterdam*—that is, this city's City Council—have started sounding *de sirena* again. Now this city sounds at mid-day just like that far-off high noon, repeating the terror of zero hour at the OK Corral. It only takes a second, a slight movement of the clock, to bring it on, but once it happens, it takes hold quickly and it is difficult to stop.

"At any time," the sirens proclaim, "be prepared."

But especially on a Monday...

"It's only the first Monday of the month, you know" the woman interrupted. ...the story is told again.

Death, destruction, cruelty, carnage, and the untold masses of innocent civilians, all victims in someone else's politics.

"We should all expect the worst, at any moment, again and again. And then again, again," she continued.

In the state of capital, war is never completely over.

**II.** The sirens were heard in the city again today, just like they were in World War II. But now you have to strain your ear to hear them. Only then are the sounds on the distant rooftops really audible. But once they are, your mind will chill to the scream of that immortal band of angels. Like a chorus of wailing mothers clinging to their dying babies who once dead must keep on dying forever, the sirens echo from the chasms of our painful fading memories, opening scars and wounds in the city that just won't heal. And even if no-one's listening, the sirens still enter your body, leaving their impressions on the subliminal streaming of your unwilling consciousness. That's when the citizens get horded, and when the mob's aroused, who needs individuals.

They say they play *de sirena* because they want us to stay alert. And when you hear them, you're supposed to stay indoors, turn on the radio, and wait for further instructions. The reason for their sounding could be anything, nerve gas, an atomic accident, an explosion of unknown chemicals, a natural disaster or a wild disruption of the city's services. Or it could be the enemy returning to attack.

That is why the wailing sirens cry, cries that haven't had a reason for more than a half a century. But now again, they crash into the present like a V2 bursting

suddenly over this silent neighbourhood. Well, of course, no-one ever really expects it. That is why the sirens must be constantly re-sounded. People must remember what it is to be threatened if they are to remain vigilant.

But never, not since the war, has there been a reason for their sounding! Who remembers terror after more than fifty years? My entire existence has taken place beyond the meaning of such sounds. Yet still the grip of the sirens still threatens. When their warnings wail, the civilian population is immediately put into a terrifying presence, and a trauma that has never gone away returns. The sound of sirens must be encoded in the city's genetic memory, embedded deep within every civilian, waiting for the hair of fear to trigger it. And then the people act predictably, just like the *Eloi*. The citizenry must be trained if the *Morlocks* are to get their victims. H.G. Wells' *Time Machine* is still spinning!

"Off with the sirens!" the leader is heard proclaiming.

And the city's civil servants duly obey.

"Now utter the instructions!" the Police Commander's voice continues.

And before long, the people begin their slow, hypnotic walk.

"Hey, John, no, not that way. Come with us. This is the direction where

everyone is going. We are going to the city square. Everyone must follow the instructions. Didn't you listen?"

The calls of the early warning devices beckon, and to the tunes of endless wailing, the good people have entered a long corridor. In time they will descend underground and into shelters and, from there, the steel re-inforced concrete becomes their burial chamber. Like suspicious-looking baggage forgotten at the airport, civilians are dispensable these days.

III. Somewhere in his impressive output, Paul Virilio writes that in the age of speed, the fortified bunker is no longer useful. In electronic times, embrasures only offer themselves as sitting targets. Hitler wouldn't have understand Virilio's way of thinking. His theoretical framework took shape in the Atlantic wall, a thick-skinned creature whose self preservation depended on the erection of barriers and walls of exclusion. Although otherwise impressive in his scientific modernity, Hitler's response, the communists' too, was to build an impregnable fortress. But in his primitive reactive impulse, the Dictator forgot the lessons he learned as a marauding raider. Deep inside his armoured bunker, Hitler was an easy target. Today, Hitler's survivors assiduously study his bunker archaeology as if it were a time-capsule.

The electronic revolution has not only made things faster. With the aid of

modern technology, the person who moves quickest is capable of acting both within and beyond his opponent's body. His slower moving enemy becomes trapped in its relative immobility. The Dictator who wants to control the city knows this, and he wants to make civilians think and act more slowly. Only when the city's inhabitants finally start to follow can the sirens going off again make any real sense. Our leaders want the people to think like skinks. Put us on a reactionary, conservative footing, and make it seem that bunkers are the only way to save our skins. It is only then that they will strike. This is the mind of the terrorist.

"But I like the sounds of *de sirena*" said Jenny on the way to the 'Stop the Mass Deportations of Refugees and Illegal Immigrants' demonstration in Dam Square. "*De Sirena* reminds me of when I was at school, and that makes me feel secure."

Well, maybe thinking like a reptile is not as bad as it sounds after all. I mean, if you're hot enough, you can react to what's going on around you with a kind of instant spontaneity. A lot of really basic, fundamental things—like sex, for instance—things that need to get done on a day to day basis if people are to survive, can only be performed when the lizard is in your mind. So let's not be dismissive. The ghecko in Gaarder's *Maya* was quite correct. If it wasn't for some stupid asteroid slamming into the Earth some mil-

lions of years ago, his armour-plated ancestors would still be ruling this planet. And they'd be eating soft-bodied, furry, and, let's face it, basically inferior-feeling creatures for breakfast every morning.

Still let's not get carried away by the psychopathic power of that old crocodile. Sure, he's got an armoury that makes him seem impressive, but for all his slipperiness and spontaneous power, there is still a capacity to think beyond his slimy paradigm. If an asteroid was enough to bring down his gigantic ancestors, then a grimy little lizard hasn't got a chance if his opponents' minds remain flexible and nimble.

Control in the emerging city is based on manoeuvrability. The people of the city will only lose control if they fit themselves into someone else's limits. But when people read the city's signs, the writing on the wall becomes legible. That is, when the people remain the masters of their city's destiny. And that's when the gecko starts to look like Hitler, and the suits of armour they're both so proud of wearing become straightjackets leading to a funeral. And that is why the city's fathers want us to think like lizards. But remember who's the boss and you'll remember who controls us. And remember, too, that once you're locked up firmly in your bunker, you become a sitting target.

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## Show Neon Fashions

Accompanying Exhibition/Catalogue Essay for: LEE JOO YOUNG (with CART The Airport)  
Dec 2003 to Jan 2004. Art Space Hue, [www.artspacehue.com](http://www.artspacehue.com) (Seoul)

*Fashion! Turn to the left*  
*Fashion! Turn to the right*  
*Oooh, fashion!*  
*We are the goon squad and we're coming to town*  
*Beep-beep* (Bowie, *Fashion*)

Consider what it is to show fashion. The words have a hint of glamour, and a hint of guilt. Guilt and gilt. For many, including the egotist, the exhibitionist, the extrovert, there is always a mild embarrassment at having to show, having to attract attention, showing-off. And there is also a charge, a thrill in the dress-up razzle of performance, of exposure, of risk and sensation. Because the show must go on. Advance. (On with the show, more and more sensations).

It is often difficult to examine some-

thing right in front of you in an open honest way. And this is inversely related to the fragility of that close something. Exquisite objects in a room. A plethora of ideas. The show archives such a wide range of our anxieties that it must be significant.

Anxious feeling. Hesitation. Coy and halting. The reservations of the self-declared publicist are sometimes a part of the act. Don't be fooled by the bright lights. One mustn't be too forward. Show by not showing that you are showing—

there's the trick. The display is ironic, the engagement contrived. Wink. Blink. To put on a show, to make a show of it, show and tell, knowingly. There is a well-known injunction against secrecy—yes, on with the show, show-all, tell us true. The metaphors of showing are well-developed in English, as in other languages. We show, demonstrate, reveal, prove, illustrate, explain, confirm, display, parade, exhibit, act, flaunt, expose, bare, exemplify, at a fair, an event, the extravagance of it all,

Appearance itself, like show, has multiple meanings—to put in an appearance is a representation that doubles. To appear as one is, and to appear as something else. To put in an appearance on the stage is an act, or not. We should not overlook how to show something may also be to show by proxy, to dissemble, to appear as something else. Crazy diamonds.

I remember something called “show and tell” from school. Each student had to bring an item from home to display before the class and tell a story. I always brought pets. Cute, but pointless really. They may or may not have won me friends—a lizard, a rat, a snake—or told them anything about who I was or how I wanted to be (don’t judge me from this bestiary), but this was one way we learnt to show ourselves. This was a version of hide and seek, for audience and artists, and it’s no more sophisticated than what we are doing now – looking at material on show and wondering if what is shown reveals itself and tells us something which may or may not be intended, may or may not tell us a story. This structures our cultural life—the lifelong elaboration of the old fort—da game the child plays with mummy. But we often have our hands over our eyes so we cannot see what we are missing.

Representation—are these works on show re-presented fashion by context or design? We would have to ask how they display (show or fashion) their previous presentations, how they carry meanings, contexts, how they show the marks, how they fashion thought and views, of here, of elsewhere. Carry them with them to the new, ever-new fashion shows of our desire. In this fissure the works themselves show up the fissured character of show business, in showing. Fashioning means shaping, means creating—the fashionista has a distance from the fashioning of the works, and the workers, who are practised at this art of showing, they have done it before, tried this over and over. Showtime.

So as everyone here knows—no business, no show—the movement of art and ideas from the rarified space of the gallery into some form of commercial space is not the first time the distinction between business and art has been questioned. This topic itself is really in fashion. And just as surely as art has always been a ritual showcase of power, of fashions, so the idea that the galleries were somehow separate space was always an illusion. The logic of the administered

society required illusionists, but it was fake nonetheless.

What does all this have to do with the appearance of certain works in a certain space? Each asks a question. Why are these works on show now? Why did they show up here? What are we intended to see? What is revealed? What hidden? What looks important, what not? Where to look so we see just what is supposed to show up with this show?

The participation of some artists in “art” spaces adjacent to or within commercial spaces, with corporate sponsorship, continues an established mode of showing work, but it is one that reveals much. The corporate sponsorship of art is questioned at the moment when it is extended to hitherto unimagined levels of the integration of corporate interest and product-placement in “art.” Of course, commercial concerns have long wanted to be seen as sponsors, to show that they are good citizens supporting independent artists and ideas. The explicit critique of this has become boringly routine. Can we show it another way—cutting up the product, for example, foregrounding product-placement in another? Drawing the viewer into new relations with objects? With ideas? With spaces? With showing?

What of the multiple senses of fashion and show? Verity, to reveal something in its originality. Or copy, to represent by substitution. Or do we need to think through this show more or less laterally, stooping to draw the curtain on this show, to see there is nothing shown here, there is no substitution, no division, only the raw show, the show on display—only what’s left exposed on the end of a fork, as William Burroughs has shown us in *Naked Lunch*? Nothing to see. No show. Neon residue.

But we know this is show business—the emphasis on the second word in this single phrase no longer merely reveals to us that art is a business. There is no show and no fashion without the entire apparatus of grants, funding, organization, contacts, galleries, venues, studios, schools, commentaries, cameras, critics, criticisms, articles, books, bookshops, libraries, footnotes, catalogues, history—an enormous institutionalized and globalising apparatus, a web of interconnections and archival depths, variously ordered. The fashion business is huge, convoluted and controlled. So we know something is going on here. We know we must make sense of the show, to extend it beyond the apparatus to meanings, to see what the

business of showing shows.

Convulsed by rituals, the show pretends to separate itself from its context, from the apparatus, from the connection—but it does this at the same time that it stresses them, shows the connections, dines out on them. Makes them visible.

But all this remains philosophical if we do not examine how the fetish character is strong in showing. And we are deceived by the show that does not show more. The displacement of ideas onto objects reflects the fetish of both sexuality and of the market. Things stand in for their others, dissemblance rules, truths are illusions. But visibility leaves too little to the imagination, one needs to think in order to see. Blink. The monotonous stare of convention and compromise can only be cut, as with the razor that cuts the eye in *Un Chien Andalou*'s most provocative scene, only with a violent rupture. Power is so strong in vision, it takes an great crisis to show something else. There are two possible exposures, or more. Let’s cut to these, to see what this show also exposes.

Showing through all this is a hypocrisy that will feed us art in the days of generalized terror. Auschwitz has been generalized for every occasion. And we are encouraged to look away, to know only the most minimal facts about the destruction of the Palestinian people, the direct effects of the bombing of Afghanistan (rubble sifted into sand), Iraq and the rape and death that attends today to Baghdad, the abandonment of the Kurds, the deaths in Turkish prisons, the detention camps in Australia (asylum seekers seen as invaders), the HIV holocaust in Southern Africa, the floods in Bangladesh (annual death tolls beyond calculation), the resource extraction that decimates Papua New Guinea, the demonization of North Korea (news for a week in the west, displaced by the next show), the dictatorship in Burma (not solved by offering Nobel prizes), the civil rights violations in Britain and the U.S. (under guise of the new anti-terrorism bill we have detention without trial) and almost everywhere else (the internal security act in Malaysia, detention without trial), and so much more. Too many signs show there is a new totalitarianism abroad and we do not wish to see that it is also here amongst us, we do not want to be shown the horrors amidst which we live. Hidden in the light, we go about our business as if it wasn’t there, as if our complicity with all manner of new persecutions did not

show us up as the storm troopers and camp commandants of a world spectacle that we really are. We'd rather just go to a show. It's just fashion. The bright lights shine on you. Blink.

The world of spectacle under Empire—be it of Nero, or the Raj or of the Reich—is no less total because it offers 120 channels and luxury condominiums next to halls of culture. The

branded injunction to enjoy the fashion show is the new soundbyte of jackboots on your face. There has never not been a time when the choices not made and the examples not examined were simply omissions overlooked. There is so much kept deliberately out of focus, so much behind the scenes. Is it so ugly that we dare not see, or is it a fear of having nowhere left to look once the facade has

been brushed away? Perhaps we Emperors are naked once and for all, exposed and cold—no-one cares to say, no-one moves toward the gate upon which the slogan declares that our work shows that we are free... Blink. Fashion.

Inspirations for the above:

Adorno, T. *The Culture Industry*, and Nietzsche, F. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

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## Toes in the Sand. How Things Change, by Jonathan Nanlohy

Nicola Frost (London)

**"I'm the guy in the green shirt,** look more Turkish than Ambonese," says Jonathan Nanlohy, when we are arranging to meet. So he does, and it seems somehow appropriate (and maybe not wholly accidental) that he confounds categories in this way. Mixing migrant-services work with membership in several bands (including the successful "Hindustani-Kurdish" Sydney band Heval), and now making forays into the world of words, with an Anglo-Australian mother, and a father from the eastern Indonesian island of Ambon, Nanlohy is multiculture's one-stop shop.

His short play *How Things Change* premiered at Parramatta Riverside Theatres, in Western Sydney in January 2004, as part of a presentation of six plays under the title *ELASTIC: Stretching Boundaries Between Suburbs and Centres*. Though I didn't get to see it performed, the script refuses to rest meekly on my overcrowded desk. It follows me about, demanding consideration, rejecting classification, refusing to be reduced to data. The play is uniquely insightful, finely tuned ethnography, as well as confessional, dreamscape, career strategy, and jaunt.

Sef and Jo are sitting in the waiting room of a hospital emergency ward in Blacktown, a western suburb of Sydney. As they flick through the magazines, they get to thinking about family, memory, and regret, and of the stories that pass between generations, "told between the spaces of the everyday and familiar," and form the personal history to lay alongside the official one of nations and borders. Nanlohy turns the non-place of the waiting room into a freakish theatre of dreams. The world outside conjured by their talk is not suburban Sydney, but a flickering, partial, epic vision of home, across the sea, irretrievably innocent, peopled by gorgeous warriors in fearsome war canoes. We even hear the paddles splashing in the water.

Family is the fulcrum that orientates Sef and Jo in the world, mediating between coming and going, being and belonging. They reflect on broken relationships, absentee fatherhood, and anecdotes of sparkling childhood moments. Family is also what is glimpsed, partially, imperfectly, through a glass darkly, in the island images. Sharing stories from this other place is what it is to be father and son; Sef says: "It was the one thing I truly got about our culture, being born here and removed from the islands, the language, everything. It was the one thing that stuck."

Nanlohy explains that the play leans heavily on autobiography. There is no direct identification of the "homeland" within the play—just a handful of insider references, though the press release for the production specifies the Moluccan islands, of which Ambon is the capital. Ambon, the island where his father was born, perches on the edge of Melanesia, though it is currently Indonesian. The region has a long history of lively inter-group rivalry, and was the scene of a brief independence struggle in the 1950's, something with which Nanlohy's father was involved, and the idea of which remains potent for some Ambonese, especially diasporic groups. Over the past five years, Ambon, and many of the other neighbouring islands in the Moluccan archipelago, have been the site of brutal violence and widespread arson and destruction, with thousands killed and tens of thousands displaced, as the repression of the Suharto regime unravels into chaos. Ambonese in Sydney have looked on in impotent dismay, spectators in the hospital waiting-room.

Nanlohy himself, however, has never been to Ambon and doesn't speak Ambonese Malay. His Ambon is the one his father has shared with him, through stories that act as anchors in a world where even family is fluid: "I grew up

with the warrior story," he admits. The stress of family illness a couple of years ago, shadowed in the play, sharpened his desire to develop his own version. "It's sort of who you are but it's distanced by a lack of personal experience—the culture gets bleached. I've had this metaphor in my head for a few years now: I want my toes in the sand. I want to walk the village."

Given the success of the play, and the interest it has generated, Nanlohy's wish may be nearing a literal fulfilment. As a project officer at Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre, he works daily with groups and individuals from the city's 'ethnic communities' seeking funding for welfare services, cultural activities and arts projects. He smiles archly at the prospect of slipping between advisor and beneficiary, as he is planning to apply for a grant to hold a writing residency in Ambon.

In another sense, Nanlohy's toes have already sunk deeply into the sand. In contrast with the helpless stasis of the waiting-room, and the endless leafing through magazines, *How Things Change's* world of memory, belonging and loss outside is organic, constantly changing and reinventing, demanding active engagement. Sef says: "I wanted you to hear and learn the stories of revolution and how the family failed to be subdued by poverty and imprisonment. I wanted you to be connected to all that was before and all that would come from you. You still have your own stories to be made and told."

Telling his own story is certainly what Jonathan Nanlohy is about. It is a complex tale, fractured, contradictory, and relentlessly eclectic, but disarmingly generous, and tipped with old-fashioned tenderness. Jo and Sef, Jo-Sef, two parts of a whole, yet one suspects there are many more besides.

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## “Up The Hoods”: Belfast Youth as Homunculus, Urban Guerrilla and Folk Devil

*John Nagle (Belfast)*

**Walking around Belfast, Northern Ireland,** the undiscerning flâneur is visually assaulted by a veritable panoply of random signifiers on any spare wall or mural: graffiti spouting allegiance for one of the alphabet-soup combination of paramilitaries: IRA, UDA. Sprawled on republican or loyalist murals, in one sense the graffiti demonstrate how murals go beyond visual displays to become objects open for use, re-use and abuse; a ludic space to potentially subvert the meaning of the mural is perhaps manifest when a youth secretly draws a comedy moustache and spectacles onto the face of a venerated republican or loyalist martyr.

During 2003, appearing almost organically alongside the paramilitary scrawls is graffiti proclaiming “UTH FT.RA.” Its juxtaposition with paramilitary slogans suggests another new grouping, but the letters stand for “Up The Hoods Fuck The IRA.” “Up the Hoods” proclaims self-aggrandisement for those who willingly label themselves hoods or hoodlums: young working-class males perceived to be involved in petty crime and mindless vandalism, their uniform described in the media as tracksuit bottoms, hooded tops and baseball caps to help evade detection from the panoptic eye of CCTV cameras monitoring their nefarious activities. The FT.RA or even FT.UDA motif ominously points towards antagonism between youths and the paramilitaries whom self-police local working-class districts.

