

The "bad subjects" ... on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State apparatus. But the vast majority of the (good) subjects work all right "all by themselves," i.e., by ideology.
- Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

Bad Subjects

Political Education for Everyday Life

Nov/Dec 2000 / Issue # 52 / FREE

Improper Intellectual(s)

Property

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Intellectual Improprieties

When we first decided to dedicate an entire issue of Bad Subjects to the theme “Intellectual Property/Improper Intellectuals,” Joel received several letters from prospective contributors asking why we had tied intellectual impropriety to the subject of intellectual property. Were we trying to define the status of intellectuals who transgressed private property relations?, one letter queried. Were we going to do an issue dedicated to culture jamming? asked another inquirer, who claimed to be one of the leading proponents of copyright infringement in Lichtenstein. Or was this issue supposed to be a manual for overcoming the alienation imposed upon intellectuals by capitalist economic structures, queried a wayward socialist scholar from India.

In response, Bad Subjects’ 52nd issue ends up answering all of these questions in its own collage-like way. Rick Prelinger’s “Beyond Copyright Consciousness,” and first-time contributor Mary Kelly’s “Wanted: New Subject of Knowledge — No Alienated Intellectuals, Please,” make the connection between intellectual labor and the reproduction of intellectual property, suggesting that all intellectual work is essentially dependent on appropriating the work of others in one form or another. The idea is that there is never any intellectual labor done in isolation, whether it be through the consumption of cultural commodities or the process of exchanging ideas as a form of borrowing, or imitation. In either case, ideas are always lifted.

Other essays focus on the alienation of the intellectual, both as a laboring individual in the academy – such as in Steven Rubio’s

and first time contributor Scott Schaffer’s articles; and in terms of abstract political categories such as Charlie Bertsch’s piece on Foucault’s materialist critique of French intellectuals. Amanda Shoemaker’s article metaphorically brings it all back home in an essay where she describes her own personal alienation within the sphere of interpersonal relations – in this case, in her relationship with her boyfriend. Canadian artist/activist Min Sook Lee discusses artistic alienation in an essay on a young local graffiti artist in the increasingly conservative city of Toronto.

BS#52 would not be complete, however without an interrogation of artistic property itself, and to that end Bad Subjects Co-Director John Brady provides a review of Boston singer/songwriter Don Lennon’s most recent album, while Joe Lockard writes about the re-issue of Matmos’s first album. For those BS readers who dig reading these short essays on ‘new product,’ we’d like to encourage you to check out the reviews section of our web site, where BS critically interrogates the world of private cultural relations on everything from new Marxist theory to instructional recordings from the 1950s. After all, that’s why we call it Bad Reviews. Or, to riff off that worn out slogan from the *New York Times*, we feature all the culture that’s not too hip to still transmit.

-Joel Schalit and Geoff Sauer, Issue Editors



The Voice of Authority: Michel Foucault's Problematization of the Intellectual

Charlie Bertsch

What makes somebody an intellectual? It is commonplace to explain the difference between human beings and other creatures in terms of intellectual capacity. Although research on higher mammals such as primates, whales, and even pigs has made it harder to think this difference in black-and-white simplicity, most people remain confident in their status as exceptions to the rule of nature. Animals may be conscious, but they are not self-conscious in the way that we are. They may indeed use a kind of language as a means of managing group behavior, but lack the ability to contemplate language from a theoretical standpoint. They are, in short, deficient in powers of abstraction.

Or at least that's what we like to tell ourselves, as we pat ourselves on the back for having a totally rad species being. Yet this recognition of our exceptional status on the planet rarely leads to the conclusion that everybody is an intellectual. On the contrary, the difference we discern between human beings and other creatures is almost always reinscribed in our analyses of society. When we restrict our attention to human beings alone, we suddenly find it necessary to distinguish between those few people who get to deploy their intellectual capacity as "intellectuals" and the rest of the population. This compulsion to draw distinctions is only tenuously connected to the attempt to measure intelligence quantitatively. It's not like you can submit people to IQ tests in order to determine whether they are intellectuals or not. To paraphrase the great twentieth-century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, you may not be able to establish with absolute certainty that someone is an intellectual, but you will still know an intellectual when you see one. If you see one.

You're far more likely to hear one on National Public Radio or its equivalents. The bleak reality of our televisual culture is that talking heads don't sell. You may see the odd major intellectual speaking briefly as the voice of authority on some PBS or cable documentary or giving a lecture on C-SPAN II. But most people who fall into the category of "intellectual" as it is presently constituted will rarely grace your TV screen, unless it doubles as a computer monitor. Unlike models or politicians, then, intellectuals do not acquire their status on the basis of their looks. Yet that status is still a matter of perception. The way people's ideas are received will largely depend on their position in society. Two individuals may have identical thoughts on a topic, but if only one of them is considered to be an intellectual their words will probably not be accorded the same respect.