The ostensible cause of friction is the seeming anti-social behaviour of the hoods. Their perceived intransigence towards their own local community is depicted in worst-case scenario terms as joy-riders and burglars; their blatant disrespect for all public property is manifest in vandalised telephone kiosks or in acts of ritual stoning, surrounding ambulance drivers and fire-fighters called out on hoods-inspired hoaxes. That these are the grounds on which the hoods have come into conflict with local paramilitaries, who proclaim status as defenders and moral arbiters of the community, to some seems ironic. Some would argue that Republicans have created Frankenstein’s

monster in the form of the hoods. For the years of the euphemistically named “northern Irish troubles” it is claimed paramilitaries manipulated Belfast youth as *agent provocateurs*, a reservoir of testosterone to be turned on and off like a tap, ordered to instigate riots against the security forces, any act of mischief-making welcomed as part of the war against the Crown requiring expenditure of valuable economic and human resources better needed to combat the larger paramilitary threat. The hoods are thus Frankenstein’s monster: the paramilitaries have created an homunculus out of control. Now that Irish Republicans are on official cease-fire and have taken their place in the Northern Ireland government, youths are expected to reciprocate and that accept they too are stakeholders in a society that offers little reward in terms of education and employment. Alternatively, Republicans tell me it’s a myth they instigate “political child-abuse”; they argue the security services refuse to arrest hoods, preferring to encourage petty crime by recruiting them as low-level informers spying on republicans.

Acts of paramilitary reprisal against hoods are often brutal. Mangled limbs and bullet-ridden kneecaps wrought by baseball bat and gun are often on view in the hospital’s casualty wing. Whilst such paramilitary activity is closely politically monitored for evidence of cease-fire breaches, recently it has come to wider attention. In the north Belfast republican district of Ardoyne a fourteen-year old youth suspected of dealing drugs was tarred, chained to a lamppost before being shot in the legs, and dumped. In the weeks following it was revealed that thirteen youths had recently committed suicide in the district, a staggering number given the tiny size of the area. All of the teen suicides were accredited in some form to punishment beatings. The local priest confirmed these suspicions after one youth had hung himself from the scaffold of his chapel. Immediately the community came together to deal with the problem of the suicides, the beatings and the hoods. It was agreed, as in almost

all areas of Belfast, that the hoods were a problem, even more than hot political issues like police reform, but that it needed to be dealt with constructively through restorative-justice schemes and tackling the root cause of teenage delinquency (economic underdevelopment and poor education).

But is it possible to question the phenomena of the hoods as some sort of collective consciousness and organic movement deserving its own name? Moral panics concerning delinquent youth are a pervasive theme in post-war society undergoing urban degeneration. In Belfast, which has not only undergone a sustained period of conflict but chronic industrial decline, the need to blame something for such decay is powerful. During the “troubles,” the second-class status of Belfast in the UK could be attributed to either British intransigence or Republican militancy. Communities undergoing violent siege had a natural sense of cohesion created against an outside Other. Now with the tentative peace-process under way for a decade, communities have been forced to become more insular, searching for the threat within to explain a collapsing community. Teenage crime is the most prevailing issue in working-class areas of Belfast. Ethnographers hardly assist by trying to attribute objective criteria to groups like the hoods, almost legitimising the concept that they exist in a culturally reified state, a movement with some sort of vague ideological purpose. Exalted to the status of subcultures and urban guerrillas, joyriding and other specific acts are ethnographically described as street performance and corralled into the politics of everyday class resistance. Disempowered youth live up to this status, calling themselves hoods, acting out collective behaviour, feeding into pre-existent stereotypes of youths governed by a primordial consciousness. Meanwhile little evidence, if any, reveals the hood phenomena to be little more than a metaphor for the disintegration of once homogeneous working-class districts.

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## Policing the Colour Line: Control, Crime, and Culture and the Hip-Hop Generation.

Dipa Basu (Los Angeles)

Early in March, 2004, the New York *Daily News* reported that the New York Police Department had assigned a team of six detectives to “spend their days navigating through the worlds of rap and hip-hop.” The result of their uninterrupted surveillance is aptly described in the title of a NYPD book, *Crime Trends In The Rap Music Industry* (the compilation already reported in the *New York Post* of April 20, 2001). Meanwhile, the *New York Times* revealed the existence of a special NYPD unit designed to focus specifically on the hip-hop industry, investigating violence and other crimes, and consulting with “detectives who do similar work in places like California and Florida.” Hip-hop’s mass-marketing appeal is based on the historical tropes of suspicion, fear and a fascination that beguiles White America (and beyond). Hip-hop bolsters sales of services and commodities ranging from army recruitment to soft drinks, (to the tune of approximately \$10 billion dollars) and hip-hop propels young Blacks to the apex of a “ladder of culpability” that stigmatizes and monitors them in school and on the street, innocent or guilty, rich or poor. The consequence: arbitrary detention without a charge being pressed, no rights to due process, restriction on freedoms, erosion of privacy, collective liability and surveillance. And these are not experiences to be categorized as past practices of slavery, Jim Crow laws or echoes from the Civil Rights and Black Power eras. In the minds of America’s hip-hop generation, the past informs their understanding of the contemporary forms of physical and psychic violence inflicted upon them daily. For example, KRS-One’s (Knowledge Rules Supreme Over Nearly Everyone) seething comparison between police officers today and overseers of slavery in the past asks in “Da Sound of Da Police”: “You need a little clarity? Check the similarity! The overseer rode around the plantation, the officer is off patrolling all the nation. The overseer could stop you what you’re doing. The officer will pull you over just when he’s pursuing.” The NYPD listening to rap for clues already begs the question as to whether the negative profiling of hip hop artists is bought on by Blackness, notoriety or by justifiable cause?

### Justifiable Cause

The lethargy of the police in solving the murders (under policing) of rap legends Biggie Smalls, Tupac Shukur and Jam Master Jay is in stark contrast to the frenzied over-surveillance of rappers inside nightclubs, outside in parking lots, and where lyrics, artistic battles, and business feuds are monitored and dossiers are compiled (over-policing). In the wake of Jam Master Jay’s murder, there has been joint FBI-NYPD raids on the offices of record company Murder Inc., and arrests of a number of rappers including Dead Prez and Fabolous (the charges were dropped later, as are many of the charges for which rappers are arrested <<http://villagevoice.com/issues/0351/pablo2.php>>.

An article in the *Miami Herald*, in March 2004, revealed that a wholesale surveillance system on hip hop artists is operated by the Miami Police Department. Officers staked out Miami International Airport, hotels, video shoots and nightclubs to monitor individuals who are perceived as a “threat.” They compiled a 6-inch-thick record on rappers and their entourages, and took great pride in the fact that they possess “one of the most hip-hop savvy police departments in the country, and that’s attributable to us taking the initiative to go out there and learning the most we could about the industry,” said Miami Beach Police Detective Bobby Hernandez.

<http://blackcollegeview.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2004/04/05/40719e08c843f>

This action was taken in (disproportionate) response to what was, basically, a congregation of mobile (upward and across space) but situated, Black folks in Miami on the Memorial Day weekend of 2001. More than 210 people were detained on the day—most of whom were not arrested for violent crimes but for troubling notions of appropriate decorum (disorderly conduct), and for displaying that universally appealing mode of youthful conduct that befalls any congregation of a certain age in a hot place on a holiday (MTV, spring break)—i.e., intoxication. According to the police, 210 arrests is double the number detained on a typical weekend. The seemingly alarming “210” (out of an estimated quarter of a million of the hip hop generation) is so telling and problematic that it can even

justify officers going “undercover” in clubs and bars frequented by hip-hop artists. The secret hip-hop cops come dressed in hip-hop brand labels while in the very process of branding behaviour, associations and every day activities of the hip-hop generation. A New York party promoter interviewed in the *Village Voice* claimed they came into clubs “wearing Sean John apparel, buying bottles with tax payers’ money, trying to fit in and observe who’s who.” When asked how he knew they were undercover, he responded that his bouncers made them leave their gun clips at the door

<[www.villagevoice.com/issues/0351/pablo.php](http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0351/pablo.php)>.

In the birthplace of hip-hop, New York, The Street Crimes Unit, a branch of the NYPD, conducted 45,084 reported stops and searches (they admitted that only 1 or even 5 in 10 were actually reported). Of those, about 40,000 innocent people were stopped on the basis that they live in a high crime area or they fit the “profile” of a “suspect.” It was four officers in this “elite” squad who shot Amadou Diallo 41 times as he stood in the vestibule of his own house in the South Bronx. The judge’s instructions to the jury at the trial of the four police officers advised them to put themselves in the position of the officers and to be mindful of their assessment of danger when considering their verdict. The four police officers approached Diallo in front of his own home because he fit the description of a serial rapist in that area— young, black, male and mobile (he was reaching for his wallet and this was taken as a sign he was reaching for a gun). Evidently, the jurors who acquitted the police worked on the same principles, as indicated by the judge. Diallo’s death was deemed as justifiable homicide.

### Blackness

In California, which possesses the highest incarceration rate in the world, and imprisons more Black people than South Africa did under apartheid, many are juveniles tried as adults. The displacement of social and welfare policies to social control mechanisms via the Criminal Justice System is evident in my home state of California’s “Juvenile Crime Initiative,” Proposition 21. It demands three-year jail terms for petty vandalism, life sentences for home rob-

bery and witness intimidation, and even the death penalty for “gang-related” homicide: children as young as 14 years of age can be tried as adults for a variety of offenses. Most of those tried are Black and Latino. The results are not just the possibility of further criminalisation when exposed to the “big boys” of crime. Compared to those confined in juvenile facilities, Black men in adult institutions are twice as likely to be beaten by staff, five times as likely to be sexually assaulted, eight times as likely to commit suicide and 50 percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon

<<http://www.buildingblocksforyouth.org>>. Between 1985 and 2000, the total increase in spending of the state on higher education was 24 percent, compared with 166 percent for corrections industry. Little wonder that stock prices for private firms involved in the prison industry were among the best bets in the stock markets in the 1990s.

### Notoriety?

The slippage between gangs and Black youth is more than semantic. With, no doubt, a straight face, a police officer in the NYPD, Derrick Parker, revealed to MTV News: “It’s not called the hip-hop unit, it’s really just under Gang Intel.” The material success of multi-platinum Nelly, who put St. Louis on the spatially conscious hip-hop map, did not prevent security staff at the Union Station Mall (a central component of the city’s sanitized and exclusionary “tourist bubble”), from banning and ejecting him for wearing “commonly known gang-related paraphernalia”—a doo-rag. He could have been wearing or showing a bandana, have a hat tilted or turned to the side, or a single sleeve/pant leg pulled/rolled up. All the above are also deemed signifiers of gang membership, rather than merely the stylistic codes of hip-hop urban couture. Nonetheless on Black bodies these sartorial transgressions ire more than the fashion police. For the hip-hop generation, wearing gold chains, sagging dickeys,

baggy jeans and gold fronts puts them within the set of norms that constitute profiles of a “likely drug courier” by the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). It was not so many years ago that the legendary Afrika Bambaataa’s Universal Zulu Nation were detained by the NYPD as they worked with local neighborhood kids—for whom they served as mentors and big brothers. They were arrested for congregating in a park that allows no more than 20 people to do so (34 were arrested). Even though they were all eventually found innocent, just a year later the Zulu Nation and the newly formed Black Panther Party were classified as gangs by the NYPD. A highly ironic situation since anyone with even a cursory knowledge of hip-hop knows that Afrika was instrumental in making hip-hop a force that was displacing gang violence, not organizing and orchestrating it. The NYPD undercover B-boys have a whole lot to learn.

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## Archiving struggles for social justice

*Anandi Ramamurthy (Lancaster)*

**Tandana-Glowworm is an archiving project** that aims to archive the struggles of the South Asian community for social and political rights. This is a history that has been undervalued and hardly recorded in Britain, yet the experience of these organisations are crucial to an understanding of British history, the power of anti-colonial struggles and their aftermath. With this knowledge Tandana established three simple aims:

1. to archive the visual and ephemeral culture of South Asian struggle in Britain for social, cultural and political rights.
2. to give value to this heritage through
  - [a] the creation of a centralised and accessible archive
  - [b] the collection of supportive and contextual documentation with archive material to enhance understanding and value of this heritage
3. to digitise the ephemera and make this heritage accessible through the web, and to allow access by as wide a number of people as possible.

The decision in the first instance to simply collect material relating to the South Asian communities was not taken with the intention of dividing communities in struggle. The struggle against racism or colonialism is a struggle affecting all Black people and ideally the material belonging to all Black (I use the term politically) organisations struggling for social justice should be collected. For Tandana, the decision to collect material relating to South Asia was simply made because of the need to draw realistic boundaries for collecting.

As a group that wishes to see this history recognised and understood, collecting supportive information will also enable users of the archive and website to understand the history behind the posters and other material culture that they are viewing. This supportive information is also part of the process of recording recent history, since many people involved in the creation of this history are alive and able to share their life stories.

The digitisation of this culture is useful and imperative for a number of reasons. Firstly the quality of many of the leaflets and posters is poor and will

inevitably deteriorate very quickly. It is therefore valuable to digitise the material as a way of preserving it. The people who produced this history were also more concerned with the meanings and messages that they wished to convey. The aura of the object is therefore not the crucial issue. Much of this material, because it is a people’s history, also belongs to family histories, and digitisation allows communities to share material relating to their histories without having to part with them. Digitisation also allows the material to be made accessible through the web. This allows wide access to the material by groups who would not normally visit archives or museums.

Currently Tandana is collecting and digitising material relating to the Asian Youth Movements from the 1970s and 1980s.

Why choose this history?

The Asian Youth Movements were the first political expression of Asian Youth in Britain from the large-scale post-war migration. They came about as a result of heightened racist attacks taking place in Black communities

across the countries. The murder of Gurinder Singh Chaggar in Southall for example was the spark for the first Youth Movement in Southall. It gave impetus to Asian youth up and down the country to organise as Asians and as BLACK in a white country. The establishment and experience of the AYMs is an expression of the fermentation of a very British kind of identity. They saw themselves as Asian (as opposed to Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Indian), Black (identifying with all people of colour who have suffered under slavery and colonialism) and also as part of a larger underclass of workers in Britain. In the North in particular many of the key organisers were also members of white Left organisations, where they often felt frustrated at the lack of attention given to issues affecting their own communities. Previous expressions of political involvement such as the IWAs were rooted in sub-continental politics. The Asian Youth Movements on the other hand were about living in Britain—"Come what may we are here to stay," as one slogan asserted, or "here to stay—here to fight" was another.

The AYMs are also a valuable secular history which given the recent increase in Islamophobia, makes it a valuable history that can be inspirational in showing the ways in which people from a variety of religious backgrounds can work in solidarity with each other. All these points make it historically an important part of British history and the history of the Left in Britain.

Why collect this now?

The longer the material is left, the less material is extant. In Bradford a beautiful collection of posters produced by the AYM, or giving evidence of their solidarity work with trade unions or with the Irish Republican cause, has disappeared in the last ten years. The experience of the Linen Hall Library in Belfast is that the archiving of the history of political struggles and peoples struggles is difficult retrospectively. The head of political collections there is very clear that contemporaneous collecting is crucial for this area of history. Some of the reasons for this lie in the fact that peoples' organisations

are often poorly resourced and there is no one there to keep the material. Often organisations are formed to tackle particular issues and then participants drift apart, with no one dedicated to maintain their history. Political changes can lead to individual disillusionment, which often leads to material being discarded. Even when material is kept so that history can not be re-written, as one former member of the AYM in Sheffield declared, poor conditions like damp cellars have led to valuable historical material being lost or spoiled.

Tandana would be keen to hear from anyone interested or able to help with the project. [www.tandana.org](http://www.tandana.org)

The project is being carried out by the Department of Humanities, University of Central Lancashire, and is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The work is supported by an advisory committee, which includes individuals who were involved in these campaigns, academics and archivists.

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## The Race Relations (Amendment) Act and Local Democracy

*Katharine Tyler (Guilford)*

**Inner city areas of urban England** have for decades been targets for socio-economic urban regeneration strategies. The current New Labour policy for urban renewal in England is centred upon the empowerment of individuals and communities. This means that local residents, and not the state, are encouraged to take responsibility for the maintenance of their local communities and are invited to play an active role in local democracy. It is in this political climate that the Highfields Area Forum (HAF), a non-statutory association composed of local community groups from an ethnically diverse area of Leicester, initiated a Judicial Review, at the High court in London, against the Leicester Electoral Commission, that forms part of the city council.<sup>12</sup> The legal action opposed the Labour, led council's proposals to change the electoral boundaries in the Highfields area of Leicester. HAF's case focused upon the Electoral Commission's failure to uphold the duties placed upon public

authorities to eliminate racial discrimination, in accordance with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000. The residents lost the case on a legal technicality.

HAF members were stirred to instigate a Judicial Review because they thought that the new electoral wards would disguise the socio-economic deprivation in Highfields by amalgamating part of the area with an affluent suburb. The effect of this would be to harm Highfield's access to local government urban renewal funds. The proposed boundary changes would also mean the de-selection of two Labour councillors, which HAF members considered undemocratic. A cross-section of community groups from Highfields raised the money to employ London lawyers to initiate the legal challenge to the new electoral boundaries. A white lollypop lady (a person who escorts young children across dangerous roads), who is the mother of a "mixed-race" child represented HAF at

the Judicial Review. This was in spite of the Electoral Commission's attempts to obstruct the woman's right to legal aid because she was a city-council employee.

The case for the residents centred upon the Electoral Commission's failure to implement Section 71 of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. This legislation is a direct result of the MacPherson report (1999) that examined the racist assumptions guiding the Metropolitan (London) police investigation of the racially motivated murder of the Black teenager Stephen Lawrence. In deciding upon the new electoral boundaries, the Electoral Commission focused upon Section 19b of the Act, which makes "it unlawful for a public authority... to do any act that constitutes discrimination." Section 71 goes further in stating that it is the duty of public authorities, which would include the Electoral Commission, "to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons

of different racial groups.”

HAF’s Counsel argued that the creation of a new electoral ward that would be 24% above the ratio of the average in a “minority ethnic” area and the de-selection of councillors should have rung alarm bells in relation to the access of “minority ethnic” people to their councillors. These proposed changes distorted the relationship of the elector to the elected that would be detrimental to the rights of “minority ethnic” people. The Judge questioned this proposition stating that he could not see how the new wards interfered with the equality of opportunity of the residents because they still had the right to vote. Counsel suggested that this missed the point. Section 71 places a duty upon public authorities to ensure equality of opportunity for “minority ethnic” people, which includes the elimination of prejudice within the electoral system. It is on these grounds that Counsel asked for a declaration that the new wards are unfair.

In response, the opposition’s Counsel reasoned that the Electoral Commission had consulted with the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) on the equality implications of the new wards. However, neither the Electoral

Commission nor the CRE knew about the separate duty of Section 71. Thus the Electoral Commission could not be expected to implement a duty that they knew nothing about. The Judge conceded that he also did not know about the specific duty of Section 71. Moreover, Counsel maintained that unless the old electoral wards were reinstated immediately, it would be impossible to proceed with the imminent local elections in Leicester. The effect of this would be to cause chaos to democracy and the electoral system in Leicester. A letter from the Deputy Prime Minister’s office endorsed these sentiments.

The Electoral Commission’s defence also focused upon HAF’s failure to take legal action within the three months’ time span allowed for objection. Counsel explained that HAF was consulted in all discussions about the boundary changes. Thus when the decision to change the electoral wards came into effect, HAF had all the information necessary to bring legal proceedings within the permitted time.

This legal technicality led to the Electoral Commission’s victory, in spite of the residents’ plea that allowance should be made for the delay because

HAF had limited funds and no experience of litigation. While the residents were disappointed by this verdict, they felt that the Electoral Commission’s victory was diminished by the Judge’s decision to take the weekend to deliberate on the case due to its considerable importance. The residents also perceived the Judge’s use of the word “regretfully” three times in his judgement to be significant.

This court action demonstrates that the meaning and implications of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act are not yet fully understood and implemented by public authorities. Furthermore, while New Labour’s policy is to encourage local community groups to play an active role in local governance and democracy, this case exemplifies that when local people rally together to challenge strategies of local governance that they consider to be undemocratic and endemically racist, local authorities have the legal machinery, financial clout and political power to silence and dissipate local dissent and rebellion.

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12. Leicester is situated in the East Midlands area of England, approximately one hundred miles north of London.

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## “Play Mas”: Young International Performers’ Festival

*Patricia Tamara Alleyne-Dettmers (Hamburg)*

“Perform! Revolt against the established system!  
Conquer the rulers’ spaces!  
Create and re-define other spaces—  
Play Mas”

The above quotation, slightly adapted from the *Play Mas Program*, describes briefly but effectively what the “Young International Performers’ Festival” (Hamburg, Germany 6-14 March 2004) entailed. International Groups were invited from three continents—South Africa, India, Argentina. Marginalized in their own social, and geographical milieu—the barrios/slums of Argentina, disease and HIV in South Africa, and slums again in New Delhi—these groups have documented a capacity to develop other power spaces through their creative art worlds.

Play Mas<sup>13</sup> brought together young artists from four areas of the world who presented their art in very diversified ways. The first of these:

**a) Crear Vale la Pena (Art is worth it)** (Argentina), who simply stated: “Our bodies are the most direct link to reality”

Why is it then that contemporary dance is a privilege of high culture and does not reach ordinary people? With their performance, the Argentinean group Crear Vale la Pena attempts to close this gap. Most of the artists in this group are socially excluded individuals who use art to conceptualize what is going on in their lives. The group is convinced that art is a vital need, just as much as is food, education and work, because of its transformative strength. This in turn is linked to the building of a sense of socio-cultural identity. This recognition makes self-respect and self-recognition possible.

**b) MUKA (Most United Knowledgeable Artists)** (fSouth Africa)

Young homeless people founded the improvisational theatre group MUKA in Johannesburg at the end of apartheid. Their mission was to provide an alternative for young people and adults who may be tempted by circumstances that can lead to crime, drug dependency, prostitution and deprivation. They also sought to educate the larger communities about problems such as AIDS, homelessness, poverty, violence against women and child abuse. Their presentation “Wild Fire” is a play about HIV-aids and against the dangerous myths that surround it, particularly in Africa.

### c) Cybermohalla

Cybermohalla was the next group, and they originate from India. *Mohalla* means neighborhood. Cybermohalla is a project comprising adolescents and young adults with different social, educational backgrounds and interests. They develop cross-media works relating to their everyday experiences in the sprawling metropolis of New Delhi. The works are created in media labs in different parts of the city, for example in Dakshinpuri, a resettlement colony in Central Delhi. The participants combine texts with video projections and soundscapes in multimedia formats to tell stories related to identity construction and community.

### d) Hajusom

Hajusom—the hosts in Germany—is a group consisting of undocumented refugees from West Africa, Central Africa, Iran and Afghanistan. They have produced theater, music and video performances since 1999. They are concerned with themes of origin, homelessness, dispossession and the politics of racial and cultural discrimination. Hajusom seeks to make an artistic statement that tries to enter into migrant policy discourse in various ways. Their theatrical performance for Play Mas, “The Rainmaker’s Children” is an African Saga that describes life in Tanzania before colonialism. In this play, the participants set out to find their own roots (African and otherwise). In the end, they discover that they live in a transitional world with shifting boundaries and borders, in which they are at home nowhere and everywhere. The question “where do you come from is no longer indicative of who you are”

#### Play Mas: Festival Theme

What all these groups had in common was their aesthetic creativity. Thus, there were two complementary themes running through the festival: **a)** empowerment of marginalized peoples (migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, socially disadvantaged), especially young people, through performance and theatre. The intention was to provide them with the forum to articulate and express protest about, and emancipation/liberation from, circumstances of oppression as a means of enhancing their sense of self and their identities through the discipline of performance; **b)** the second theme was the use of Trinidadian Carnival and the *Mas* (costume performances, with *playing/* accompanying enactment) of Trinidad as constitutive of a particular type of performance and theatre through which this

sense of empowerment could be facilitated and achieved. The Trinidadian professional artists—a group of 25 Trinidadian choreographers, designers and steelband players—worked with the groups.

In this work the visiting artists used two facets of Trinidadian Carnival: a) the musical component—steel pan, with its history of marginalization/resistance to colonial domination in its struggle to become *the musical instrument of the 21st Century*. And b) *The Jouway Experience—*which signals the beginning of Trinidadian Carnival—used to introduce the non-Trinidadian performers to this type of performance art and to involve them in a process of participating in Carnival theatre exercises, which culminated in a Carnival-theatre presentation/performance, *the Jouway Experience*.

#### Festival’s results

The festival was a resounding success. For in this new diasporic space created in the usually homogenous Western space that is Germany, the **migrants** integrated through performance, celebrated and developed new and other forms of cultural creation and expression. They thus engendered a unique type of trans-culturalism in that they transcended a variety of borders and boundaries.

The borders crossed were physical, geographical, linguistic, religious and even socio-cultural. This resulted in other forms of empowerment as ethnic identities were staged and displayed during the Festival. Aesthetic creativity became a ritual site, facilitating a unique forum for re-gaining a sense of identity while re-instituting a new form of trans-cultural ethnicity—what could be called “trans-culturality.” This result creates a new perspective for trans-culturalism since it challenges the divisions between “insiders”/“outsiders” particularly in a homogenous society like Germany. It also questions multi-cultural models based only on processes of assimilation and integration (like the German one), and the existence of cultures that are shaped by their own national boundaries.

Central to the argument and interpretation of performance (art and humanities) as it relates to concepts of multi-culturalism and national identity, I suggest that multi-culturalism as it relates to trans-nationalism cannot be understood within the confines of any one academic discipline. Instead, historical, geographical, socio-cultural and linguistic factors all play a crucial role in any understanding of these concepts. From my perspective as a professional linguistic anthropologist—I would like to opt for a

more-multiple-disciplinary approach i.e.:

- Post-colonialism (both in the field of literature and sociological discourse) in this case rooted in performance and how the post-colonial artists—writer, filmmaker, theorist and, in this specific instance, the *carnivalists* (carnival artists) continually seek to de-center colonialist systems through aesthetic creativity in Carnival.
- Symbolic anthropology as it relates to interstitial spaces as power spaces, and the multi-valiance of symbols in different contexts. In this particular event, how symbols of denigration and destruction can be transformed into symbols of domination, resistance and creation.
- This also relates to processes of globalization and differential flows. I would like to suggest that the important question here regarding global flows as it relates to the Caribbean and other marginal groups is to determine how other processes such as rupture, dispossession and the politics of displacement, can assist with the tasks of cultural decolonization through new artistic creations in the performance context.

My approach to globalization as it relates to multi-culturalism and national identity thereby lies within the socio-cultural sphere. Marginalized groups present the global city (in this case Hamburg) as a heterogeneous political space for working out multiple oppressive conflicts through performance and creativity. This type of perspective engenders different levels of discomfort, since it questions the political role of multi-culturalism and cultural expression not only in Germany but also in other European nation-states.

Claude Jansen, Ella Huck and Dorothea Reinecke directed *Play Mas*. Dr. Alleyne Dettmers coordinated and directed the Trinidadian artistic contingent. She also produced and directed the artistic concept for *Play Mas* as well as the Play Mas Workshops and Symposium.

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13. The term, “Play Mas” comes from the *Jouway* tradition of Trinidad Carnival. *Jouway* (coming from French *Jour Ouvert*, meaning “Open Day”) marks the beginning of Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago. The term alludes to the freeing of the slaves—when they took to the streets to celebrate their Emancipation in 1834. In this context, “Play Mas” provides the performers with a mandate to Perform, but in a way that signals a revolt from the “everyday” resistance against the establishment. Conquer the rulers’ spaces and create other spaces with new definitions—Play Mas.

## Who is Trinidad Carnival really for?

*Atticus Che Narain (Georgetown, Guyana)*

**Participating in Trinidad carnival**  
In April 2004 I was somewhat over-burdened by the weight of those theoretical and historical discourses that often position Carnival within the paradigms of resistance/opposition, ritual inversion of social hierarchy, or in the popular local sentiments of “all a we are one.” Through partial immersion in the event of Carnival (and its pleasures) I looked for signs of overt or covert behaviours that might disrupt middle-class sensibilities. The closest to such disruptions were the sexual gyrations between men and women and the few scantily-clad female participants, both of which made the papers, along with complaints about the litter and excess alcohol consumption. Clearly, sites of opposition included the huge Bedford trucks of machine-gun waving army men or the lines of armed police combing the streets widthways. The trucks towered above and ploughed through the sea of Black faces at night time. In freeze-frame style the power imbalance between authority and the festive spirits of “freeing up oneself” was momentarily juxtaposed. Dissonance was emphasized by the fact that the music was stopped and the MC announced: “Pave de way fuh de police, behave or we will be shut down.” But who was the enemy at Carnival? I had not seen such policing elsewhere and the reason for this was made clear when a tourist replying on camera to the question “How is carnival for you?,” said: “It’s great, there are lots of police so you feel really safe.” This crystallized the fact that carnival is a festival primarily designed for tourism, for wealthy returnees and for the large corporate sponsors desperate to secure their capital investment.

Carnival is big business, organized and commercialised to attract outside investment. Participants are attracted through the regular media channels of television, newspapers and radio. However the airline BWIA’s in-flight presentation of carnival caused me to question who carnival is for. Their representation painted a very “white light” affair, maybe attempting to adhere to a rosy notion of an acceptable multi-

cultural Trinidad. There is a real lack of Black representation in the media; even the local media have internalised this representation, as predominantly sun-burnt whites become the face of carnival. This is not a call for a more even ethnic representation but to recognize the historical context through which carnival originated and it begs the question: “Were have all the natives gone?” Black Trinidadians, it seems, are being erased from the representation of carnival, and from participation through economic marginalisation, cultural change and the differential needs of carnival sponsors. Lilt ladies would be an acceptable representation, but they don’t sell Lilt in the Caribbean.

The commercialisation of carnival is nothing new, as Earl Lovelace’s novel *The Dragon Can’t Dance* well portrays. But what is striking at carnival is the duality of participation along lines of ethnicity and class demarcated in the usage of streets and designated areas of the city. It seems as though a whole reversal has taken place. Carnival’s origins began with the colonials occupying the streets whilst slaves were prohibited from participating. Post-emancipation slaves dominated the streets forcing the colonials and the growing colored class to retreat and participate from the safety of their homes. Today the descendants of slaves occupy spaces far removed from the glossy images portrayed and the main routes of carnival. Whilst Black people dancing may be a common site on MTV there is no place for it here in attracting business.

One evening I was taken to a fête in the St. James area and I was immediately surprised by the overriding presence of Blackness. The feeling was one of locality reflected in the prices of food, drink, free entry and the free music being played on the street. Local unsponsored street sellers out to capitalize on this small market fight for this space neglected by larger corporate sponsors. There are dangers that these observations may be interpreted as maligning Blacks, with my emphasis on poverty, or an unwarranted assumption that they are the true holders (owners, agents?) of carnival’s cultural capital. The point is, there is a dual divide that

determines who participates in carnival, and where. How these dual spaces are policed begs the question of what and whom is being protected. The heavy policing contradicts the national portrayal of carnival as the “people’s” festival and raises the question of who are the people?

Carnival is punctuated with events that attempt to commemorate and make links with the historical origins of carnival. For example Jouvert Morning represents the beginning of carnival and is linked to the 1881 Camboulay riots and signals the official start of ceremonies. Here participants parade through the streets covering themselves in mud. This is turned into a spectacle of capital whereby differing prices determine differing qualities and colours of mud, t-shirt designs and access to drinks—all provided by your chosen sponsor. The overriding prerequisite that distinguishes participation would appear to be financial. One could argue that the influx of capital allows local vendors, guest houses, and Trinidadian tourism to profit as a whole. But at what cost? By driving away the people that it used to attract, carnival becomes an international event with only peripheral local articulation. As a local journalist told me “Locals stay away for financial and cultural reasons. Carnival is big money and how you behave and have fun has become institutionalised.” Capital has no regard for historical and cultural sensibilities. The only protest I saw at carnival was the silent retreat from participating in the mainstream aspect of carnival, or the slow lethargic movement of bodies making way for the police as they made their presence felt. The Black lower class so often represented within a discourse of carnival-as-protest occupies a very different space than what I had been conditioned to expect. Stereotyped and profit-margined, carnival, now more than ever, is slave to capital in a way that requires new discourses on the carnivalesque, ones that go well beyond the old staples of opposition and play.

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## Second World: The New Europe Recalls Its Working Memory

Charity Scribner (New York)

The fanfare of May Day 2004 celebrated the formal entrance into the European Union of ten former Soviet satellites. But in 1996, when the EU began its preparations for eastward expansion, an obituary for the ideals of socialism had already appeared on the streets of Berlin. Framed with a black border, the notice invited the public to join a funeral procession that led from the Memorial Church in the western half of the city, across the dividing line of the former Berlin Wall, to a “Cemetery of the Welfare State” temporarily marked out in the East. The artists who orchestrated this performance struck a peculiar chord—one that resonated not only in Germany, but also in the rest of Europe. For, although many Europeans considered the project to build a workers’ state a failure, they nonetheless have proceeded to mourn its collapse.

This collective sorrow has motivated a proliferation of literary texts and artworks that survey the wreckage of socialism and its industrial remains. John Berger’s trilogy of novels *Into Their Labours*, the Mekons’ politically conscious recordings *Punk Rock and Rock n’ Roll*, and Wolfgang Becker’s film *Goodbye Lenin!* are just three examples of this cultural field. These requiems for the socialist collective do not simply indulge in melancholia for an idealised communist or welfare state of the past. Rather, they heighten the awareness that something is missing from the present. State socialism’s ruin signalled that industrial modernity had exhausted its utopian potential.

Writers and artists in both Eastern and Western Europe look back from our digital age to the moment when the promise of solidarity manifested itself among men and women who laboured together in factories. This collective hope was shared by miners in England, laundresses in France, and machinists in the Germanies and Poland. Yet it registered most deeply in the former people’s republics which the new world order has now pronounced obsolete. In eastern Germany factories fall into decay but have not yet been fully supplanted by the informational economies of late capitalism. As a result, cities like Chemnitz (formerly Karl-Marx-Stadt) lie at the threshold between Europe’s industrial

and postindustrial moments. Wasting pockets of this “second world” also persist in the outskirts of Manchester, Lille, Turin, and other Western metropolises, but it is the East that stalls most momentarily in the shadow of heavy industry’s eclipse.

A lull in the rampant march of “progress” discloses something that the new Europe, as a whole, cannot afford to leave behind: a means of collective experience that provides a singular perspective on its former counterparts: the “first world” and the “third” that were fixed in a hierarchy. As the traffic condenses between the first and third worlds, a new “empire” emerges in which old boundaries dissolve—obscuring the second world that once mediated between them. Yet today, when the forces of globalisation are smoothing over Europe’s industrial wastelands, some cultural producers hold on to the second world’s cultural memory, claiming its remainders as sites of reflection and resistance.

Some policy makers see EU expansion as a sign that Eastern Europe has weathered the storm of postcommunist transition, that history is no longer out of joint. German Finance Minister Hans Eichel credited his government for guiding workers out of industrial plants and into part-time jobs in digital technology. “They used to say, ‘the smokestacks are really smoking,’” Eichel quipped, “but now it’s better said that ‘the mice are clicking away.’” Although unfortold opportunities await Europeans working in the new information economies, what they stand to lose is the common space of the shop floor. With each mouse click, another factory lamp blinks out.

Although Thatcher, Kohl, and Reagan might like to take credit for vanquishing the “evil empire,” part of the truth of state socialism’s dissolution lies in the West’s lucrative digital leap in the postwar years. Eastern European planners saw their economies’ imminent failure, and staked everything on the outside chance that they might compete favourably in the production of microchips and memory boards. In the late 1980s, East German authorities, in particular, found themselves in a contest between cybertech and collapse. Although engineers in the Dresden-based

concern Robotron made valiant efforts to stay competitive, they were ultimately done in by the upstarts in Silicon Valley.

The market transition from heavy industry to IT has left its imprint upon European culture. One example of this is the shifting meaning of the expression “working memory.” Metaphorically, working memory is that which remains “in living memory.” In the lexicon of digital technology, however, it designates random-access memory: the space of temporary storage. Our recollection of life under socialism now hovers at this level. It remains to be determined how the second world’s history might be retained. Will it be permanently inscribed into Europe’s collective memory or merely deleted from the disk? This question opens up a new channel of critical inquiry. Examining the culture that recalls waning modes of labour entails, at the same stroke, analysing the process of recollection itself. Here the memory of work mingles together with the work of memory.

With the turn of May 1, 2004 the cultures of Eastern and Western Europe merged onto the Infobahn of late capitalism, taking even greater distance from the second world. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri might see this as an occasion to eulogise “the lightness and joy of being communist.” But for many writers and artists on the left, the fallout of the last century’s socialist crisis calls for an elegy.

Today the insistence on labour’s emancipatory potential appears conclusively discredited. Yet while the search continues for alternative strategies, many ask how to navigate the transition from collective, material production to a life channelled by the symbolic exchange of the global economy. Postcommunist societies in Europe have already registered the first shocks of this shift: as full digital agency is effectively limited to privileged individuals, the rest are left to feel shut out from the future. Bereft, many un- and under-employed workers turn either to retrograde communist ideologues or towards right-wing populism, and the leaders of these groups seem to be the only ones still concerned with the labourers’ collective plight. However, the opposition between the brave new (media)

world and the extremists' reaction to it is of little matter. What threatens to disappear from the new Europe is the concrete site of collective labour and, not least, the sense of solidarity that materialised there. This loss can no more be recompensed by any virtual community than it can be requited by a return to traditional values or submission to leftist melancholia.

The authors and artists who survey second-world culture aim to salvage from the factory hour not the mechanical function of managed labour, but rather the collective sites of resistance that also occupied that historical moment, the downtime, for example, when a steel press would unexpectedly call for repair. The exchange of glances across a com-

bine. The sigh at the siren, and the group exit out of the factory gates. The critical minds of postcommunist Europe do not take us back to the factory. They look for something to take out of it: the intractable moments of solidarity among men and women that did not square with the Market or the Plan.

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## Classes and Struggles

### The *jour fixe initiative berlin* presents its current program:

The *jour fixe initiative berlin* is a group of radical Leftists that is trying to provide a place to discuss issues of theoretical and political importance to the Left. For several years now, the *jour fixe initiative berlin* organises programs of lectures and discussions on radical theory and politics. Combining and confronting critical theories, particularly Frankfurt School theory, postmodernist theory, and postcolonial theory, these programs want to address crucial aspects of theory, culture and society. Programs included topics such as "Theories on Fascism," "How To Become A Stranger," "History after Auschwitz" and "Lines of Flight of Exile." In our current program "Classes and Struggles," we are investigating the history and perspectives of social struggles, as well as theories and ideologies that try, or tried, to provide a basis for these struggles.