And this phenomenon can even be observed in situations where the person considered to be an intellectual knows a lot less about the topic than the person who isn't. In many cases, expertise actually seems to impede a person's attempt to be taken seriously. Expertise is in the details. But details are not readily translated into public discourse, precisely because it takes expertise to understand their importance. We confront this paradox in political campaigns, where a candidate's experience is only considered strong if she or he can speak effectively in a language that does not presume too much experience.

There are exceptions to the pattern described above. Within the United States, for example, there is a longstanding tradition of anti-intellectualism that regards the division of mental labor with suspicion. Yet even within that context, the people asked to speak publicly on matters of concern still tend to be those who are considered to be intellectuals. It is they who get invited to give lectures, they who are included in roundtable discussions, they who find it easiest to secure a book contract. And the more widely their reputation spreads, the more likely it is that they will be asked to speak, regardless of whether they have the time or inclination to speak from a position of real knowledge.

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Michel Foucault, the influential French social theorist, spent a lot of time thinking about this peculiar circumstance. He was particularly interested in the production of authority. How does a discourse acquire legitimacy in the public eye? And how do individuals learn to inhabit that discourse, speaking in the voice of legitimate authority? Foucault grappled with these questions throughout his career. Although he eventually became an "insider" within the intellectual life of postwar France, he never lost sight of the outsiders whose words fall on deaf ears. In fact, a good deal of Foucault's activism centered on efforts to construct an audience for those outsiders. He also devoted considerable attention to the fate of those people who, although they spend most of their time doing intellectual work, are not considered to be intellectuals; people whose right to speak is circumscribed by institutional constraints and subtle prejudice.

It is within this context that Foucault developed the idea of the "specific intellectual." Reacting to Jean-Paul Sartre, who played the role of leading left-wing intellectual with self-confidence, if not self-righteousness, Foucault tried to imagine an alternative to the "star system" exemplified by Sartre. "For a long period, the 'left' intellectual spoke and was acknowledged the right of speaking in the capacity of truth and justice. He was heard, or purported to make himself heard, as the spokesman of the universal. To be an intellectual meant something like being the consciousness of

us all.” From Foucault’s perspective, this sort of intellectual vanguardism had been thoroughly discredited by the 1960s. “Some years have now passed since the intellectual was called upon to play this role. A new mode of the ‘connection between theory and practice’ has been established. Intellectuals have got used to working, not in the modality of the ‘universal’, the ‘exemplary’, the ‘just-and-true-for-all’, but within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life and work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and sexual relations).”

Foucault takes pains to point out that the rise of specific intellectuals need not be interpreted as a reactionary development. “I believe intellectuals have actually been drawn closer to the proletariat and the masses, for two reasons. First, because it has been a question of real, material, everyday struggles, and secondly because they have often been confronted, albeit in a different form, by the same adversary as the proletariat, namely the multinational corporations, the judicial and police apparatuses, the property speculators etc.” Precisely because intellectuals of this new kind devote their energy to the sectors in which they have the most expertise, rather than spending it on broad pronouncements about politics-in-general, they are more able to bring about tangible change. At least, this is what Foucault believes.

There are a couple of points in Foucault’s description of the specific intellectual that merit closer scrutiny. The first one is that his model reframes left-wing discussions of the workplace. Without explicitly abandoning the Marxist concept of alienated labor, Foucault encourages us to focus on local struggles within the workplace. That is, he underscores the possibility that, even as workers are estranged from the product of their labor, they may still use their expertise to improve the conditions under which they labor. In other words, his argument is something like the one that left-wing trade unionists have traditionally deployed against radicals who desire only outright revolution. It must be noted, of course, that Foucault is thinking primarily of white-collar workers when he talks about specific intellectuals, since they are more likely to have the time and the opportunity to think self-reflexively about their work.

It’s easy to see how an educated person working for an impersonal, bureaucratic institution could take solace in the idea of the specific intellectual. People who imagine themselves to be specific intellectuals can concentrate on making interventions at the “local” level, rather than agonizing over the inability to stop the machine from pursuing its relentless course. At the same time, however, the idea of the specific intellectual can also function as a convenient rationalization for people who are doing nothing to disturb the status quo. Part of Foucault’s thesis is that academics have largely taken the place that writers once occupied in the intellectual firmament. Without disputing his thesis that academics have become “privileged points of intersection” in the “global process of politicization of intellectuals,” it must be stated that there are a lot of academics who conceive of themselves as radicals, but function more like “competent instances in the service of the State or Capital.”

The second point to be made about Foucault’s argument is simply that the trajectory of his career undercuts it. Although Foucault was undoubtedly committed to the idea of the specific intellectual, he ended up being a public figure of nearly Sartre’s status. And, because he wrote about such a wide range of topics, he became one of those intellectuals asked to speak on almost any subject. The *Publisher’s Weekly* review of the book *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings of Michel Foucault, 1977-1984*, quoted on the back of the paperback edition, reveals the extent to which Foucault eventually found himself in the position of the universal intellectual. “Here is a candid, unbuttoned Foucault who praises rock ‘n’ roll as a cultural catalyst, who admits how boring it is to write some of his books, who sounds off on everything from France’s social security system (he hates it) to Khomeini’s fundamentalist revolution (he glorifies it as a manifestation of Iran’s collective will).” In addition to rather blatantly distorting the points Foucault actually makes in interviews, this passage makes it clear how thoroughly mainstream society still expects intellectuals to be big names who “sound off on everything.”