The radical change and abolition of social domination is the main message of the politics of emancipation. While conservative thought sees the splitting of society into rich and poor as a natural development, whereby liberalism plays an active role in encouraging the split, social-revolutionary and socialist movements have attempted to fundamentally change social relationships. Class struggle was the parole used to define the driving force in history and to give a political perspective to the analysis of capital. The fact that this perspective has lost its eminence is reason enough to question the state of social struggle in our time.

The emancipation of the individual, the removal of irrational and immediate conditions of force and the rationalisation of material production were possibilities and promises of the bourgeois revolution. Yet under the conditions of capitalist production, the free development of the individual soon reached its limits—limits

which the proletariat as the revolutionary subject of history should sweep away. Whereas Marxism has mainly identified class-consciousness with the working class and with its avant-garde, imperialism, nationalism and the culture industry have suppressed and weakened it, and they have tamed the antagonism between labour and capital. The present subject under capitalism—lumpenproletariat, workers made redundant, depressive managers—all of them find themselves, regardless of bourgeois contracts, in a state of struggle with everyone else. The horror of civil-war economies in the disintegrating post-colonial states in Africa and other parts of the world testifies to a global war that takes place in the periphery but is seen as clash of cultures, humanitarian intervention and war against terror. Critical discussion of these and other ideologies is often lacking. It should be able to criticise a way of thought in such a manner as to make its relationship to society visible.

The new Left has taken leave of the determinist view of history which automatically sees the working class as the revolutionary subject. The opposition—in view of the irreconcilable contradictions which appear in capitalist society—cannot be fixed to a single class. Within this context various civil movements, such as the women's movement, the ecological movement and the civil-rights movement, began to demand their political rights. However, the struggle for political and cultural recognition has often lost sight of the economic basis of society or was itself in service of capitalist modernisation. The question still remains as to how a movement which is scattered among various milieus can form coalitions in order to gain political hegemony and question the ruling character of the state.

Capitalist socialisation has always succeeded in either eliminating or integrating revolutionary forces which have arisen out of exploitation and suffering. This refers particularly to the internalisation of capitalist work-norms and the resulting idealisation of labour in the Marxist labour movement. It led to the "conformity" which Walter Benjamin saw established in the social-democratic movement from the very beginning, and which he attributed to a "corrupted definition of work." It is no accident that emancipatory and anti-emancipatory tendencies and ideas of social and national liberation have always been mixed in the history of class struggle. The more general and global capitalism becomes, the more opaque this mixture becomes. For the social struggles of the present, the constitution of the subject and its position in capitalism is of decisive importance when discussing possibilities of overcoming capitalism.

The fact that no political movement based on class lines exists in Germany today which has been able to transform this society—or even make a modest attempt at doing so—does not mean that we are not living in a class society. A part of this class society, together with a social-democratic government, has been openly waging class war for the past few years, yet it has been unable at any time to bring the other side to pick up the gauntlet. With very few exceptions, not even the radical Left was able to realise the danger or take advantage of the situation.

As a part of our series of lectures, which has included "Critical Theory and Post-structuralism," "Theories of Fascism—A Critique of Society," "How Does One Become a Stranger?" and "Lines of Flight of Exile," we now want to address the question as to why no



movement has arisen in Germany, Europe and the rest of the world—which at least reaches the dimensions of May 1968 in France despite the frontal attack on modest—yet hard-fought—standards of living. The unfettered implementation of the capitalist market appears to be more successful the more ruthlessly and arrogantly it proceeds. Do the current protests directed against social declassification and cuts in social welfare articulate a class-consciousness, or do movements which confine themselves to the economic interests of their own clientele have nothing to do with class? Are, for example, parts of the anti-globalisation movement the inheritors of the class struggle? Are they even taking new forms? Or are they just another form of its mystification?

The paternalistic welfare-state of the 60's and 70's was, on the one hand, an instrument of capitalist integration. On the other hand, the relatively well-developed social-welfare systems of the western industrial states can also be interpreted as a result of class struggle—achievements which are not to be given up without a fight. This is the dilemma—the state as guarantor of social rights is also the institution of domination, which regulates social struggle and guarantees the utilisation and exploitation of labour.

For Adorno, in the administrated world and particularly after Auschwitz, the possibility of emancipatory praxis is blocked for the long term. However, Adorno did not reject praxis on principle—he calls for a reflection upon the conditions of praxis to safeguard the idea of emancipation against blind action. Instead of trusting the rebellious subject, which arises spontaneously and voluntarily, Adorno is interested in the moment where the deformed consciousness denies its own deformation. The question remains as to whether a revolutionary consciousness can be formed or if, at least, the idea of a fair society remains in an engagement for humanity which focuses on the individual and not neces-

sarily on the change of social conditions.

Marcuse, Bourdieu, Deleuze, Negri/Hardt and others stick to the idea that class struggle is the motor of history—even when the classes are fragmented and the struggles have diversified. On the global level the obvious question remains: Is the fragmentation of society and the diversification of struggles so far advanced that the emancipatory perspectives of the anti-capitalist struggle are lost rather than being spread? The old hope that a revolutionary potential particularly exists in the periphery has faded away. Instead, all kinds of religious and ethnic fundamentalisms have arisen as alternatives to take its place.

The international Left, however, does not exist in a historical void, but can refer to the Paris Commune, the Spanish civil war, May 68 in France, experiments in Middle and South America, as well as other political struggles. The knowledge of past struggles is just as important for revolutionary struggles as their economic and social position. Even the losers of history are political subjects. They have never acquiesced to their destinies—they attacked the existing conditions of control. Battles are being fought against the state and corporations in France to gain improvements in social conditions, yet no such consciousness exists in Germany which is based on historical experiences of social struggle. In Germany, corporate social and labour contracts were established after the era of national-socialism. When social achievements are seen as a “fair” system of distribution administered by the state, but not as a result of class struggle, then there is usually no readiness to defend these gains from attack.

What happened in France in 1968 can be seen as the most radical attempt to change society in a highly-developed capitalist country—a struggle which brought forth new forms of class struggle but did not succeed. As opposed to France and Italy, the '68 movement in Germany never managed to form an alliance with workers and labour unions. Whereas the

sympathies with the working class remained but an exercise for the intellectuals, the labour unions saw the anti-authoritarian student revolt as an attack upon their corporate policies. Certainly one should not overemphasise the impact of their attempts, but Leftist intellectuals in France in the post-war era saw themselves as allies of the working class. It is in this tradition that Foucault, Bourdieu or Derrida took part in the social struggles of the declassified, emigrants and workers.

Capitalism is no bitter fate—it is the result of uninterrupted class struggle carried out both secretly and in the open. It is neither abstract nor eternal, but rather historical and regionally specific in its peculiarity. It is both the historical and current forms of social movements that contributions to this series of lectures should address. How did the forms of socialisation arise in which these struggles are constituted yet at the same time often hinder their own realisation? How is one to gauge the theories and ideologies which have been formulated in the context of these struggles? The fuzziness of the front lines in the class-struggle of the present makes the answers to these questions as difficult as they are necessary. Most importantly, how can a political subject be constituted when the economic and social basis necessary for its survival has been removed? How is emancipation possible under these circumstances?

The program did start in January 2004, but will last until June 2005. As every program, the lectures will be available in print after the program is finished. Already known, the *jour fixe initiative berlin* would be happy to get in touch with anybody interested in our debates. For this purpose, some of the lectures of this program, as well as of former programs, are also available online. For contact, detailed programs and more information, please visit:

[www.jourfixe.net](http://www.jourfixe.net).

# Creativity and Power in the Age of Interactivity

*Alexander Bard and Jan Söderqvist (Stockholm)*

**Social change is always a matter of** technology and the way we communicate. True change of the conditions of power and creativity can always be traced back to a groundbreaking technological innovation: spoken language, written language, the printing press, and so on. Capitalism and industrialism would, for example, be unthinkable without the revolution of print: books, newspapers and paper money. Printed language gradually made it possible to think differently about oneself and the world.

History, as seen through the eyes of the netizens of today's informational world, is no longer synonymous with the classic narrative of kings and battlefields, but rather a popular version of Henri Bergson's "la longue duree", slow movements driven by technological change, where a small number of innovations result in sudden mutations of the fundamental conditions of social co-existence. The most recent revolution on a major scale in communication technology is digital interactivity. Given time it will also change everything: from the way we form our social identities to the ways politics, media and culture work. The Net is bound to become the new, metaphysical center of the contemporary worldview. One-way communication is no longer attractive and therefore no longer valid as a foundation and method of power. So ours is the golden age of the netocrat, the socially skilled communicator and distributor of information. Consequently, it is time for sociology to view interactivity in this new light, and to appreciate its truly revolutionary implications. From an activist perspective, the concept of interactivity needs to be saved from its current function as a sloppy cliché in the commercial arena and be brought back to the academic fold. The same goes for the related, originally Derridean concept of The Event.

The shift from one-way communication to interactivity as the major mode of communication and power distribution changes values and valuations in a most dramatic fashion. The every-day questions of what should be done, and why this is the case, require new answers. A perfect example of the on-going revolution is the changed meaning of the powerful concept of creativity. In an

industrialist society, with its focus on the entrepreneurship of factory owners and the qualifications of industrial workers, creativity was seen as a combination of the entrepreneur's individual talent for exploitation and skilled craftsmanship. Consequently, Art was to be produced by The Artist, a hermit at the margins of society, a heavily romanticized, isolated genius of entrepreneurship and craftsmanship. To be creative meant to be good at producing decorations for the factories and homes of the bourgeoisie in splendid isolation. The Artist was revered but not to be taken seriously. As a token of appreciation he might be invited as an eccentric entertainer to the dinner parties of the bourgeoisie. Although some older artists still do their best to live up to this dated cliché—heavily supported by nostalgic media critics and badly informed social theorists alike—anybody interested in artistic expression within the fast-growing and increasingly dominant virtual communities of informationalism knows perfectly well that creativity has taken on a radically different meaning. After the Cartesian concept of The Individual went to its grave with industrialism, and after the Deleuzian concept of The Dividual has turned out as a superior formula for social success in the informational world, creativity is naturally no longer attached to a faith in the individual genius. Instead, geniality is becoming a truly social phenomenon, a collective process that requires the input of an extensive network of people. Who needs inventors anymore, when The New requires costly but glamorous research and development departments?

This explains why it's not meaningful to talk about creative individuals any longer, but rather about creative networks, communities, milieus or contexts. Belonging to such a network, being able to make a substantial contribution through interaction and remaining a valued participant, is the new, more low-key ideal. The undisputable goal of the collective process is The Event, the new metaphysical ideal that is replacing the dated concept of Progress from the old capitalist paradigm.

The question is no longer whether I am creative and how this can be expressed, but rather how I can find a

creative milieu where I, as a dividual rather than an individual, can both become part of Creativity and establish myself as instrumental to the The Creativity-Event in question.

To take an example from our own personal experiences: the current paradigm shift in values and valuations explains why we find the recent revolution in music production so incredibly interesting. Sociologists, critics and entrepreneurs alike have long focused on the arrival during the 20th century of recording technologies and electric and electronic instrumentation as the true revolutions of music production. However, none of these technological innovations can compete sociologically with the implications of the arrival of interactive media technologies applicable to music production.

New, temporary and fast-changing creative environments—referred to as laptop music production—have arrived, making both the traditional recording studio and musical instruments, even of the electronic variety, completely redundant. World-class music productions can and are now being made in kitchens and airport lounges alike around the world, rather than inside the walls of recording studios in a few select metropolitan areas. Furthermore, these laptops are not at all like the isolated mammoth tools of the classic recording studios, since they are all constantly interconnected with each other.

The creative process now is neither materially nor mentally the project of the isolated musical genius, but rather a constantly on-going process without centers or pre-set limitations, racing ahead at the speed of light between thousands of laptop computers. If the tag of creativity is to be applied anywhere in this process, it must be applied to The Event itself, the process as a whole, rather than to just one isolated aspect. This is also increasingly what happens, even if social critics have so far totally missed out on the revolution. The traditional rock'n'roll band with its seasonal modi of creative contemplation, songwriting, rehearsing, recording, promoting and touring is a stone-dead concept. Nothing could be less interesting or sexy in the new interactive environment. Rather, music is

becoming pure production and re-production. Inspiration, songwriting, rehearsing, recording and performing have all become intertwined and can no longer be separated from each other in any meaningful way. The previously distinct roles of the social dramaturgy now overlap each other. The face fronting a project has become a matter of convenience rather than the promotion of a specific individual musical genius—in contemporary dance music the front is often one of the supposed consumers rather than one of the consumers—since the traditional concept or The Artist no longer has any credibility.

The Star is Dead! Or rather, The Star has become an underclass phenomenon, given artificial life in fake talent shows on tv like “Fame Academy” or “Pop Idol”, media formats that carry no interest whatsoever to the new netocratic elite. Pop stars are only seen as a marketing stunt aimed at unsophisticated consumers.

As a consequence, creativity has become an attribute reserved for the confines of network dynamics. As philosophers, we hope to inspire sociologists and social theorists alike to take a new and strong interest in the effects of the ongoing technological revolution. Not only

because the brand new world of art and music production is fascinating and inspiring, but also because it is quickly becoming a major aspect of power production in the informational society and as such must immediately become the subject of a sharp social critique. We therefore leave this opening argument of the archaeological endeavor into the creativity of interactivity with what we believe is the most relevant question for the sociological undertakings of the netocratic age: Where is the Frankfurt School of digital interactivity when we so desperately need it?

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## Art in the Right Place?

*Rosie Wright (Bristol)*

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to.  
—Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness* 1973:10

**At fifteen-feet high, anti-contagious and civilizing in pure white classical marble,** pregnant British woman Alison Lapper, who has no arms and shortened legs due to a congenital disorder called phocomelia, will sit in pristine wholeness on the fourth plinth in the north-west corner of Trafalgar Square in London, from spring 2005 until the summer of 2006. Surrounded by commanding military heroes, excluding a replica of British football hero David Beckham and a stone cow, the fourth plinth has remained empty since 1841 when it was built by the architect of Trafalgar Square, Sir Charles Barry. Originally meant to display an equestrian statue but left empty due to insufficient funds, this year London Mayor Ken Livingston assigned “The Fourth Plinth Project” as part of his “Culture Strategy” for London. In March, a panel of specialist advisors recommended there be one temporary work of art that would be on the plinth for fifteen months; the public could “vote” but these would not be classified as votes and only the specialists could make the final choices. Chosen from a group of six leading national and international contemporary artists, which included Chris Burden, Sokari Douglas Camp, Stefan Gec and Sarah Lucas, British artist Marc Quinn’s sculpture “Alison Lapper Pregnant” was

chosen by the Fourth Plinth Commission group in March 2004, to be replaced by Thomas Schütte’s pigeon “Hotel for the Birds” in 2006.

Despite the Chair of the London regional council of Arts Council England, Lady Hollik, advocating that “London is not a museum piece... the historic and the contemporary sit side by side, distinct in their diversity yet combining to produce a fresh landscape,” it appears that it is easy to get sentimental where, within the language that celebrates difference, stereotypes can re-blossom and imitation allows us to be closed to learning. With the placing of Lapper in a public city space whose dominant historical text is that of heroism, some of us are slipping into a different kind of present response than one of “Travulgar Square” British tabloid press disgust at bad taste, political-correctness-gone-mad shock art. Instead we slide into another historically established order: one of sentimentality and high-flying well-brought-up morality. Facing the heroic Lord Nelson in wholeness and beauty, Lapper is our ultimate modern conquer—“I pay taxes, I am a single mother...”—whose sculpture acts, according to Lapper, as a “tribute to femininity, disability and motherhood.” She is a steadfastly self-affirmed, a self-sufficient individual and, to Quinn, repre-

sents the contemporary heroine. He says of his series of limbless sculptures:

Even if they refer to the sculpture of the past, they seem to me to be about the future, which is about difference and diversity. They’re celebrations of difference and of the triumph of the human spirit. Hero’s are people who conquer themselves and go on to lead full lives.”

Reverenced and idealized, Lapper’s life career becomes the thread of the story in a work of fiction. She exists within the same museum-narrative of revenge, punishment, reward and retribution that we use to understand Lord Nelson’s Imperialist History and the colonization of the contagious savage other who is overcome by the civilizing hero; celebration and acceptance only exist for difference that can become triumph by way of such an heroic individual. Quinn’s winning this public art competition has, it seems, helped Lapper to become the embodiment of a hegemonic Imperial British history, of a way of thinking that fetishises the story of the eye—Nelson, in the battle of Copenhagen, knowing that there was no time to flee, put his blind eye to his telescope and saying, “I don’t see the signal,” and so continued to fight and crushed the Danish fleet—that signifies bravery and a patriotic love of coun-

try that excludes different perspectives and voices beyond the heroic.

In commenting on Bataille's *Story of the Eye* (1928), Roland Barthes writes:

Its story is that of migration, the cycle of the avatars it passes through, far removed from its original being, down the path of a particular imagination that distorts but never drops it. (2001:119)

The eye for Barthes acts as an endless metaphor, a chain without a beginning that has no hierarchy of meaning. Open and out of reach of interpretation, there is no place for a secret reference behind the signifier. Douglas Camp's sculpture *No-o-war-r No-o-war-r* aims to "depict ordinary people as heroes"; as complex and conflicted beings, full of doubt, hesitation, anger and conviction, Douglas Camp describes them as akin to Rodin's sculpture of all six of *The Burgbers of Calais*. The equal status of her protesters acknowledges the context of Trafalgar Square as an historical place of continuing protest and the assertion of rights by ordinary people. By refusing to

stamp identities and form distinctions in diversity, her sculpture does not contribute to the process of creating totalizing modern moulds. The Fourth Plinth Project advisors turned a blind eye to the millions who demonstrated in Trafalgar Square against the war in Iraq in 2003, and who have demonstrated there throughout its history, crushing alternative perspectives and upholding the Victory of neo-colonial thought. Simultaneously, the myopic board coordinate their own self-affirmation through a sense of social duty and have thus prevented Londoners the right to explore public spaces such as Trafalgar Square and learn an unexpected education.

In a world that is maintained by inequality, historic love is belief in an idea of science, knowledge and ethics to which you can sacrifice yourself. Within the archive of such a love, the perception of disease at the heart of modern living must be controlled and purified in order to free us from imagined threat and continuous conflict. The Fourth Plinth Project, goes

on Lady Hollick, "at its heart aims to encourage Londoners to engage with the arts and with their environment in new ways." In many ways I would have to disagree. Marc Quinn's sculpture offers only one history, one perspective, one hero. Instead of "producing fresh landscapes," this sculpture acts to maintain the stench of diseased old ones.

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## On Statues.

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### Hindutva is prone to statues.

The installation of the Ram statue in the Babari mosque in Ayodhya in 1949 opened up the Hindutva-driven campaign to overturn India's commitment to republicanism. Free of British authoritarianism, Indian politicians were in the process of drafting a Constitution to endow each citizen with the norms of bourgeois equality, when the Ram statue appeared. It challenged their unfinished work. The statue's presence signaled Hindutva's desire for India to be a state that offered preferential citizenship to the Hindu majority, and to shun Muslims to the nation's margins. Ram's statue in a little-used mosque named after the first Mughal Emperor of India symbolically made Hindutva's case against the creation of a secular Indian citizenry.

In late 2002, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the main electoral arm of the axis of right-wing Hindutva organizations, pushed its coalition government, the National Democratic Alliance, to install a statue of its ideological hero, Veer Damodar Savarkar, into the Central Hall of the Indian Parliament. After con-

certed opposition to this move, the BJP reduced the demand from stone to oil and, in early 2003, hung a portrait of the man in Sansad Bhavan. The nuclear scientist turned President of India, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, unveiled the picture to the shouts of BJP Members of Parliament; *Swatantrayaveer Savarkar Amar Rabe*, they yelled, "Long Live Freedom Fighter Savarkar."