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Foucault shouldn’t take all the blame for the way his work was received. But it should make us more dubious of his thesis. Even if the idea of the specific intellectual has proven useful in local struggles, we still must confront the fact that specific intellectuals who meet with success in their work have a way of metamorphosing into universal intellectuals. From Stephen Jay Gould to Andrew Ross, there is a long list of contemporary thinkers who have transcended the boundaries of their disciplines to become the sort of public figures mentioned in *The New York Times*. Does this mean that people should refrain from talking about matters that exceed the bounds of their professional expertise? It is hard to imagine what good such devotion to purity would inspire. After all, when one person declines to comment on a topic, the media moves on to the next likely candidate. The word, in other words, is going to get out regardless of anyone’s misgivings about universal intellectuals. If the intellectual who does end up talking to *CNN* or *Newsweek* is at least aware of the problems inherent in seeming to be “the consciousness of all,” there is a chance that she or he will be able to forestall some of the negative consequences of becoming a spokesperson.

One strategy would be for well-known intellectuals to redirect the media’s attention to less familiar names, particularly those who lack a convenient outlet for their ideas. Donna Haraway might say, “You know, rather than answer your questions about cyborgs, I’m going to give you the name of a graduate student who is doing some really interesting work in the area.” A lot of public figures already do this, of course. But in this impatient age, it’s increasingly difficult to find reporters with the time to follow up on these secondary sources. Not to mention that, like it or not, it is the big names that most people, intellectuals included, look for when they are reading a story.

A more promising approach might be to continue the laborious task of constructing sustainable outlets for the alternative media, where the pressures of marketing would be less likely to necessitate a name-centered approach. In the right hands, an alternative weekly or website can radically reshape our sense of which opinions matter. There's no reason why a story about steelworkers coping with new technology couldn't use steelworkers themselves as sources, not only for details about their working conditions but also for reflections on the broader implications of the new techniques being implemented.

But perhaps the simplest way of complicating a rigid division of mental labor would be for intellectuals to pose questions instead of answers. Asked why he refused to take clear stands on certain political questions, Foucault would reply that he didn't think it was his task as an intellectual to do so. He has taken a lot of heat for this seeming evasiveness. Yet when we place it in the context of his preoccupation with questions of authority, it can be interpreted as a reflection of his political convictions. If the production of intellectuals cannot be dissociated from "the multinational corporations, the judicial and police apparatuses, the property speculators," then it is incumbent upon those few individuals who do attain the status of intellectual to resist speaking in the voice of authority.

Foucault underscores this point in statements about his own

practice as an intellectual. "The role of an intellectual is not to tell others what they have to do. By what right would he do so?" Once again, Foucault seeks to distinguish himself from Jean-Paul Sartre. Whereas Sartre argued strenuously that left-wing intellectuals should demonstrate political engagement, Foucault proposes the opposite. "What can the ethics of an intellectual be — and I claim this title of intellectual, though, at the present time, it seems to make certain people sick — if not this: to make oneself permanently capable of detaching oneself from oneself (which is the opposite of the attitude of conversion)?" As Foucault sees it, the task of the radical intellectual should not be to engage the politics of the moment, but to disengage them. "The work of an intellectual is not to shape others' political will; it is, though the analyses that he carries out in his own field, to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people's mental habits, the way they do and think things." These are words to live by, not only for intellectuals who are asked for their "expert" opinion about something in which they lack expertise, but for anybody who wants their politics to translate into practical results. After all, if you step far enough back from the dominant worldview, you could say that every one of us is an intellectual. And it wouldn't hurt to try.

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BEYOND COPYRIGHT CONSCIOUSNESS

Rick Prelinger

A CHILD EMBRACES TECHNOLOGY IN THE SIXTIES

The first cheap Norelco Cassette Recorders hit the US market when I was thirteen. Though it suddenly became much easier to tape songs off the radio, I lagged behind the tech curve, stuck in 3-inch open-reel land. It took time to save up the money to buy a little Sony battery-powered cassette recorder, but finally I ditched my reel-to-reel tapes. And then the format battles escalated. Record companies had gotten in the habit of releasing key albums in expensive 7-inch reel-to-reel versions, highly valued by audiophiles for their sound. But then, as the youth music market exploded, they came out with a wealth of read-only technology: little MGM "Playtapes," bastard cassettes with four songs; 4-track cartridges destined for sad obsolescence; and those beloved relics of the 1970s that still litter thrift stores, 8-track tapes. All of these machines would sooner eat a tape than record onto one. Wanting large music libraries and mostly unable to afford them, we kids recorded as many albums and radio shows on cassette as we could. And then I began to lose interest in rock and roll, at least until the onset of punk; not

because free music was less alluring than expensive music, but because pop music entered into an overproduced and boring phase.

Not being a disenfranchised musician or songwriter, I never thought about intellectual property issues when I was young. Access to music was all I wanted. Much later, I began to collect historical film, partly out of fascination, partly because few others were doing so, and started Prelinger Archives in 1985. Needing to support the breadth and speed of my collecting habit, I went into the business of selling stock footage, which means charging commercial users for access to film clips or segments so that they could use them in their productions. Though we owned some of our material outright, much of it was public domain and not subject to copyright. Even before I knew of the Internet, the copyright status of the works in our collection, and the state of copyright law in general, was thus intimately associated with my own archives' ability to survive financially.

Now, in our business-crazed culture, "IP" is practically the hottest topic in town. Whether it's the Napster trial or the latest corporate acquisition, control over content is generating highly publicized battles. We used to just go ahead and copy; now we talk about copyright, our freedom to violate it, and the latest tools that enable us to do so. (Or perhaps the entertainment industry just thinks we do, and that's why they're scared.)

ANACHRONISTIC BUT HARD AS NAILS

Copyright may be under siege by new access technologies, but it is far from dead. Quite the opposite. The “copyright-based industries” — publishing, entertainment and software — contribute hundreds of billions of dollars to the US economy. Intellectual property is our second most valuable export, and more and more of us labor to create, manage, distribute, sell and shrink-wrap what passes for “content” these days. Though I’d like to imagine differently, I find it inconceivable that the large corporations that control intellectual property rights will stand by as the fences separating their holdings from the public domain melt down.

Like organic creatures, copyrights used to age and wither away. In fact, Congress’s original intent in drafting copyright law was to grant exclusive rights for limited terms, linked to the life spans of authors, in order that they could enjoy the fruits of their labor while alive. Until 1978, copyrights generally lasted 28 years and could, if formalities were strictly followed, be renewed for another 28. Publication without proper copyright notice threw a work into the public domain. This is why so many older US works are out of copyright, unlike works that originate in most other countries. After 1978, the US “harmonized” its copyright laws with those of most other countries, extending the term of copyright for new works created by individuals to the span of their lives plus 50 years, and new works created by corporations to 75 years. In 1993, renewals for older works became automatic. The tragic death of John Lennon at age 40 was cited in congressional testimony, as paid lobbyists warned that his young son Sean might outlive the terms of his father’s copyrights, and see John’s works exploited without proper compensation. In 1998, the largely undebated Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act further “harmonized” our copyright laws with our European trade partners, extending terms to life plus 70 and 95 years respectively. These laws have collectively kept hundreds of thousands of US works out of the public domain, and restored copyrights to perhaps millions of foreign works. Such lengthy timespans lock works up for an inordinately long time, but then corporations often live longer than people do.

Corporate copyright holders have also pushed to limit the definition of “fair use” and, now, under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 2000 (DMCA), to prevent just about all unpaid copying, performance, distribution and collecting of digitally based works. If today there are not thousands of people serving federal prison sentences for felony violations of copyright law, it’s not

because the laws aren’t on the books — they’re just too difficult to enforce.

NOT DEAD YET

Today’s received ideas about intellectual property can be distilled into two major threads: technology killed copyright, and copyright is anachronistic in networked culture. Both of these notions are simplistic and ahistorical, and I’ll try to argue that they’re shortsighted. What we really ought to be talking about is access to works. Access is related to copyright, but is really more fundamental to our freedom to think and experience. I’d like to propose an expanded access scheme and offer an example of small steps that are being taken in that direction.

Trying to debunk the idea that technology killed copyright is a tiring chore. Yes, the proliferation of new tech tools makes it harder to control the unauthorized duplication of copyrighted works, and such tools are certainly sustaining another thrill-

ing chapter in the arms race between geeks and suits. But people are still lining up at Blockbuster after work, waiting in line to pay money to rent major studio releases on video tape. HBO, which relies on a regular flow of monthly subscriber payments, is more profitable than ever. Yes, millions of people are using Napster to collect semi-degraded music files, but they still have to pay their AOL bills, and \$263/year times tens of millions adds up to enough to buy Time Warner, who boasts of being the “world’s largest copyright proprietor.” Recent widely reported studies indicate that Napster actually drives increased CD sales.

Many estimable individuals have lined up behind the notion that we live in a post-copyright age. They try to convince us of the total irrelevance of copyright, as “information wants to be free.” Others posit that the disintermediating characteristics of the Internet will empower individual authors and artists by permitting them to sell their work directly to their audiences. People like John Perry Barlow and Esther Dyson imagine an era where creators are compensated in a royalty-free realm, where reputation, expertise, consulting chops and sales of collateral products almost magically generate income. This isn’t completely off the mark, because this works for some people, notably the proponents of those ideas themselves. Like so many economic schemes today, it presumes a winner-take-all model. But how many writers can give away their texts and survive on honoraria from guest slots on CNN? And, ultimately, who cares enough about most creative people



to help provide them with a living? As long as IP is bought and sold as a commodity, market rules will apply.