Between the stories of the two images lies an enormous gulf. The first act came in the darkness, surreptitiously. Relatively unknown people snuck into the mosque and placed the idols. They bet that some might take this as the miraculous appearance of Ram to reclaim an India that had been conquered by outsiders. The only "Indians" that would count for this India had to be people willing to prostrate themselves before Ram. Whatever the actual motives of the people who put the idols into the mosque, the forces of Hindutva soon took up the charge and tried to convert the mosque into a temple dedicated to what they claim is the birthplace of Ram. The movement went nowhere until the 1980s.

In the 1980s, Hindutva's chiefs pushed the Ayodhya issue as their March on Rome. Veteran Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) member and a BJP leader, L. K. Advani led the assault on secularism with his insistence that "pseudo-secularism" had corrupted India, and that the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya (what he called the *dhancha*, or "structure") and the erection of a Ram temple, would restore the nation to its glory and the people to the path of paradise. It was a powerful message across the class divide. The Ayodhya campaign certainly contributed toward the BJP's electoral upsurge and eventual leadership of a rag-tag coalition of regional parties that won power in 1998 and tried their best to take control of the apparatus of the Indian state.

When the BJP, therefore, chose to honor its main political ideologue, Savarkar, by first naming the airport at Port Blair (Andaman Islands) and then by the installation of his statue in Parliament, this action came from strength. These events did not take place at night, but in the plain light of day. In

fact, Advani opened the proceedings at Port Blair with a speech that acknowledged the immense influence of Savarkar on him personally and on the movement in general (indeed, the word Hindutva had been coined Savarkar in his 1923 book of that name). "There is no reason to fight shy of Hindutva, propounded at great length by Veer Savarkar," Advani told the crowd on May 4, 2002. "It's an all-encompassing ideology with its roots in the country's heritage." Until this speech, the BJP movement shied away from Savarkar, mainly because he had earned a scurrilous reputation as one of those accused in the 1948 assassination of M. K. Gandhi. Now, with the BJP in power for half a decade, and with Hindutva unashamed of its murky heritage, government history books were being rewritten to give people like Savarkar a central role in the nationalist struggle against the British rule, and the monuments of the state could now honor people such as him.

The elections of 2004 stunned the BJP, as many of them begun to think that their thousand-year Raj had only just begun. How could the voters have turned them away with a shrug, almost with the same kind of nonchalance that brought them to power in 1998? In the 1950s, the secular nationalist leader of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, had spoken of the dams and factories as the "new temples of India." The freedom movement that produced a secular government for India recognized that one of its principle planks had been economic nationalism. What

moved people to Gandhi's Salt March was that they had to pay a salt tariff to brutal rulers, and what enthralled them to his spinning wheel was that it was a critique of the extraction of raw materials from India to Manchester, and the import of finished goods from there to impoverished cotton farmers. To ignore the important work of the creation of a national economy that worked to the benefit of all citizens would have been suicidal for free India. Nehru knew that, so he moved away from the British use of religion and adopted a modified version of import-substitution, the new religion among the hungry nations that formed the Group of 77 within the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Feed the stomach and the soul will follow.

Hindutva reversed the logic: enflame the soul and the stomach can be forgotten. Until the late 1970s, the Nehru model had reasonable success. India's growth rate increased, its food production followed and, even though inequity had not been denied, the rhetoric continued to favor the poor. All this ended when the Congress Party abandoned the poor for the IMF. The World Bank became more significant than the rural banks. As the Congress walked away from the poor, it also stepped away from its version of nationalism. Nothing remained. Hindutva entered the empty space and nailed its patriotism on the temple door. To build a temple to God became the new patriotism, not to build the temples of industry and science.

Hindutva maintained the myth of patriotism even as it continued to transfer economic power from the Indian state to Indian and non-Indian gangster corporations. Hindutva became the Indian version of McJihad (the careful negotiation between corporate privatization—Mc—and reactionary fundamentalism—Jihad).

Does the ouster of the BJP in the federal election bode any better for monumental symbolism in India? The Congress-led government in power turns to the mausoleums of dead Gandhis: Indira and Rajiv, both murdered while Prime Minister, and the unrelated Gandhi, the Mahatma, also killed in his line of duty. Since the Congress too has no economic agenda *for the people*, it must create a mythic patriotism, although these new temples will be to the dynasty of the Gandhis rather than to the dynasty of the Hindu pantheon.

I am left to ask what should be an obvious question: where is the statue of the unknown farmer, whose children now commit suicide by drinking fertilizer that is otherwise too expensive to use on their fields? The very tragedy of this sentence shows that stone idols are of no consequence. What needs to be remembered here is not the past, however long-lived has been the rivalry. The farmer needs no statue, because the farmers are alive, inflamed and ready for a history that does not look back to commemorate what has betrayed them.

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## On Elections and Anniversaries

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After five years of right-wing religious fanatical rule in India, the United Progressive Alliance has taken power in elections held in May 2004. In a sleight of hand reminiscent of epic stories from another era, the Italian-born daughter-in-law of Indira Gandhi handed over the seat of Prime Minister to a neo-liberal economist and be-turbanned Congressman, Manmohan Singh. High drama indeed, though barely commented on by the British educated classes, and then by the likes of George Monbiot— that well known expert on India!—in the *New Statesman* magazine.<sup>14</sup> Whatever the

motivation of Sonia Gandhi to hand over the seat of power, the outcome remains that she now reigns like the Queen, overlooking the shoulders of those in government, unassailable, until perhaps her offspring are ready to continue the dynasty. But these fables of queens and courtiers mask conspiracies, such as Sonia Ji's involvement in the death of Indira Gandhi, whose last breath was taken in the lap of her daughter-in-law. A spurned son waiting to take over the country overlooks the death of his mother and oversees the carnage of thousands of Sikhs as revenge. These divergences lead

me to my main concern.

The installation of Manmohan Singh as the Prime Minister of the Indian Republic deserves attention for what it hides rather than reveals. An Oxbridge-trained economist who did the work of the IMF and World Bank as India's Finance Minister in the early 1990s, Singh's neo-liberal impulses are now circumscribed by the largest bloc of communist MLAs (Members of Legislative Assembly) that the parliament has seen. The coalition of parties is standing on a ticket of secularism and pro-poor policies that belies the policies and practices of

previous Congress governments. But of course anything is better than the BJP and the associated extreme right-wing bigots of the RSS and VHP—so the story goes. Rhetorically the climate will change, but the outcomes for Muslims and other minorities remain to be seen, let alone for the increasingly disenfranchised rural peasants and urban poor.

These macro-political machinations have played out in two separate but related arenas concerning Manmohan Singh's Punjabi and Sikh identity. The first concerns his birth place in village Gah, in Chakwal district in what is now Pakistan. This has been greeted with some amusement in the press, where the ruler of Pakistan, General Musharraf, was born in New Delhi, in what is now India, and so now the same for the Prime Minister of India. This has given some fillip for the peace process, though no great solace to the impoverished peoples of both states. Yet the arrival of a visible Sikh also revokes connections for Pakistan in terms of both those who were left after partition and converted to Islam, as well as the tacit state support given to the Sikh separatist movement in the 1980s. These multiple invocations are not at all concerned with the personality or character of Manmohan Singh, who has always been loyal to his class rather than ethnic/religious identity, but have provoked comment and debate in India and Pakistan.

The second arena concerns the year in which Manmohan Singh became Prime Minister. Though the arbitrary nature of anniversaries does warrant concern, the fact that twenty years have passed since the ransacking of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the subsequent assassination of Indira Gandhi, and the massacre of Sikhs in urban centres throughout North India, again has generated a certain amount of debate. The BBC World Service reeled out the tired Mark Tully (I thought he had disputed

with and left the corporation?) to revisit Punjab and notably the Sikh diaspora to assess the impact of the events of 1984. The media in India and Punjab presented the appointment of Manmohan Singh as a potential step towards reconciliation between the Congress party and the Sikh political leadership. This viewpoint though was set against the background of nobody being found guilty of orchestrating the violence against Sikhs in 1984, and the re-election into the Congress party of those who have been accused—by independent civil society organizations—of organizing lynch mobs at that time. Indeed, Singh's rhetoric since taking up office has been replete with conciliatory words about the Gujarat pogroms and anti-Sikh violence of 1984. But, given that he is now leader (but not overall in charge) of the party that was involved in perpetrating the violence upon Sikhs, it is unlikely that any action will be taken.

Ten years ago we were involved in the production of a theatre performance titled "Bullets through the Golden Stream" (Writer and Director: Raminder Kaur), which attempted to portray the events of 1984 through the eyes of a family who were on a visit to Punjab from England. The play offered an expression of the multiple and complex emotions that the storming of the Golden Temple evoked, and the immense impact it had on the lives of British and other diasporic Sikh communities. Crucially it offered a way of criticizing the Indian state as well as the separatist movement, given its focus on individual lives. At this twentieth anniversary of that event, the space for articulating protest will be mainly occupied by those who have an explicit agenda for the creation of a theocratic Sikh state. Demonstrations are planned in Hyde Park for June 20th and several conferences will no doubt follow. To be critical of the Indian state and not support Sikh separatists makes attendance at these demonstrations a difficult task. This does

not mean that to engage in this protest would be a full endorsement of the political views of the organizers but, just as in the anti-Rushdie demonstrations, there are other political positions at stake. During the main Rushdie demonstration in London, there was a counter protest by Women Against Fundamentalism, while others found themselves caught between, wishing to protest against state racism against Muslims but unable to engage in the vitriol of the death sentence on Rushdie.

Perhaps these symbolic reckonings place too much emphasis on the role of Manmohan Singh's Sikh identity. They lead us up too many avenues where the issues of class are not clearly articulated. Perhaps it is wiser to consider the other main player in the constitution of the new Indian government, an (even) older player than Singh in the political game. Though also a turbanned man, we would be more concerned with the politics of Surjit Singh Harkishan, the leader of the Communist Party of India and the lynchpin in securing the stability (or not) of the new government. But here again we might be disappointed in the rhetoric of empowerment of the peasantry and the working class, and the actions taken on the ground. It may be wrong to too quickly dismiss the potentials of an Indian communist-controlled, secular government, but it is also too difficult to ignore the lessons of the many anniversaries of massacres and state violence that punctuate India's post-Independence history.

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14. "That was the vote. Now for the real election": *New Statesman*, George Monbiot May 31 2004. There is little of value in the article, let alone insight. Rather, it is an excuse for Monbiot to complain about democracy in general. Nonetheless it illustrates the complete lack of concern by the British media about the election.

## “Can the Subaltern Speak?” A Retro Vision

Anjan Ghosh (Kolkata)

Written and re-written several times,<sup>15</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s celebrated essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” has become emblematic of post-colonial studies, without being limited by it. Much translated, excerpted, anthologized and misunderstood, the title of the essay has become a standard rhetorical gesture of the (un)initiated! If only Stephen Greenblatt’s recommendations to the PMLA had been heeded,<sup>16</sup> this essay could well have stood in for a monograph at an academic tenure committee.

On February 26, 2004 when I walked into the august and apposite precincts of the *Casa Italiana* (Italian Academy for Advanced Studies) at Columbia University, New York, for a day-long symposium on the essay two decades after its publication, little did I anticipate the interest and enthusiasm of the swelling audience. By the end of the day, when it was Spivak’s turn to respond to her interlocutors, long queues of last minute hopefuls had formed outside the auditorium who were kept at bay with great difficulty by the security personnel apprehensive of fire hazards for the old building.

A brief address of welcome by David Freedberg, the Director of the Italian Academy, launched the day’s proceedings, followed by Rosalind Morris’s introductory remarks. As the Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender (IRWaG), at Columbia University, who had organized the symposium, Morris drew attention to several anniversaries being commemorated by the symposium. Not only was the essay twenty years old, the university itself was celebrating its bicentennial even as the IRWaG marked its tenth anniversary. Clearly institutional research-concern on women and gender was of recent vintage!

The morning session commenced with Partha Chatterjee’s “Comments from the Subcontinent,” presented in absentia by Nicholas B Dirks. It recounted the Subaltern Studies encounter with Spivak’s work on the subaltern. He maintained that Spivak’s critical essays on the subaltern<sup>17</sup> displaced the subalternist’s search for the sovereign subject, and made the audience aware that the “historian was merely representing the sub-

altern on the pages of history.” By suggesting that it was more productive to “examine processes through which the subaltern was constructed as the other of the elite,” Spivak ushered in a shift among subalternists, from the enumeration of the authentic subaltern subject to the processes of its representation. Jean Franco’s paper, “Speaking in the Mother Tongue: Women in the Indigenous Movements in Latin America,” dwelt on the withholding of speech as a mode of resistance among the indigenous people’s movements in Latin America. Ritu Birla’s gloss on “Postcolonial Studies: Now That’s History,” called upon the “areas to speak! As a transient visitor to New York from the subcontinent, who had strayed into the symposium, it was interesting to observe the initial audience response to these presentations. A member of the audience queried what all this talk about human rights and alterity would do to the terrorists threatening the U.S.? Alterity was quickly transposed into opposition and threat! While interjecting briefly, Spivak picked up the threads of Franco’s discussion of secrecy as resistance to illustrate her own experiences in South Asia.

The afternoon session “Of Subalternity and Globality” included three papers. Pheng Cheah’s “Bio-power and the New International Division of Reproductive Labor,” took issue with Spivak’s critique of Foucault in the essay and sought to revamp the idea of the New International Division of Labor (NIDL) to account for female work participation in Southeast Asia. His contention, that imported domestic labor from the poorer nations like the Philippines and Indonesia enabled women in more advanced Southeast Asian states like Singapore and Hong Kong to climb the corporate ladder and exercise repressive authority over the former, exemplified the playing out of the NIDL at the regional level. Abdul Jan Mohamed’s paper, “Between Speaking and Dying: Some Imperatives, in the Emergence of the Subaltern in the Context of U.S. Slavery,” engaged with the writings of Frederick Douglass, while Michele Barrett’s “Subalterns at War” articulated the subaltern significations of the war memorial to Indian soldiers at

Nueve Chappelle killed in World War I in France.

The late afternoon session had two papers. Drucilla Cornell’s “Unlicensed Lunacy: Spivak’s Feminism and Human Rights” argued how Spivak’s feminist positioning strengthened the cause of women’s rights. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan’s nuanced interpretation of “Death and the Subaltern” read Bhuvanewari Bhaduri’s death in Spivak’s essay as opening the narrative for critical interlocution instead of terminating it.

This session was followed by a unilateral discursive homage by Homi Bhabha, whose “Untitled Remarks” recalled the functions of iteration in Spivak’s essay. Bhabha’s rapid transit from the symposium allowed little space for dialogue.

As a grand finale, Spivak’s response recalled how the writing of “Can the Subaltern Speak?” was an act of “private piety” on her part, as it involved the death of her grandmother’s sister. She felt that, if the protagonist’s participation in the national movement had been acknowledged and understood, then her grand aunt could have emerged into the public sphere, much in the manner of her own public presence. It was to mark this absence of cognition that she had composed her celebrated essay, as this misrecognition bore the signs of failure of decolonization in the periphery.

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15. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, *Wedge* No. 7/8, 1985; idem: ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg eds: *Marxism and the Interpretation of Cultures*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1988. Idem: *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Calcutta, Seagull Books, 2002, pp. 266-311.

16. Apparently Stephen Greenblatt as President of the Modern Language Association had circulated a letter among its members recommending a rethink on the nature of academic publishing necessary to obtain tenure in top U.S. universities. In view of the crisis in academic publishing, one suggestion among many others was that, instead of monographs, papers in refereed journals could be considered by tenure committees. Cf. John Sutherland: ‘Diary’, *London Review of Books*, January 22, 2004, p. 31.

17. Along with “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. Chatterjee also included Spivak’s essay, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” in Ranajit Guha ed. *Subaltern Studies* VI, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1985.

## Hybridity as Cultural Commodification and National Modernisation

Kien Nghi Ha (Berlin)

Through the reinforcements of border regimes, Western societies are able to control selective immigration. It is a policy based on the functional, but also lustful, demand to accumulate postcolonial VIP-immigrants and their hybrid Diaspora cultures to enrich and to modernize the ageing and declining nation. Even a country like Germany, which is well-known for its political failure to acknowledge its transition to a modern immigration society, is nowadays obsessed with immigrant newcomers. The purpose of this revaluation is to place the White nation in the midst of a colourful Otherness. Formerly rejected and devaluated cultural resources of non-European communities are now desired as productive and exotic ingredients, when it comes to the celebration of the cosmopolitan and high-performing national culture. After a selective procedure, certain People of Colour and Black voices, which fit into the prescribed categories of beauty and attraction, are now regarded as suitable, entertaining and representative. The German pre-selection for the European song contest, *Grand Prix Eurovision 2004*, in a nationwide televised event called *Germany 12 Points!* might be a good case study. Obviously, the participation of immigrants and Germans of Colour are welcomed to secure the top position for Germany. Following the trend of recent years, the national preliminary contest presented above-average performers with migrant or different German backgrounds, like the Arabian-German *Laith Al-Deen*, the Indian-German *Sabrina Setlur* and the “multiracial” boy-group *Overground*. Fabricated by a TV casting show, which was sponsored by a major music label, *Overground* represents, together with other test-tube newcomers like *Become One* and the girl-group *Preluders* (all three bands were set up in November 2003) only the latest outcome of an extremely successful pop product line that started with *No Angels* (2000) and *Bro'Sis* (2001). All these industrially composed bands share in different colour tones an aspiration for a “multiracial” and sexy appearance. The girl-group *Preluders*, a name apparently connected with sexual availability and stimulations like “hussy” (German: Luder) and “fore-

play,” is most consequent in executing this conception: the *Preluders* represent a female mixture of Albanian-German-Italian-South-African-Vietnamese features. This form of “privileging” hybrid Otherness in selective cultural contexts, with industrially defined role models, is reductive and can reinforce racist and sexist stereotypes.

It is worthwhile to reflect how this local situation is connected to a broader development. In recent years we have been facing, on a global scale, the appearance of hybrid constellations in a world system where historical dynamics and geopolitical superiority are calling nostalgically for the horrifying return of late-colonial empire. Ironically, it is often predicted at the same time that the globally overlapping cultural landscapes and economic conjunctures are transformed into a postmodern flow. As some optimistic commentators expect, the location of unbounded culture will become, within this movement, transglobal, and culture itself will turn into both a negotiable site of creative patchwork and a mutual exchange. In this context, the term cultural hybridity serves to name the hope for transgression as well as the availability of new cultural forms, which are no more determined by modernist exclusion and a fixed belonging to identities. However, the longing towards heterogeneous and transnational cultures cannot only be perceived in critical, artistic or academic articulations; it is also noticeable in the cross-bordering formations of popular culture within late-capitalist economy.