I'm actually most comfortable with the ideas of those who support formative chaos, those who rhetorically call for total and complete disobedience of copyright law, rather than cloaking their efforts under a veil of disingenuous responsibility. In many ways copyright law has outlived its social and economic function. It's a fact that the most lucrative copyrights are controlled by monopolistic corporations, but it's also true that copyright can permit comparatively powerless individual authors and artists to exercise a tiny measure of economic clout. But if we're to transform authoritarian copyright laws into social practices that protect creators and benefit society in general, a period of flux and experimentation will be essential.

AUTHORSHIP REQUIRES ACCESS

This brings us to the issue of access to works. Today's reader is also a writer; today's listener a sampler; today's spectator an editor or director. Many of us are no longer content with simply reading, listening or viewing works — we want to appropriate material from other works and make something that is more than the sum of its parts. This is a pretty obvious point, and it's also obvious that unyielding copyright law limits freedom of expression for all of us. What's less obvious is that there are also other ways of limiting our ability to quote, cutup and recontextualize.

In order to be an active reader/listener/spectator, we need access to materials. Yet aside from current pop culture stuff widely available in American superstores, such access is currently quite difficult. One reason for Napster's popularity, and the rush to embrace other peer-to-peer technologies, may be the sheer diversity of music and sound that has become available. Much of this audio was hitherto inaccessible, locked in record company vaults, private collections, archives and radio station libraries. In this sense the body of Napster material functions as a virtual archive that's totally available to all.

Quite the opposite is true in other media. Our history and culture are increasingly becoming private property rather than public resource. For instance, consider still photography. Hundreds of millions of historical still images are now controlled by two large corporations, Getty Images and Corbis, who are actively competing for top market rank. (I should disclose that two subsidiaries of Getty Images do an excellent job of representing my own collection for stock footage sales.) Unfortunately, these collections are generally inaccessible without payment of substantial research and licensing fees. In other media, textual material, music and works of art are now owned or controlled by a dwindling number of rightsholders. It is now highly probable that most access to cultural and historical materials will follow the paradigm of "billable events," with few exceptions or discounts for

nonprofit or public users. E-commerce, of course, makes it much easier for rights holders to charge for the experience of listening to or eyeballing content.

The function of not-for-profit entities like libraries, museums and archives is also changing. They no longer exist simply to offer reference or read-only access to their holdings. With the proliferation of authoring tools in all media and the vast increase in all modes of cultural production, many access requests now anticipate the reproduction of materials for reuse and public distribution, and this trend is running headlong into the limitations of copyright law. Although the Internet is dramatically increasing the population of creators and publishers, there is less preexisting content available for reuse.

The access problem exists for both copyrighted and non-copyrighted works. Many public domain works exist only in libraries, archives, or private collections, and their custodians charge for access. Though fees may pay for storage, preservation, cataloging, and the production of viewing copies, it ultimately defies common sense for public domain works not to be freely available to the public. If we act to lessen or to end copyright's authoritarian control over access to culture, we must make sure that other controls don't take its place.

TOWARD AN "INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PRESERVE"

To think about strengthening public access to cultural resources is to consider basic questions of property and its privatization. As in so many other situations, it's worth looking to history and landscape for precedents and a possible solution. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, private corporations exerted unprecedented pressures on the "public domain" — American land and natural resources. They owned or controlled key tracts of productive land, often as a result of government give aways or favoritism. The aggressive pursuit of extractive interests such as mining, logging and agriculture threatened to exhaust public lands and encroach upon naturally or culturally significant sites. In response to this threat, the conservationist movement lobbied to organize a system of national forests, parks and monuments. By preserving a limited public sphere not subject to the exercise of private property rights, the benefits of some wilderness and cultural sites were preserved for all.

Substituting culture for nature gives us the idea of an intellectual property preserve that houses words, pictures, sounds, moving images and digital information, and protects them as public property. How might such a "national park for intellectual property" work? First, the preserve would be a repository for intellectual property rights that had been donated by rights holders. These rights would include copyrights, or in the case of public domain materials, the right to reproduce and disseminate the materials. The activities of the preserve would be closely coordinated with existing institutions, who would often still hold physical materials.

The preserve would contain textual material, still and moving images, works of art, sounds and digital information of all kinds.

These assets would be acquired in two ways. First, the preserve would purchase certain key resources to build up a core collection of content. This activity would necessarily be supported by private funding. Second, after developing a curatorial plan, the preserve would solicit donations of content. These donations might not necessarily include the physical materials representing the content, but would definitely include copyrights or rights to reproduce.

Why would copyright owners (or owners of public domain materials) ever cede their properties to the preserve? First, and perhaps most important, tax incentives. Amend the tax code to allow substantial deductions or tax credits for donating valuable copyrights or materials. Second, following the precedent of public land acquisitions, key donors might be compensated with private funding. Third, promote public recognition that an act of donation is a prestigious deed benefitting the national cultural heritage.

There is nothing particularly radical about the practice of a preserve. It's an attempt to work within the system, a gentle expropriation, a creation of incentives for property holders to do the right thing. Ultimately, though, its goals are to rebalance private vs. common property for mass benefit. The preserve aims to make a significant portion of our intellectual and cultural property available to one and all – both individuals and corporations — for nothing more than the physical costs of duplication and transmission. Its concept supports freedom of inquiry and freedom of expression by preserving the right to quote, to duplicate, to appropriate preexisting material.

I've been thinking about this idea for several years, and have recently discovered that a Boston writer and publisher, Eric Eldred, also has a similar idea for a "copyright conservancy," where copyright holders would donate works to benefit the public. See www.boston.com/globe/magazine/8-29/featurestory1.shtml.

AN ATTEMPT TO BUILD THE PRESERVE

At the Internet Archive, a nonprofit headquartered in San Francisco, a small group of engineers backed by a philanthropist are trying to create a new paradigm for access to archival material, in this case historical film from my own archives. By doing this, we're making a concrete move toward building an IP preserve. What we've done is to select a body of 1001 key archival films, both films that we've found to be most in demand and unknown films that we think people will like to see and work with. Next, we've undertaken the expensive process of transferring the films to videotape and then digitizing them so that they can be stored and served online.

There's lots of film and video on the Internet right now, but most of it is of relatively poor quality. There are two reasons for this. First, of course, most people don't have sufficient bandwidth to view huge movie files. Second, rights holders want to stream their images rather than provide downloadable files which can be viewed repeatedly, reused or distributed with little control. Since we're not worried about either of these considerations, we are offering fairly high-resolution video files (MPEG2). These

files are too big to stream, and must be downloaded by the user.

What this means is that visitors to our site will get movies for keeps. They can look at them, send them to other people, archive them to disk, dump them to tape, re-edit them, and even incorporate them into low-end productions. We don't think this will put an end to commercial stock footage licensing from our collection, which generates income to keep the archives going, because high-end users will ultimately demand the best quality images available, and there are certain compromises inherent in video compression.

We hope to see our footage show up in independent productions, in cafes, on public access TV, in classrooms (shown both by teachers and students), as home entertainment, ambient imagery, on other people's web sites, and in places we can't yet imagine. Very few people have ever had significant access to primary moving image historical material, so it has had little chance to seep back into, and influence, the culture. There is much talk of media literacy, but access to the archival material that might make exercises in literacy dig deeper has always been difficult. Here is an initial step toward making it easier.

Concurrently, we also hope that users will take our video and recompress it further, so that it will be easier to distribute. This is already happening in the world, with a hacker-developed technology based on MPEG4, which may well evolve into the video equivalent of MP3.

I'm hoping that this project will encourage other companies and institutions to give up total exclusivity to their material and make it available, at least for viewing access.

Despite being the object of much attention right now, the struggle for control over content probably isn't very meaningful to mass audiences. Neither is the issue of access. On the other hand, people want to learn, play, and be entertained, and they tend to find ways around control mechanisms that limit the free and inexpensive exercise of these activities. While grassroots opposition to the DMCA, for instance, was limited to fairly sophisticated groups, tens of millions voted with their mice and downloaded Napster before it could be declared illegal, rendering any possible crackdown effectively impotent. And while it may require the support and expertise of elite elements to organize something like an intellectual property preserve, and though the activities and even the existence of such a preserve may be invisible to most people, a preserve could mount a fundamental challenge to our definitions of public and private property. In so doing, it would be a greater force for change than any possible reform of copyright law.

Rick Prelinger <footage@panix.com> has collected historical film since 1982, and is currently working with the Internet Archive <www.archive.org> to build a prototype IP preserve, soon to be available to all. Watch this space for a link. Thanks to Megan Shaw Prelinger for timely and thoughtful assistance.

To Cal. with Love

Steven Rubio

Recently, the *East Bay Express*, a Berkeley, California free weekly, ran an interview with Pedro Noguera, a former professor at Cal who has just moved to a new position at Harvard. Noguera, who came to UC Berkeley as a graduate student in 1982 and stayed on after receiving his doctorate, was one of the most popular instructors on the Berkeley campus. His courses were invariably over-crowded with students who knew, from personal experience or via the grapevine, that Noguera was something special. And he was a rare example of a scholar who put his theories into practice, both inside and outside the classroom. Not only did he serve on the Berkeley School Board, but he also worked on various projects at Berkeley High School for several years. (My own son, who found much to criticize during his own formative years in Berkeley schools, always singled out Pedro as one of finest people he encountered in that system.) A committed activist, Noguera was involved not only in city politics, but the politics of the campus community as well. And now? Harvard's gain is Berkeley's loss.

Noguera wasn't chased out of Berkeley, of course. He moved on to new challenges at another prestigious institution, where he will no doubt continue to do excellent work. And he is hardly the first academic to take a new job in a different place. Nonetheless, one wonders if UC Berkeley realizes what they've lost. At the end of the interview, Noguera speaks to what he hopes will be usefully different about Harvard:

"Berkeley's elitism encourages academics to be detached, and to the extent that you're involved in the real world, that's looked down upon. As I've been reviewed here over the years I've actually been told that. I ran for school board at the time I was first hired here, and people told me I was crazy, I would never get tenure because I was running for school board. The sense I have at Harvard is that their elitism makes them believe that they *should* be involved in the real world, because they have the answers."