If on one hand the borders of prosperity and the so-called homeland security for Western societies are increasingly policed, on the other hand, and not surprisingly, the undeniable effects of globalisation and migration have also shaped a travelling economy of bodies, signs and idioms that operate through combination and re-combination of diverse cultural elements. Instead of celebrating the space won for cultural freedom and permeability, one should be cautious when it comes to thinking about the political potentials of cultural transgressions. First of all, it is necessary to differentiate between hybridity as a process of cultural subversion and subaltern resistance (Homi Bhabha), and hybridity as an industrial

conception for “marketing the margins” and exotica (Graham Huggan), which leads to cultural commercialisation of certain stylish images of Black and immigrant people. While the first understanding of hybridity is based on everyday cultural practices, on ambivalent ways of artistic expressions, and the ongoing identification process of marginalized groups, the second conception of hybridity allows the dominant White self to extend his range of self-definition by consuming and appropriating fashionable and permitted forms of Otherness. Meanwhile, excluded and unwanted Others, who are perceived as traditional or fundamentalist, are forced to remain silent and invisible. Therefore, there is a need to ask if transgressions are free of utilizing interests, societal hierarchies and cultural exclusions, or if they are regulated and exploited by cultural industries and national agencies to achieve pleasure and improved performance. It is important to acknowledge that dominant subjects and national projects are to a certain degree willing and interested to make use of the advantages that cultural diversity and intercultural management is offering.

The blending of gendered and racialised bodies, images and sounds from different national, ethnic and local contexts to create a consumable product is nowadays a common marketing strategy to construct innovative products and to increase their cultural attractiveness. Hybridity as a cultural-industrial technology, to create serial newness through infinite mix and remix, serves to speed up and enlarge the cycles of production, consumption and profits, as we can see in today's economy of Western popular culture: New music trends like Oriental pop, Latin soul or Bhangra beats, that might entertain and enrich the White mainstream society for one or two seasons until they get boring and have to be replaced by another hot, exotic and vivid hybrid music style. It is also not coincidental that recent Hollywood productions make use of “racial” colorization and the stereotypes connected with it to enrich the cinematic atmosphere and to direct humour. The range of these body and identity politics in mega-selling movie sequels starts simply with mixed heroic duos, like in *Men in Black* (Will



Smith/Tommy Lee Jones) or *Rush Hour* (Jackie Chan/Chris Tucker). At the other end of this scale stands the perfectly designed philosophy of the *Matrix*-trilogy, which exhibits hybrid ornaments and trans-cultural settings to an unprecedented extent in mainstream cinema.

As Frederic Jameson has reasoned about in *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1990), industrial hybridity as a postmodern aesthetic form has to be analyzed as a cultural dominant. Among the most important features of the postmodern condition are

the transformations within the mode of production. Compared to earlier stages, late capitalism is characterized by a remarkable shift from material to cultural production. In this process, the material usage of most commodities becomes less important. Furthermore, the material worth of products is increasingly replaced by the fetish characteristics of postmodern commodity. Mike Featherstone describes in *Consumer Culture & Postmodernism* (1991) how products and representations are turning into a site for the creation and transfer of meanings,

images and feelings which enable a different mode of consumption. Interestingly, this shift to cultural impurity and mixing is just one section in a series of newly developed technologies, like the hybrid car, genetic hybridisation and hybrid materials. Hybridisation represents a major technological turn, with great potential and profound societal impact in the future.

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## Ideas of Progress, Civilizational Norms & the Role of Culture: A Report on the 2004 Calcutta “Culture” Conference

Rila Mukherjee, (Kolkata)

### These days aid is big business.

Foreign aid is pouring into Calcutta as never before. DIFD is looking after public health and primary education, the French after solid waste management, the Japanese after roads and highways in West Bengal. The Italians want to look after water treatment, the Germans are already looking into health care. There are rumours that DIFD may soon be paying salaries of civic servants! Red tapism is a thing of the past; West Bengal is the exciting new destination for European investors.

But the experience of aid giving agencies has not always been happy in South Asia, never mind that it also has not always been happy for South Asia. Allegations of corruption and misuse of public funds aside, there is a growing awareness that cultural factors may foster/hinder the effective application of aid. The German aid agency, GTZ, has been particularly alert to this and decided to hold a series of conferences to address this particular problem. The result has been meetings on “Notions of Progress in Different Cultures” in La Paz (Bolivia), Alexandria (Egypt), Calcutta (India), Windhoek (Namibia), Kaliningrad (Russia) and Berlin (Germany), for 2004.

In India the conference, “The Idea of Progress: Does Culture Make a Difference? Progress and Development in India and its Implications for International Co-operation,” was held from 22 to 24 April 2004 in Calcutta. The Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Calcutta and The German

Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ), with support from the United Nations and in association with *The Telegraph* (a popular English daily newspaper with a “trendy” reputation), hosted a lavish three day bash at the glitzy Taj Bengal (a super luxury five star plus) Hotel to discuss if “culture is still important? Are terms like ‘progress’ and ‘development’ trans-cultural and universally applicable, or do they have unique and distinct echoes in every culture?” These fundamental questions were at the heart of a... “searching look at ‘development’ in its Indian application, as well as the possibilities for Indo-German co-operation in development” (official conference report, public circulation).

This is how the schedule read for the inaugural session :

Day 1: 2.04.2004 : 9.30 AM to 11 AM, Dr. Martin Wälde, Director, Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan, Calcutta: “Introductory Remarks,” Franziska Donner, Director, GTZ Berlin, “Prof. Dr.” Constantin von Barlöwen, Paris: “Basic Ideas on Progress and Development in Different Cultures” and Erhard Zander, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Calcutta.

This was obviously meant to be a solemn—indeed *official*—conference, and so it was that disgruntled Maoists, sceptic academics and stoic postmodernists took their seats in anticipation. Academic participants from within India had been “screened” and chosen, not just on reputation for merit, but performance. It was their position in centres and institutes working on economic policy and aid-

implementation that ensured their participation.

Constantin von Barlowen was evidently the star of the show, the brains behind the business and the “idea” behind the series. He was GTZ’s celebrity and a famous “culture studies expert” based in Paris. Just in from La Paz, he was on his way to Windhoek (or was it the other way round?) blazing a super-trail of conferences across the developing world. Calcutta was one of his stopovers to deliberate on the 21st century world society that was in the making.

What he had to say about culture was this: The progress of the idea of “progress” through history meant that while the 19th century gave rise to a certain optimism regarding technology-driven progress, the great wars of the 20th century as well as overpopulation and environmental destruction re-invigorated the ambivalence of modernity, and even a sense of hubris around technology. Modernity, however, is no longer confined to the Western world but is now global, and plural; the task is to understand how it is differently inflected in different places. Globalization has not led to unification of the world as its emphasis is purely economic; cultural differences and their interaction with the new world-system is poorly understood.

This was the “expert’s” speech. Stirring stuff; also rather trite. Von Barlowen then went on to ask the audience if they understood the notion of modernity, did they know what the enlightenment was, and whether they had heard about the critique of the enlighten-

ment. Since these are by now hackneyed topics taught in universities around the world, and in Calcutta in the second year of Bachelor of Arts courses at most colleges, many of the enthusiastic undergraduates who had attended the conference (among them my students) left disheartened. The GTZ officials looked distressed. The audience was flabbergasted. They had expected a conference with a *difference*.

It was left to Ashis Nandy of CSDS, New Delhi, to ask whether modernity was desirable. He noted that modernity is as close-minded and authoritarian as the systems it seeks to displace. Modernity has no compassion for history's victims. Nandy felt, moreover, that colonialism had a tendency of looking at the colonized as its own "yesterday," that is, in terms of a passage from "tradition to modernity" or a route from "primitivism to modernism," but the question was:

who was "modern" and who was "primitive"? It is possible to regard the modern as the ancient—or, as Nandy put it, Von Barlowen as the "yesterday" of Nandy's present and future! Nandy referred to the "rebellious children" of the Enlightenment—Nietzsche, Marx and Freud—and their tragic sense of loss. In India, Tagore registered the emptiness of modern times in his last testament, *Crisis in Civilization* (Sabhyatar Sankat). Satyajit Ray recreated the prototypical Indian village in his *Pather Panchali* ("Song of the Road") because he had never been to a real village. Modernity was not about desire; it brought with it a sense of loss.

So what did this conference achieve? Actually nothing. About 400 people attended the conference on the opening day, followed by approximately 250 on each of the subsequent days. Life continued in Calcutta as before, while the participants sweated it out in air-conditioned

bliss.

Wälde noted at the outset: culture may not be the most important determinant of development, unequal power relations were. This was visible in the lunch arrangements at the Taj. Participants and officials were *entertained* in a special room; the audience was left to *eat* in another. There was little interaction between participants and audience except within the formal conference structure. Is it also possible that, as countries become more alike due to the development process, "culture" becomes a conscious marker of difference and of unique identities, a possibility that Rustom Bharucha noted when he said that the question "does culture make a difference?" could be re-inflected to ask whether culture *has* made the difference?

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## The Woman under the Burial Quilt—Death of a Trans Warrior

*Josephine Ho (Taipei)*

**December 11, 2003.** As the transgender community of Taiwan eagerly awaited the first public appearance by Leslie Feinberg in Asia, at a transgender conference in two days time, news came that a local transgendered person had thrown herself in front of an on-coming express train and was killed instantly. Several transgender friends tried frantically to confirm the identity of the deceased, but no one expected it to be Tsai Ya-Ting, perhaps the most actively "out" transgender activist in Taiwan.

Ya-Ting first "came out" to the media when she submitted an official petition to the President's office in 2002, requesting that she be allowed to use a photo that reflected her actual appearance on her identification card. Ya-Ting had been living as a woman for three years and was trying to raise enough money for her sex-reassignment surgery. She had little problem getting along in life except when stopped by the police for an ID check. As the primary procedure usually checks the person against the photo on the ID card, the incongruence between her appearance as a woman and the much earlier photo on the ID card when it was issued had been a source of constant hassle, not to mention her diffi-

culties in applying for jobs, which prompted Ya-Ting to file the request.

There had been reports about transgendered personalities in Taiwan before Ya-Ting's endeavor. Some narrated the tragic fate of being born into the wrong body; others sensationalized the capture of those "deviant persons" found wearing women's clothes and underwear while committing petty crimes. Ya-Ting's case was the first time a transgendered person openly demanded her basic civil rights by challenging existing laws governing the issuance of identification cards. Her action was applauded by many trans people but also worried some who fear that public attention would be drawn to dissident gender expressions.

Ya-Ting's move made her well-known all over Taiwan and put her in touch with Taiwan's only but burgeoning transgender support group, The TG Butterfly Garden, through which she soon joined other actions to promote the transgender cause. In December 2002, when marginal sexualities' groups announced the ten worst cases of sex-right violations in Taiwan that year, Ya-Ting acted as the transgender delegate who reported on two cases that involved the transgendered: one, the rejection of

her application for an ID card that would bear a photo that matched her real life identity, and two, the suicide of a transgendered youth after suffering family scolding and exile. In March 2003, Ya-Ting wrote and presented an education program at a training camp for activists in an effort to help other marginal groups understand the specificities of trans oppression and the realities of transgender existence. Continued involvement in activism helped Ya-Ting develop into an articulate transgender spokesperson, who could even deal with the sensationalizing media quite level-headedly. Yet her impressive performance and activism also hid from view the actual difficulties of living as a trans person in a highly transphobic world. When a well-known MTF, Lin Guo-Hua, killed herself out of desperation in a hotel room in May 2003, five years after her transition, Ya-Ting was the one who braved the shock and went in front of the cameras to read her heart-breaking eulogy for Lin. This eulogy would prove to be just as fitting for her own funeral seven months later.

Ya-Ting's family might have wanted to keep a low profile on her suicide, as well as for her trans identity; the transgender community was however reluctant

to let one of their most articulate activists leave quietly and in shame. A memorial poster was made in Ya-Ting's honor that presented a record of her contribution to the transgender cause. Ya-Ting's smiles and thoughtful moments were immortalized amongst glittering butterflies that symbolized the transgender identity in the Taiwanese context. The poster was then prominently displayed at the transgender conference on Dec. 13th, 2003, reminding the attendees of the real lives and stories that lie behind theoretical musings. While delivering his keynote speech, Leslie Feinberg paid special tribute to Ya-Ting and called for more vigorous struggles to carry on Ya-Ting's unfinished work.

In the meantime, activists from the Gender/Sexuality Rights Association of Taiwan (G/SRAT) rushed to Ya-Ting's family to help with funeral arrangements amidst the isolating effect of stigmatization. Ya-Ting came from a very poor family that had great difficulty understanding her "condition" and, after her suicide, only hoped the whole thing would quickly blow over so that family members would not miss too many days of work because of this incident. G/SRAT

activists learned other details about Ya-Ting's life, and death too: that she had been out of work for the greater part of the year due to her high-caliber media visibility; that she had met with only frustration when trying to win the love of one woman journalist; that she took off her female clothes before throwing herself in front of the train naked, as if she wanted to destroy that cumbersome male body.

Ya-Ting's father was obviously dismayed by her last gesture of defiance, as well as worried by the disrepute that the news had brought the family. G/SRAT activists sat with the family at the wake for two nights and worked patiently with the professionals from the funeral home to persuade Ya-Ting's family that it is a long-standing Chinese tradition that the will of the deceased be revered. As Ya-Ting's last move declared her insistence on her female identity, G/SRAT hoped to sway the family toward fulfilling her last wish. After two days of negotiation, G/SRAT achieved two results. To begin with, the name tablet featured at the funeral and on Ya-Ting's ash-urn would bear two names, with her given male name in the middle but her chosen female name on the side in smaller char-

acters. This would constitute a public announcement of Ya-Ting's double identity as the son of her father and a woman in her own right. And on a more private side, Ya-Ting would be dressed in her favorite black dress and full female underwear. The traditional burial quilt that covered the deceased from neck down would ensure that the family did not suffer any suspicion or shock at this quite unconventional arrangement. And after the ceremony, Ya-Ting was cremated in this outfit, which aptly fulfilled her life-long wish.

On December 17, 2003, G/SRAT activists bid farewell to Ya-Ting at her funeral and cremation. She left a legacy of clear thinking, careful analysis, persistent effort and outstanding bravery, which makes her suicide all the more enigmatic. Despite unanswered questions, the transgender community will always remember Ya-Ting and will continue her fight for basic human rights and dignity for all trans persons.

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## Perfect Day: Mark Worth (1958-2004)

*Carmela Baranowska (Melbourne)*

**January is the hottest month in** Melbourne. John Martinkus rings and in his slow and thoughtful way says, "I have some bad news." It's then that I experience a terrible flashback. It's a fortnight earlier and John is ringing to tell me that Andrew McNaughtan is dead. But this time it's another friend, Mark Worth. Dead. And I ask the automatic questions we ask of the living: Are you sure? Who told you? How did it happen? But this time I also say, "I don't believe it."

Mark Worth. Dead. I can't even read what I've just written without feeling a mixture of stunned disbelief, shock and, yes, anger. "Worthy" was larger than life. And he was unstoppable—as a person, as a documentary filmmaker and as a friend. Death has made Mark Worth into a myth. But I want to write about the life—before I can describe the man.

Andrew and Mark. Two friends in one month. Two friends who also knew each other, as we all know each other in our small world and in our large region.

Two friends who were Australian, who didn't want to be European or American and who looked outward, to our region, for inspiration. At a time of growing Australian insularity, when both governments and broadcasters are turning inwards, they were the true innovators. They took us along with them on their journey. They were heroic. And I salute them.

Andrew and East Timor. They will always be linked. Sydney, May 1999: a long telephone conversation with Andrew. I have just returned from a two-month stay in East Timor. It's the time of Kosovo and continuing international indifference about East Timor. I have filmed some undeniable evidence that Eurico Guterres, the militias and Indonesian military are inextricably linked, and I can hear down the line that Andrew is happy. Andrew is also a documentary filmmaker, although history will not accord him that status. His footage from the Dili Spring of 1998, when uni-

versity students took to the villages and the countryside in a spirit of reformasi, is unique. He travels with them, his HI8 camera on his shoulder, always documenting, always hoping against hope that East Timor will become independent.

Dili: July 1999, in the Hotel Turismo: Andrew, always smiling, both relaxed and serious in his razor-sharp analysis of the worsening situation. When the UN and NGO workers refuse to let Andrew come on the aid convoy for fear that an "activist" will jeopardise their operation, he simply decides to hijack another four-wheel drive himself. When we return to Dili we pass burning villages, and some militia members at a checkpoint start waving their handmade guns in our direction. Andrew simply places his foot on the accelerator and we screech away to safety.

Darwin, September 1999: after we're evacuated from the UN Compound in Dili, Andrew on the telephones at the solidarity group ETISC in an office

above a pizza shop in a bland Australian suburb day and night campaigning, lobbying, arguing for an international peace-keeping force. In the end success is ours. East Timor is now independent. Andrew McNaughtan elevated the term “activist” to a position of moral reckoning.

John sighs and says he’ll ring the others. John has the journalist’s ability, responsibility and strength to transmit the bad news in a seemingly endless spiral of chaos and death. It’s what I remember best about John in Dili in 1999—and what I thank him for now.

He hangs up the phone and I try to think about the narration I am writing for my documentary. I try to work on the film that I am attempting to methodically put together while the rest of Australia is on holiday. But Mark is dead. And I know that I have to start to make sense of everything.

Back in 1998 Catherine Gough-Brady and I had decided to set up Documenter, an internet magazine on documentary. We’d just completed the new Documentary course at VCA SFT and we’d been taught, in that strange combination of idealism and naivety, that we could do anything. We looked around and came across Mark Worth’s writing in *IF Magazine*. From that moment began the cross-city three hour phone conversations. Mark liked the fact that we had reached out to him. Here we were in our Melbourne fastness, in that city that he had left behind many years before and which he’d always had a love-hate relationship with, as so many of us do. We were beginning something new.

It was Dennis O’Rourke’s films that brought us together as friends. The ideal was embodied in this philosophy: live every-day in the tropics, spend years on a film, really get to know the people, the place, the language. It was Hemingway, yes, but it was also a dream we hoped to make reality. For Mark filmmaking was really about life. He was always talking about a film he was going to make, was shooting or editing. While I mourn a person I also mourn a way of life. It’s what economic rationalists and public servants always fail to understand. The director is the auteur—and not the producer or bureaucrat. Documentaries are sublime. Documentaries are art. Documentaries help make sense of a world that is often cruel, unforgiving and yet sometimes joyous.

Dennis O’Rourke’s films had inspired Mark to become a filmmaker in

the early 1980s. We shared a great love for films like *Yumi Yet, Ileksen, Shark Callers of Kontu* and *Cannibal Tours*, all wildly ground-breaking in the content, form and feeling of both Australian and international cinema.

All these films were based in Papua New Guinea, where Mark was born. I see Mark as someone belonging to a great line of filmmakers stretching back in time, for whom the “personal” was a motivating force in all that they did. John Cassavetes is my own favourite in the pantheon. For these filmmakers their own lives were the starting point for all that came after—the profound to the banal had to be investigated, turned over and prodded. It was Mark’s early years in Papua New Guinea which were the formative and determining influence on his life. He grew up between the Mornington Peninsula and Manus Island. Even when he was quite still, Mark was always traveling. He fought against the sedentary lifestyle with great gusto and recklessness. While Mark lived for many years in Sydney, his mind was always in Papua.

Papua. Mark’s obsession and love, the great island to our north divided in the middle by both colonialism and stupidity. And as with any true love it both imprisoned and freed him. Sometimes he would speak with wonderment and awe and at other times he would rail and rant against the whole damn thing. Papua also consumed him. Mark’s long-term project was the documentary archive. He was an encyclopedic living compendium of people, news, articles, books, photos, footage, music and sounds.

*Land of the Morning Star* is a very fine and powerful example of his work. Mark sensed that he would be criticised for the conventionality of his narrative and he countered by saying that he simply wanted to tell the history of West Papua. And his film, amazingly, is the first time that a documentary has done that. It was more than just jumping on the latest bandwagon that rolled by for Mark, and he had little time for poseurs. He railed against the cold political indifference of Australian and American politicians who conveniently looked the other way when West Papua’s political fate was decided in the 1960s—and continue to do so today. But Mark also directed *Super 8 Soldiers*, *Revolt Into Style*, *Act of No Choice*, *Dead Man’s Party*, countless radio documentaries, and he wrote many newspaper articles.