Noguera here accepts the notion of elite institutions; he is not criticizing Cal for being elitist. But he points to the necessity for scholars, teachers, intellectuals if you will, who "have the answers" to share their knowledge with their students and with folks outside the academic community. Recalling Gramsci, we have 'traditional' intellectuals helping to foster the creation of more intellectuals, 'traditional' and 'organic,' in order to make the world a better place.

This is not to say that there is no place for "ivory-tower" academic research. In the humanities, as in the sciences, theoretical work is invaluable in pushing forward our understanding of the past and the present. But to have an impact on the future, at some point, theory must become practice. Academ-

ics working in higher education, professional intellectuals, owe it to their discipline and their communities (academic and public) to pass along their knowledge and insights to others. If you have answers, you can't keep them to yourself.

Public higher education in California is split into roughly three levels. At the top is the University of California system, with UC Berkeley perhaps the light that shines brightest in a room full of illuminating institutions. Here is where most of the research is done and doctorates are granted; UC is elite. A step below in the established hierarchy are the state universities, where much great work is done, but where the emphasis is more on the classroom than the laboratory. Finally, there are two-year colleges, which serve as feeders to the four-year schools and also offer training in specific areas for students who aren't necessarily interested in getting full degrees. Some of the best teaching in the world happens at these schools; perhaps not so coincidentally, they emphasize instruction over all else.

It is a bit much to expect cutting-edge research would go on at a two-year college, or even at a mid-level university like the State system; it is understood that their priorities are often elsewhere. And so we look to the elite institutions like the University of California system for that cutting-edge. But public institutions, elite or not, have a special obligation to the community at large. That UC is the accepted venue for research does not mean that UC should disregard the value of education. It is possible for Nobel Prize winners and excellent teachers to coexist in the same institution. To the extent that the UCs of academia undervalue teaching as something that gets done at 'lesser' schools, they are cheating their teachers, their students, and the public.

Such a statement is not anti-intellectual, although it may be seen as such in an environment like UC Berkeley, where service on a local school board is occupational poison (how ironic given that Noguera, a tenure-track educator, was told that working on public school issues would be bad for his future as a academic), nor is it anti-scholarly. To demand that teaching gets respect on an academic level, whether it is performed at elite institutions or more humble venues, can only be interpreted as anti-intellectual if you define intellectualism as something done amongst intellectuals. But, if you want to create future intellectuals, if you want to pass on the answers that you have, then teaching becomes an integral part of the intellectual agenda. Without teaching, there will be no future intellectuals. Teaching is the opposite of anti-intellectualism.

For this reason, it is more than a little puzzling that elite institutions like UC are so dismissive of teaching. At this point, we aren't even talking about taking your work outside the campus community; this isn't about the local school boards, except in a broader philosophical sense. We're talking about work that gets done every day at every school: the transmitting of knowledge, understanding, and critical thinking tools to students (without whom, it should go without saying, there would be no universities). This is

valuable intellectual work. And yet, too often, at schools like Berkeley, teachers whose classes are popular are dismissed as catering to a lowest common denominator, the (elitist in a *bad* way) assumption being that students will always prefer easy over important. This all-too-frequent belittling of teachers who are doing good jobs of connecting with students demonstrates how a system like UC sees intellectual work and teaching as opposites.

It isn't hard to find examples of how universities like Cal dismiss teaching as non-intellectual work. It is no secret that increasing numbers of undergraduate courses in American colleges are taught by graduate students and part-time lecturers (sometimes called "adjunct faculty," for which read "temp"). Many of these courses are introductory-level, many of them mandatory parts of a school's undergraduate program. When the university dumps these courses on the most under-paid, inexperienced workers, they are telling us that they do not value what goes on in these classes, which are as far removed as possible from high-level research work conducted by professors and their chosen graduate student employees.

The irony is that the teachers in these classes are doing some of the most innovative work on campus. They are rarely as jaded about teaching as their more entrenched tenured 'superiors.' One could say that the simple fact that they are teaching unappreciated courses for crap pay is proof of their commitment to teaching; they certainly aren't in it for the money or prestige. But at places like UC Berkeley, their work goes unnoticed by administrators and high-ranking faculty (although students, the consumers of academic capitalism, are well aware of who the good teachers are). For example, as a graduate student, I received an award as an Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor for my work teaching composition in the English department (a further irony being that it was well-known that the departmental Powers That Be wished the composition classes would be removed from the English department entirely, as something beneath the 'real' intel-

lectual work that was the basis of the department's elite reputation). At some point after getting this honor, I was asked to sit on a panel where graduate students with some experience at teaching offered advice to new instructors. Among the attendees was the professor who had sat on the committee that chose me for my award. I explained to the audience what I did in the classroom, teaching critical thinking skills using non-traditional texts; afterwards, the professor expressed surprise, if not shock, at finding out exactly what happened when I was teaching. He clearly had no idea. In retrospect, he just as clearly didn't care about the teaching going on in his own department: if he truly cared, he would have known what kind of work I did before he gave me an award he obviously didn't respect enough to take seriously.