The first memorial for Mark is at the

beach in Middle Park, opposite a house where he lived in the 1980s. I know that Mark would have hated the weather. A cold, very cold Melbourne evening. But it’s still a beautiful grey. We gather and suddenly I feel really young. If it were a film it would be called “The Last Days of Swinburne,” and you would see the joggers in the half-evening light turning their heads at the small group of mourners in a circle on the beach, listening to Lou Reed and exchanging reminiscences. For someone like me and the generation that came after Swinburne in the mid 80s, all was mixed up together: grunge and the avant-garde; Dziga Vertov and Sam Fuller; memories of Nick Cave and the Crystal Ballroom; art, fashion, music. Even though Mark and I studied there at different times we were both taught by Peter Tammer, whose own brilliant films are often sadly forgotten today. The aesthetic was DIY filmmaking and the content was guerrilla, a no-prisoners, no-holds barred approach to documentary.

Mark was one of the first exponents of what is today called the “one-man band of filmmakers.” Often belittled by wannabes or those who are too disparaging to understand or care, this is a movement that continues to grow, and for those of us involved in it, Mark was always extremely supportive. There are so many of us who became filmmakers, artists, musicians, journalists whom Mark encouraged and then encouraged some more: Mark Davis, David Bridie, Ben Bohane, Bentley Dean, Marcus Gillezeau, John Martinkus and countless others. Mark understood where you were going and he accompanied you for just that extra mile. It was the Jayapura Room and Worthyworld and all of us were so privileged to have been invited along for the ride.

In a world of growing masculine timidity and fickleness, Mark was courageous. He was one of the last of the “archetypal” Australian men, although, with a shock, I realise that he was only 45 when he died. It was more than just a stereotype to say that he believed in mateship and a “fair go.” Mark lived life as he saw it and in that quintessential Australian sense he hated being told what to do—by anyone. His fights with some producers were legendary. He did not suffer fools gladly. He never asked, “What’s the drama” but instead preferred to actively go “where” it was; to seek out the lessons of every-day life. All this came at a tremendous cost: the mood swings

and the demanding requests he sometimes expected from his friends and loved ones.

Tullamarine Airport, 9am: The same awful wait at the tarmac. Delta Goodrem on the TV monitor and the Collingwood Football Club in the seats around me; a bad cup of hospital-strength tea and lemon tart for breakfast. After ninety minutes we're in Sydney and it's like arriving in another country.

Inside the church at La Perouse it's so intense, all those unanswered questions and interrupted conversations hanging in the air. The orations are unforgettable. Mark Davis is brilliant. Jack Strocchi is dazzling. David Bridie sings what has now become the Mark Worth anthem, Lou Reed's "Perfect Day." There's no-one left who knows so much about West Papua, and I feel deep distress. The world is now more sanitised and less wild. Arguments and love, vitriol and laughter are now replaced by quick

phone calls or no phone calls at all.

At the Icebergs in Bondi I meet old friends and make new ones. Even in death Mark is bringing people together. I stand on the balcony and realise that wherever Mark lived he could always see the horizon. Middle Park, Bondi, West Papua. The horizon that had formed him and that he always wanted to document. The horizon that would stretch into infinity.

But in the end there was death, and any story about Mark has to stop in West Papua, where he is now buried. On the winding road from Jayapura to Abepura in West Papua there is a simple memorial to Theys Eluey, the independence leader assassinated by the Indonesian military. When West Papuans pass by in a car, you can often see them silently acknowledge Theys's death by a simple expression, glance or look. For West Papua is now a closed province. Kidnappings, killings, repression and fear are routine. Foreign

journalists are banned.

I know that Mark was especially saddened by Theys's death, a larger-than-life politician whose journey he had so meticulously documented. But today let us put grief aside and let the work of Theys and Mark continue to be an inspiration to all of us, not to forget West Papua's continuing demand for independence. For one day, West Papua, like East Timor, will be free. And as for Mark Worth, I shall always miss him.

Mark is survived by his wife Helen, daughter Insoraki and many family and friends. His death will be mourned and celebrated in Australia, Indonesia, West Papua and Papua New Guinea.

Carmela Baranowska is a writer and director of documentaries including *Scenes from an Occupation* and *Welcome to Independence*.

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## Caetano Veloso's new CD, "A Foreign Sound"

Keith Hart (Paris)

I read about *A Foreign Sound* at the same time in *Le Monde*<sup>18</sup> and the *New York Times*.<sup>19</sup> The CD is Caetano Veloso's homage to the formative influence on him of American popular music.<sup>20</sup> The 23 tracks, sung in English, are mostly standards, but also with the likes of Dylan and Nirvana. When I bought the CD, I found that his notes were as interesting as the quotes he gave to the two journalists:

So the world began with a Big Bang. Not only the strangest creatures in the remotest galaxy appear speaking English in the movies, the Universe itself started uttering a typically short English expression... A character in *O Cinema Falado* (*The Talkies*), a feature film that I directed in 1986: "The English language is an important subject for those who want to dominate music because it is the language of domination. My master wants to dominate dominion itself. I'll teach music to him." (*A Foreign Sound*)

He cites Jacques Morelenbaum:

Americans think "Feelings" is a real American song; they also think the Wright brothers invented the airplane." (*A Foreign Sound*)

The song is thought, according to

Caetano Veloso,

...to represent the quintessence of an American kitsch hit. But it was copied from a French song of Loulou Gast's, written in Brazil by Morris Albert, a Brazilian who passed for an American. A punk group called The Offspring made an ironic version of this. I chose to take it seriously with a string orchestra, without mockery but in full awareness of this history. (*A Foreign Sound*)

[The album opens with The Carioca]. This piece was taken from a musical comedy, *Flying Down to Rio*, starring Fred Astair and Ginger Rogers. The film was obviously not shot in Rio and I am sure none of the participants ever came to Rio. The song started out with a tropical rhythm contrived by Hollywood to sound Brazilian to American ears. In reworking this piece, I invited some young percussionists from Bahia, who added rhythms formed by mixing samba with Jamaican and Cuban styles. American writers and composers created the finest corpus of popular songs in the twentieth century. But American culture's historical importance in the world and in our lives can support other commentaries. (*Caetano Veloso*)

Clearly, Caetano Veloso is no lover of

rock music. He quotes Frank Sinatra as saying:

Rock 'n' roll... is sung, played and written for the most part by cretinous goons... it manages to be the martial music of every side-burned delinquent on the face of the earth... brutal, ugly, desperate, vicious... (*A Foreign Sound*)

Yet he can also admit:

At first I found rock 'n' roll regressive. I much preferred American songs and jazz music. I began to love rock in 1966. This lack of respect for conventional beauty, this raw way of expressing ideas and feelings changed the face of the earth and the way we listen to the old songs. (*Caetano Veloso*)

The album's title comes from Dylan's "It's alright, ma (I'm only bleeding)": So don't fear if you hear/ A foreign sound to your ear. It's all a question of being open to influences from everywhere while remaining proud of the identity one has forged, a common enough theme in Brazil.

I don't have a simplistic vision of imperialism. Tropicália [the movement he founded in the Sixties when in exile]

aimed to take account of the complexity of things. But, against the logic of winners and losers, dear to American puritans, my preference is to present original human experience. (Caetano Veloso).

You cannot just be syncretic easily. It's dangerous. It's exciting, too, but being both syncretic and eclectic can be very dangerous because creating, performing, composing these things demand focus and concentration, and also truth in perspective. If one thinks that he can mix anything with anything, he's in danger of getting lost. But nowadays you can't really avoid facing it. Even if you just concentrate yourself in a national, closed stylistic world, you're just responding to the necessity of recognizing mixtures and the dialogues of styles and cultures. It is the era of comparison, that you can put things side by side and suggest surprising comparisons that will change your way of thinking and feeling. (*Exile*)

Even if in the future, if we as Brazilians do nothing and we just go on being poor and unorganized and dominated and cor-

rupt, and we slowly disappear in history—even if this dream is only a glimpse in the ocean of history, till now it is alive, and we live the intensity of this ambitious dream. (*Exile*)

This is just one more record of mine, and it's just as Brazilian as all the others. Every little track is filled with layers of histories and emotions. (*Exile*)

I visited Brazil in 2000. I was impressed by the size and variety of the place and by the people's interest in exotic novelties, but even more by its insularity. Brazil amplifies the stature of all its different places and people by being itself, one in the many. I was reminded of nowhere so much as the USA. There is a sort of insouciance and self-sufficiency that comes perhaps from taking the language of a minor European appendage and turning it into a continental culture. I found something there that gives me hope for our world—a society so diverse and so much itself. I dream of a new uni-

versal that can only be realized through cultural particulars, as in great fiction. America was once its symbol for me, now it is Brazil.

I have my Realplayer internet radio permanently tuned to a bossa nova station, but this CD brought back the intellectual excitement of that visit. And the Veloso website

<[www.caetanoveloso.com.br](http://www.caetanoveloso.com.br)> has an ad for IBM featuring Linux....

Thanks to Sophie Chevalier for the trip to Brazil and for the idea of writing this piece.

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18. Stéphane Davet, "Caetano Veloso croise les deux Amériques," *Le Monde*, 17.4.2004, translated by KH

19. Jon Pareles, "MUSIC; Exile on 57th Street," *New York Times*, 11.4.2004

20. Caetano Veloso, *A Foreign Sound*, Universal CD, April 2004.

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## Celebrating Unpopular Culture with Holborn's Occult Underground

*Justin Woodman (Holborn)*

**The Plough—a pub situated on** the corner of Little Russell Street and Museum Street in Central London—forms the starting point of this whistlestop tour of a loose and overlapping network of events, magical sodalities, occult fraternities, renegade physicists and paranormal investigators. Clustered about one of modernity's metropolitan centres—yet bent on celebrating the detritus of that selfsame modernity—this network is encompassed within a roughly half-mile radius of the British Museum. Within this not-so-Temporary Autonomous Zone of Holborn, one can encounter the marginal, the magical, the demoniac, the questionable and (on occasion) the unspeakable in their public and more secretive expressions.

The Plough itself is where both Aleister Crowley and Austin Spare (the "Grandfather" of Chaos magic—an anarcho-libertarian spin on contemporary paganism)—once held court, and forms something of an informal cornerstone of the London occult scene—being the irregular haunt of diverse and secretive magical groups (and the meeting place of online H.P. Lovecraft enthusiasts, the

Lovecraft Scholars). One of Crowley's magical organisations—the Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis—holds occasional book launches upstairs in the pub's function room, usually supported by the owners of Atlantis Bookshop (London's oldest occult bookshop, which stands a few yards down the road on Museum Street).

Members of the London Adventure are also known to frequent the area: led by Nick Granger Smith, this group of literary sleuths leads monthly walks into the more obscure corners of London's occult and literary landscape: Recent forays have included an exploration of sites linked with the sadly-underrated Arthur Machen, writer and Welsh mystic whose symbolist meanderings through London's hieroglyphics form an oft-unrecognised precursor to Situationist psychogeography.

The forum formerly known as "Talking Stick" was, until recently, held twice monthly in the nearby Princess Louise pub (situated on New Oxford Street); pagans (and what at the time appeared to be an ever-increasing number of social scientists) would regularly converge at this popular moot to listen to (and heckle) speakers expounding on var-

ious magical and conutercultural topics. However, since being riven by internal politics, "Talking Stick" has mutated into The Secret Chiefs, now located at the Devereux pub off Chancery Lane. The Devereux also forms the base for Steve Wilson's pagan gathering, the Moot With No Name (which attracts a larger, younger and more vital crowd than nearly-defunct Secret Chiefs), also held twice monthly on Wednesdays. Wilson—a well-known figure within the UK pagan scene—still maintains connections with the Princess Louise, where his similarly named Moot With No Reflection (pagan vampire enthusiasts) continues to meet on the first Thursday of every month (vampire novelists Brian Lumley and Tanith Lee having recently made an appearance). The Louise is otherwise only notable as being the watering hole of local civil servants, although the discerning punter can sometimes encounter swingers and fetishists (having, apparently, no connection with the civil servants) in the pub's function room on some Friday nights.

Conway Hall—situated in Red Lion Square (a few hundred yards from both the Plough and the Louise)—is currently

used by the London section of the Pagan Federation (a national umbrella organisation of neo-pagans) to hold monthly public performances of seasonal rituals—generally an open and friendly crowd, but marked by a somewhat traditionalist view of paganism (those interested in more “modern” magical pursuits—Chaos magicians, in particular—may be viewed with London’s anarchist bookfair; at the other end of the political spectrum, the BNP have also utilised its facilities on at least one occasion. Over the years, a number of Chaos-magical and Crowley-inspired symposiums—including “UKaos,” “The Erisinian Mysteries,” “Ananke” and the 2004 centennial celebration of Crowley’s channelling *The Book of the Law*—have also been held here, 2001’s “Ananke” conference being the most memorable for Alan Moore’s performance piece, *Snakes & Ladders* (recently translated into a short graphic novel of the same name), and sexologist Tuppy Owen’s visually explicit exposition of the Sexual Freedom Coalition’s manifesto. Conway Hall is also the location of the more genteel annual Questing Conference (alternative archaeology and occult revisionist history), at which Colin Wilson usually puts in an appearance. In 2003, Strange Attractor (“celebrating unpopular culture”)—led by *Fortean Times* stalwarts John Lundberg

and Mark Pilkington—also staged the “Megalithomania” event (sacred sites and architecture) at Conway Hall, which included a rather sedate Iain Sinclair reading from *London Orbital*, with an equally low-key but emotionally-fraught performance by Coil rounding off the evening. Until recently, Strange Attractor also ran Fortean-themed monthly multimedia events at Holborn’s Horse Hospital, including a one-man performance of the Jonestown massacre, “cosmic theophanies,” underground Japanese cinema, cargo cults and utopian communities, and occasional visits by Erik Davis, amongst others. Sadly, with the advent of their eponymous new journal, the Strange Attractor team have been forced to curtail their programme of events and performances, though more are promised in the future.

Further afield—but nonetheless part of this wider network of psychonauts, Fortean and occult practitioners—is the South East London Folklore Society, which meets on the first Monday of every month at the Mitre Inn, Greenwich. Thankfully, the term “folklore” has a wide remit where the SELFS team are concerned: speakers have expounded on a range of more “contemporary” topics, including: William Burroughs; Wilhelm Reich; “Drugs, Fairies, and Hyperspace”;

the Dionysian Underground (anarcho-pagans well-versed in cultural theory); Subterrenean Worlds, and the now-defunct Association of Autonomous Astronauts, outlining their program for community-based space exploration.

Details of all these groups and events can be found at the following websites:

Atlantis Bookshop:  
<http://www.theatlantisbookshop.com/>  
 Dionysian Underground:  
<http://mirror.at/dionysianunderground>  
 London Adventure:  
<http://www.thelondonadventure.co.uk>  
 Lovecraft Scholars:  
<http://www.groups.yahoo.com/groups/LovecraftScholars>  
 Moot with No Name/Moot with No Reflection:  
<http://www.exorcist.org.uk/a-moot-with-no-name.htm>  
 Pagan Federation:  
[http://www.paganfed.demon.co.uk/districts/districts\\_essxlondon.html](http://www.paganfed.demon.co.uk/districts/districts_essxlondon.html)  
 Questing Conference 2004:  
<http://www.andrewcollins.com/page/conference/conferencenews.htm>  
 Secret Chiefs <http://www.oakleafcircle.org/MootsEnglandLondon.htm>  
 Sexual Freedom Coalition: <http://www.sfc.org.uk/>  
 South East London Folklore Society:  
[www.selfs.co.uk](http://www.selfs.co.uk)  
 Strange Attractor:  
<http://www.strangeattractor.co.uk>

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## AMERICA, BY TRIAL & ERROR: The BRussells Tribunal: People vs Total War Incorporated: 14-17 April 2004

*Arun Saldanha (Minneapolis)*

**I don’t know about you, but I** often find myself wondering why academics in the general field of cultural studies converse so little about politics, I mean the kind of politics you get on the news. In the Thirties, that is well before Foucault, Bertrand Russell had identified power as the crucial dimension of the social that thought needs to engage in. This conviction supported his dedicated and public involvement against the arms race and the Vietnam war. His *War Crimes in Vietnam* begins: “The racism of the West, especially of the United States, has created an atmosphere in which it is extremely difficult to make clear the responsibility of America for problems which are held to be ‘internal’ to the underdeveloped countries.” To condemn U.S. imperialism, Russell instigated the famous International War Crimes

Tribunal, whose force stemmed not from state but intellectual authority.

Grown out of local protest against the illegal invasion of Iraq, the BRussells Tribunal is the first in a series of international hearings which, like Russell’s tribunal, puts American aggression on trial. The chief organiser, Lieven De Cauter (a philosopher at Leuven), wished to focus on the intellectual roots of the invasion, embodied in the infamous Project for a New American Century. This “neo-con” think-tank was ratified by Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Jeb Bush, Francis Fukuyama and Paul Wolfowitz in 1997, i.e. before George W. Bush even took office. Echoing Carl Schmitt’s profound observation that sovereignty is measured by the power to instate the state of emergency, Giorgio Agamben provides the political philosophy for analysing PNAC.

Agamben argues that state policy today is typically concentrated in “the camp,” spaces like Guantanamo Bay and gated communities where life is controlled directly, without legal mediation:

*The camp is the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule. In it, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporal suspension of the state of law, acquires a permanent spatial arrangement that, as such, remains constantly outside the normal state of law.*

As De Cauter argues, a planetary state of exception has been declared unilaterally by the USA after 9/11. Unabashedly proscribing the protection of the existing world hegemony by “pre-emptively” crushing any possible competition or threat to American security and economic interests, PNAC (pron. *pee-*

nack) played the role of “blue-print” for the formulation of the Bush administration’s anti-legalistic, and therefore anti-democratic, foreign policy. *If you’re not with us, you’re against us*: henceforth, friends and enemies in geopolitics are seasonal, while the Pentagon, not the United Nations, is to prevent the return of a Hitler. It’s crucial to understand the novelty of this situation. Agamben would treat PNAC as an extension not of old-fashioned capitalism but of American revolutionary republicanism. PNAC thinks ahead, it claps the future.

A second philosophical reference point is Jacques Derrida, who couldn’t attend the tribunal due to his illness, but gave his full support in an interview (is it sad he died just before the US elections?...). Derrida reminded the audience of a few possibly contentious issues too often simplified in anti-American rhetoric. There are *positive* potentialities in American democracy and libertarianism. Alliances need to be formed between critical voices everywhere. For Derrida, events such as the BRussells Tribunal and the alter-globalisation “movement” embody what he calls the *democracy to come*, a messianicity outside of religion. Like Schmitt, Agamben and other contemporary theorists such as Chantal Mouffe, Derrida is rigorously aware of the inherent paradox of *demo-cracy*, of people ruling themselves without inequality, violence or exclusion. But this impossibility of ever arriving at closure is precisely what drives debate and the never-ending quest for justice.

Like Bertrand Russell’s tribunal, the BRussells Tribunal is a squarely international effort and is going to reverberate in other cities, such as London, Hiroshima, Barcelona, México City and Istanbul. Still, the significance of its commencement in Brussels goes beyond the pun in the spelling. With the EU and NATO enlarging towards the east, the city stands for both a possible counterweight to American imperialism, and the frustrating difficulties in attaining trans-Atlantic independence. Brussels also stands for the resistance smaller and non-English-speaking countries can put up to the Bush-Blair nexus (indeed, headphone sets were provided at the tribunal to accommodate simultaneous translation of French, Dutch and Arabic, apart from English). Media attention of all kinds is integral to the event—hence this review. There’s little point in intellectual critique unless it ultimately trickles into public

opinion and policy.

The hearing was peopled by very capable intellectuals. It was chaired by François Houtart (director of the Centre Tricontinental). The other jury members were the economist Samir Amin, the Egyptian feminist Nawal El Saadawi, Pierre Klein (international law, Université Libre de Bruxelles), Denis Halliday (former UN official in Iraq), the Iraqi lawyer Sabah Al Muktar, the Belgian philosopher Ludo Abicht and the Iraqi writer-in-exile in the UK, Haifi Zangana. The persecutors were the American human-rights lawyer Karen Parker, and Jean Bricmont, physicist at Louvain-la-Neuve, notorious in Anglophone academia for instigating the “science wars,” but who proved a surprisingly sharp critic of the facile blood-for-oil hypothesis. The many witnesses included American public intellectuals Michael Parenti and Saul Landau (who criticised “liberal hawks” like Michael Ignatieff), several Iraqi journalists and on video, the Attorney Justice under President Johnson, Ramsey Clark. Immanuel Wallerstein, and UNSCOM chief inspector until 1998 (when he resigned) Scott Ritter provided written testimonies.

The dire task of defending American imperialism was taken up by two American journalists otherwise known for their anti-Bushism, Jim Lobe and Tom Barry. In their plea, they rightly noted that both witnesses and prosecution had done a lousy job of actually *analysing* what PNAC stands for, thereby conflating it with just about everything bad in international politics. Again rightly, they pointed out that much of American foreign policy is partly driven by a neurotic desire to bring stability—the Pax Americana. The defense’s main question, “What is the *alternative* to the war on terror?,” was never addressed satisfactorily.

The invasion of Iraq was irreducible to either energy needs or ideology. For a cultural theorist, the Tribunal was an entertaining row over the base/super-structure model. Against all the conspiracy theories, I too have always felt Bush and Blair are somehow, like Sharon, insanely self-righteous white men convinced their taking up of global responsibility is directed by God’s and History’s grace. While competition over the planet’s oil reserves are real and often cynical, American economic interests are demonstrably jeopardised instead of secured by the recklessness of Bush’s foreign policy.

Regarding this irreducible materiality of geopolitics, I’m not sure about the conceptualisations of democracy provided by Derrida and Mouffe. The quasi-theological “to-come” of Derrida and the staunch Hegelianism of Mouffe’s oppositional politics somehow seem too neat for analysing geopolitics. Meanwhile, Agamben’s rather conventional refusal to address the concrete embeddedness of human bodies in biology, geology and technology could stand in the way of pinpointing what it is that makes the amalgamation of oil, satellites, missiles, God, dollars and race so bloody scary. What I am looking for, instead, is an immanent, *Deleuzian* political philosophy and sense of justice. Efforts such as Paul Patton’s need to be more explicitly prescriptive if they want to make a difference in today’s scary international order.

It’s not going to be fun living in a state of exception. As academics, we have the responsibility to repeat events like the BRussells Tribunal, in our own little ways. Justice, whatever it is, needn’t wait for state mechanisms. The attempt of some civil organisations in Belgium to legally try Rumsfeld and Tommy Franks for crimes against humanity was promptly answered by a furious threat from Washington to move NATO headquarters to Warsaw. As long as international law remains incapable of bringing justice into the global situation—and after—intellectuals need to keep talking politics.

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## “I can’t believe it’s not ‘tasteful’ design!”: Thomas Heatherwick at the Design Museum, London

*Elizabeth Cory-Pearce (London).*

Recently, a special edition of *Theory, Culture and Society* was devoted entirely to exploring the status of the object in social sciences.<sup>21</sup> “Objects are back in strength in contemporary social theory,” declared its opening paragraph, as we notice “once again the sensuous immediacy of the objects we live, work and converse with,” and (re)discover the plethora of ways in which we “mingle our humanity with not-so-mute, active, performative objects.”<sup>22</sup> With this growing “materialist turn” in the social sciences in mind, I visited this year’s Conran Foundation commission exhibited at London’s Design Museum,<sup>23</sup> to mingle with a veritable array of human-made-things.

Each year over the last decade, the foundation has selected a guest curator to collect thirty-thousand pounds worth of objects for their collection. This year they had chosen sculptor and building designer Thomas Heatherwick, who collected one-thousand objects that he considered to embody human ingenuity. Some of them Heatherwick considered to be “ingenious solutions to serious problems,” others “more superficially inventive,” but the distinction was less important than whether he found them to be interesting or inventive: “This is not an exhibition about iconic design or good taste,” he insisted. “It is about ideas.”<sup>24</sup>

I was excited by Heatherwick’s provocation that we might engage with the workings of design through a wider variety of perhaps more “mundane” objects than an aesthete’s definition of “good design” might allow. His rejection of conventional expectation that design be in “good taste” appeared to me to be a “methodological philistinism” akin to that of Alfred Gell, who argued that aesthetics is about as useful to the anthropology of art as theology is to a sociology of religion.<sup>25</sup> What I am suggesting is, that so might notions of “tastefulness” be unhelpful to a social-materialist study of design.

### *The enchantment of design*

The Design Museum seeks “to educate the public about ‘good’ design,”<sup>26</sup> but what constitutes “good design” and who gets to determine what is and what isn’t in “good taste”? The Museum’s

director, Alice Rawsthorn, we were told in a recent interview, is a “design connoisseur” who knows a classic when she sees one.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the article goes as far as saying that if she sniffs something out, “you can be absolutely sure it’s in the best possible taste.”<sup>28</sup> Apparently this comes naturally because, not only did Rawsthorn read art and architecture at Cambridge, she grew up in a designer house influenced by Le Corbusier’s *Maison Jaoul*. “It was all very Sixties,” she explains. “We were all humming Beatles’ songs in our Cubist glass house as Uncle David arrived in his Bubble car.”<sup>29</sup> Rawsthorn’s interview was illustrated with a photograph of her seated in front of Heatherwick’s exhibition. This surprised and amused me. Surprise, because her position seemed to contradict Heatherwick’s aim to create an exhibition that was *not* about “good taste.” Amusement, because I imagine that for those of us who live in Cubist glass houses, it is probably not a good idea to throw philistine stones.

Anyone familiar with Heatherwick’s oeuvre<sup>30</sup>—including a sculptural installation on the façade of Harvey Nichols for London fashion week (1997), and cooling towers for an electricity substation by St Paul’s Cathedral (2002)—may have been surprised to come across one thousand relatively small, inexpensive and disposable objects on display. Each object was contained in a glass-fronted wooden box suspended at a unique height and distance from the wall. The front was labelled, indicating place of purchase, price and with some commentary on the object inside.

From Chinatown, USA, were elaborate paper replicas of digital electronic goods (such as CD players, laptops and mobile phones) that are “posted” to the deceased by burning. A mosque clock from Istanbul was ingeniously fitted with a “call to prayer” alarm. Bald Jewish men can bind Yarmulke (skullcaps) to their heads with “Kippon” (scalp Velcro). Ear-mounted alarm clocks enable Tokyo commuters to sleep on trains without missing their stop. Indian wedding garlands made from money enable economic transactions at marriage ceremonies. In the UK, three-armed “I Love GM” T-shirts

protest at human manipulation of the non-human, whilst cheap cardboard coffins convey a sense of our own expendability. From America, bacteria and viruses made gigantic in the form of children’s soft toys suggest a preoccupation with invasion. “One Unmah,” an anti-American cola brand from an Iranian supermarket in London, is designed to donate 10% profit to third-world causes.

By containing the objects in this way, Heatherwick effectively drew our attention toward one object at a time. So much so that, as people moved from case to case, they became momentarily caught up in each piece, sometimes losing track of their surroundings, bumping into others and treading on their toes. Through the ingenuity of his display design—objects in an eye-catching array of electrically lit-up “brain-boxes”—Heatherwick materially enacted his intention that we consider each thing as a captivating idea made material.

### *The design of enchantment*

An appreciation of the ingenuity of design in things is one possible response to this exhibition. Yet we might also be amused, or even enraged, by Heatherwick’s decision to exhibit what could be considered an arbitrary selection from a potentially infinite number of throwaway consumables that mediate our social existence. Is it convincing to display an empty margarine tub as ingenious branding (“I can’t believe it’s not butter!”) by adding merely a quirky remark (“I can’t believe they called it this!”)? A despondent audience (made up no doubt of a number of aesthetes and economic rationalists that comprise a significant section of middle-class gallery-going London) might well exclaim, “I can’t believe it’s so tasteless!” Or “I can’t believe it cost thirty grand!”

A load of rubbish? Perhaps yes. Stripped bare of its enchanting setting, a margarine tub could lose its endorsement as a “good idea.” *We might* be enthralled with it. But we’re just as likely to throw it in the bin. A waste of money? Perhaps not. Benefactors such as the Conran Foundation are not so much passively “reflecting”<sup>31</sup> changes in design and taste, as potentially influencing the nature and direction of such changes. Indeed,

Heatherwick's ingenious display design, the technical virtuosity of his oeuvre, a prestigious museum setting, and a design guru-benefactor cannot be taken out of the equation when considering why certain designs come to our attention.

As we pare down through these layers of appropriating and appropriated agency, we eventually get to the objects on display. But which "designer" actually created these things? Whose "ingenious ideas" were they before they became Heatherwick's and ultimately Conran's? We don't know. Heatherwick might throw a few philistine stones at conventional taste and its institutional ratification, but his lack of reflexivity as to the

implications of their mutually entangled agency (the foundation's, the institution's, his own, those who made the objects, the objects...) left me unconvinced that the exhibition lived up to Heatherwick's promising methodological critique. Call me a philistine, but I can't believe it's not better.

21. *Theory, Culture and Society* (2002), Volume 19 (5/6).
22. Dick Pels Kevin Hetherington and Federic Vandenberghe (2002) "The Status of the Object. Performances, Mediations and Techniques," pp 1-21, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 19 (5/6): 1
23. The exhibition ran until March 21st 2004. Plans to tour to Japan did not eventuate and the collection is currently stored in Wiltshire.
24. Heatherwick, quoted in a text panel displayed in the foyer to the exhibit.
25. Gell controversially suggested that anthropology

of art has got nowhere to date because of the inability of its theorists to disown the 'art cult' to which middle-class intellectuals, institutional directors, critics, practitioners and collectors tend to ascribe. Instead he advocated a position of 'methodological philistinism'. See Alfred Gell (1992) 'The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology', pp 40-67 in Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (eds) *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics* Oxford: Clarendon, for elucidation of his position.

26. Alice Rawsthorn quoted in 'Follow the Leader' by Lisa Grainger, pp78-79, *The Saturday Times Magazine*, April 3, 2004: 78.
27. Lisa Grainger, 'Follow the Leader', *ibid*: 78.
28. Lisa Grainger (*ibid*).
29. Rawsthorn quoted in Grainger (*ibid*).
30. And for those of us who weren't, his works to date were listed on a panel in the entrance foyer, and animated digitally on a screen at the entry/exit point of the exhibition.
31. As was claimed in a text panel outlining the foundation's aims in the exhibition foyer.

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## St. Petersburg, from a foreign perspective

*Philipa Rothfield (Bundoora)*

The local point of view is to be found at street level in the form of pointed shoes, this season's *poulaine*.<sup>32</sup> Cool St. Petersburgers, men and women, are to be seen wearing what must be this year's signifier of consumer chic. This is one of the many signs that distinguishes foreign visitors from local residents. The other is money, lots of it. The socio-economic gap between tourists and most of the locals must be close to that between the old Russian aristocracy and everyone else. Foreigners frequent all the old Tsarist haunts: the Mariinsky Theatre, the Hermitage, and the many ex-palaces which dot the city. City monies are largely spent improving the appearance of historical extravagances, to be consumed by tourists at inflated prices. Little wonder that an awesome number of robberies and muggings occur all along the famed Nevsky Prospect.

The Nevsky Prospect runs from the Moscow Train Station all the way to the Hermitage Palace. Women hang around its Metro stations selling bunches of flowers grown out of town. I saw a one-legged man pick lilacs in the park to sell a drooping bunch alongside the women. Teams of Romany gypsies surround bewildered tourists, plucking at their pockets. It's hard to hang onto your money here when you have so much in relation to their so little. Most shows are "sold out" so that touts can resell tickets at inflated prices. I saw *La Bayadere* at the

Mariinsky Theatre (choreographed by Marius Pepita). A tragic tale about a Hindu temple-dancer wooed by an aristocratic prince, *La Bayadere* was first performed in the Mariinsky Theatre in 1877, the same year Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India. One wonders whether there is anywhere else in the world which could put on such an outdated piece of exoticism.<sup>33</sup> Children were actually blacked up for this performance, their fingers spread in black gloves, or were they monkeys?

It strikes me that so many of ballet's stories are of inappropriate couplings, the reaffirmation of social differentiation via tragedy, and its partial transcendence through death, the great leveller. The latter is where the *corps de ballet* mince around in formation representing some nether world. Buffy lives! Speaking of the undead, I saw *Giselle* at the Hermitage Theatre. This was the personal theatre of Peter, then Catherine the Great, begun in 1811, the first of its kind in St. Petersburg. Every night is "sold out." I bought my tickets at the theatre from a professional scalper half an hour before the show began. The audience was full of aged tour groups, several of whom dropped off during the show. The program (in English only, a sure sign) named no company, just that its artists were of local renown ("honoured Artist of Russia") and international fame ("Prize-winner of international competitions").

No Artistic Director, no biography of the dancers. I, the audience, was trotted out to indulge in the fantasy of being an honoured member of court, perhaps seated in the very spot where Catherine herself indulged her artistic good taste.

Not that all cultural events are to be so cynically reviewed. I saw a performance of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* at the Maly Theatre, under the direction of the internationally renowned (true, this time) Lev Dodin. Dodin has been Artistic Director of the Maly Theatre since 1983, and has established strong links with the Theatre Institute of St Petersburg/Leningrad through 20 years of teaching. Dodin studied with Boris Zon, a student of Stanislavski, and his own teaching has influenced generations of performers. The theatre itself has been going since 1944. Its walls are lined with artists' photos very like the Old Vic's. The Maly repertory contains the usual suspects: Chekhov, Dostoyevsky, Platonov, along with a number of devised pieces about life in Russia.

*Uncle Vanya*, that most classic of Russian plays, was performed in Russian with English sur-titles. It ends more or less as it begins. An existential moment stretched to eternity. No-one is happy but each is unhappy in his/her own way. Lives are intertwined but there is a sense in which each person suffers alone. All the characters are very much in touch with how they feel and are prepared to

share their feelings with the others. Hearing the work in Russian felt very different to having heard it in English. The Russian language involves a different kind of breathing in its words, shhhh and zzzzz sounds proliferate. The expression of suffering in the breath was given voice in the words of the play. Perhaps it was because I could only follow snatches in Russian that I was able to listen to the emotion in the words. It sounds different in English—clipped, held back. Is this a phonetics of emotion?

Dodin's production was utterly convincing in its emotional portrayal of misery. The hopelessness of the situation arises partly from the fact that love is unreciprocated. A loves B who loves C, and so on. The other source of misery has to do with a life spent. A retired professor, Serebrakoff, feels he has achieved nothing for all his years of endeavour. Infirmary and discomfort are his only companions. His narcissistic demeanour shuts out his young wife, Helena, who is loved by two of the others. One of those, Ivan (Vanya), has spent his life working the farm in order to support the "great" professor. Vanya passionately loves

Helena, the professor's wife. Neither Serebrakoff nor Vanya are satisfied with their lives. Serebrakoff faces old age whereas Vanya feels his life is wasted, his love unrequited—"I might have become another Schopenhauer or Dostoyevsky." The third act threatens to undo them all, then retreats into an earlier existential stasis. Life goes on. Suicide a temptation. Vanya can hardly bear the thought of 15 more years of living. Although one of the characters, Sonia, gives voice to an ungrounded hope, the air is redolent with defeat.

I visited a Museum of St. Petersburg civil history. It began with the creation of the Czarist police, worked through the Communist revolution, the Chechnya war and the replacement of the KGB with the current "anti-terrorist" police. An exhibit for children offered pictures of all the heads of state, from Stalin through to Putin. The Czar's portrait used to be in every restaurant, then Stalin's, and so on until today. Our Russian guide, one of the many literate, aged ladies in positions of responsibility, indicated the relative popularity of each leader. Predictably, Yeltsin was held in contempt, but Putin

not so. The most detailed exhibit was a glass cabinet enshrining the lives of 3 Russian soldiers, "martyred" in the Chechnya conflict. The detail of personal memorabilia of these three soldiers is an indication of the propaganda function of such a display, of the need to legitimate and idealise the actions of the Russian state.

Leaving St. Petersburg was somewhat of a relief. The position of global tourist is both vulnerable and privileged beyond belief. On the one hand, it represents the ability to traverse the world in a matter of hours but, on the other, armed muggings are a reminder that we are all equally mortal.

32. This pointy-toed shoe emerged in Europe around the 12th century, reaching the height of fashion in the 14th. The *poulaine* or Crakow, as it was named after its Polish origins, was ultimately banned by the Church. Its St. Petersburg variant has a toe-to-foot proportion almost as great as its medieval incarnation.

33. Actually, the Paris Opera Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and the Royal Ballet have all staged it in recent years. Such is the imperial confidence of this classical dance.

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## A Quiet Room in an International Art Event

*Nikos Papastergiadis (Melbourne)*

A year ago, Isobel Carlos, the director of 2004 Sydney Biennale, suggested to Nick Tsoutas, the Director of Artspace in Sydney, that she use his venue to house a single project. It would involve transforming the three galleries into one quiet reading room, with catalogues and relevant books spread across the space. Tsoutas was not at all pleased. He felt that it would be a waste of space and opportunity. Carlos then suggested that he at least dedicate one gallery to the reading-room concept and that she would add two other artists' projects.

In Gallery Three the space was transformed into a gentle space of repose: fine curtains hung along the walls, the light was dimmed, mattresses placed on sumptuous oriental carpets—it was very inviting. In Gallery One another artist arranged a registration desk. His project involved a competition. He announced that he would offer his gallery space, a \$4,000 fee and four nights' accommodation to any person who collected the

greatest number of the first page of Isobel Carlos's introduction in the catalogue to the Sydney Biennale.

I was not impressed by this proposition. I thought it would provoke the most cynical, narcissistic and disrespectful elements in the art world. I had even heard of a story of a young woman who had purchased 100 catalogues on her credit card.

At 9pm on the second night of the Biennale, the winner was announced. A collective of young artists known as Sydney Circular had collected 126 copies. The rich young woman had banked on winning with 103 and lost. The Collective had devised an ingenious response—they had reproduced Carlos' text as an art work and offered it to all members of the public who were prepared to "donate" the page from their catalogue. The Collective accepted the prize and then immediately announced a new competition which was confined to the original artist. He could get back his

space, fee and accommodation on the condition that he publish a review of their work. If he declined, the money and accommodation would go to a charitable trust for other artists who had fallen on hard times. The artist declined and the money was passed on to charity. The gallery was to remain empty apart from the documentation that Sydney Circular placed on the table.

After this announcement I turned to Nick Tsoutas and commented that, for a project that could have brought out the worst, it inspired a rather noble and elegant gesture. I also discovered that the young woman was just the stalking horse of the Sydney Biennale's key patron. Money does not buy you love, nor does power get you a show at Artspace. I couldn't help reminding Tsoutas that Carlos also got her way. Artspace was touched with the magic of a quiet place for the contemplation of good thoughts.

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