Perhaps things are different at Harvard. For Pedro Noguera's sake, at least, I hope they are, and I'm sure that however things are at Harvard, they'll be better for his presence. But elite public institutions of higher learning like the University of California can no longer afford to be dismissive of teaching, can no longer pretend that teaching is unconnected to intellectual work, can no longer be so fiercely, deliberately misguided in their notions of elitism. Until schools like UC understand that teaching and community service are vital components of the intellectual agenda, they will only represent the worst of ivory-tower elitism. Keeping the answers to yourself: that is the real anti-intellectual, anti-scholarly position.

Steven Rubio is a writer and teacher living in Berkeley, California. The man who first put Bad Subjects online in the early 90s, Steven can still be found in the electronic ether at srubio@hooked.net

Wanted: New Subject of Knowledge — No Alienated Intellectuals, Please

Mary Kelley

In attempting to gather my thoughts on Walter Benjamin, the value of intellectual activity, radical and otherwise, and my own somewhat nebulous position as would-be-author / not quite recipient of a Master's in Women Studies, I find myself torn. On one hand, I feel redeemed by Benjamin's assertion, "being an intellectual (is) the experience of a perpetual state of homelessness." I am validated. I, too, have suffered from a sense of homelessness and failure in academia. My own experience as an "intellectual" thus far has been halting, backtracking, often unfinished, particularly unremunerative, and certainly not respectable.

Overall I have to admit that my performance in the intellectual realm has been less than stellar. Slightly below average grades at

a small, rural high school led to mediocre marks at an unremarkable state university, and several years later I struggled to be accepted into a master's program, which I have yet to complete. Moreover, the interdisciplinary footing of Women Studies can be slippery at times, and there still seems to be a lack of seriousness attached to Women Studies in general, both in and out of academia. Yet, using Benjamin's thesis as a point of reference, my position outside of "real" intellectual production offers some recourse in the hope that, having nothing to lose in terms of academic status, I can at least speak my mind and possibly approach a more synergistic, even radical politics. Perhaps the lack of cultural value attached to my intellectual activity can at least afford me an opportunity to approach the political in a way that includes all of my bits and pieces, from the blond, blue-eyed pastor's daughter who grew up in a trailer in Dinwiddie, Virginia, to

the 36-year-old feminist, mom, and San Francisco dweller that I now am.

However I also find aspects of Benjamin's thesis that make me uncomfortable. Approaching intellectual life from a perspective of alienation, homelessness, and inhabiting the margins can be compelling, even romantic. But it can also leave one unwittingly mired in modernist philosophies and ideologies that are, to my mind, no longer appropriate and useful in understanding how 21st-century subjects might emerge in relation to knowledge. As a feminist writer interested in looking at how intellectual property affects "everyday struggles over meaning," I am concerned with how perpetuating an image of intellectual life as set apart, or alienated might effect everyday struggles over one's own relationship to knowledge. I am also concerned with an image of the intellectual that evokes writing as a separate, originary pursuit. Contemporary struggles over copyright and intellectual property consistently show that, though outdated notions of authorship still hold currency, such positions can no longer contain the complex ways in which language and knowledge (information) travel and assume value in a public sphere. I am wary (and weary) of relying on descriptions of the intellectual that in some way reconstitute a Wordsworthian figure, one brilliant and set apart, emerging as a repository of cultural wisdom, higher morality, social vision, or even "political radicalization."

I do not have issue with Benjamin's thesis insofar as it reflects his own life and struggles and his relationship to his work. Nor do I wish to dismiss the impact of his work on 20th-century philosophy and critical thought. His conflation of intellectualism and homelessness is understandable, given his experience as an intellectual Jew born in Germany at the turn of the last century. His ability to earn a living lecturing and writing was severely curtailed by increasing anti-Semitism in pre-WWII Germany, and he spent several years quite literally homeless, forced to flee Germany for his life. My problem is with the ease of taking Benjamin's thesis out of context and applying it as a kind of *de rigueur* model for intellectual life and political struggle. Yes, exile is a real fate endured by many scholars, writers, and activists — world-famous and unknown. We don't need CNN coverage of recent wars to show us the devastating impact of homelessness — we can go to People's Park in Berkeley, or any other crowded urban center, and see "for real" what happens when people are displaced. Juxtaposing homelessness with intellectualism out of context, though, is a serious matter that ignores the considerable privilege attached to trafficking in ideas, speaking the language of academia, and being a representative force in the public sphere.

Being an intellectual is not something that everyone gets to do, and that is the hard truth. Edward Said, in *Representations of the Intellectual*, describes the intellectual's role in culture as representing "symbolic personages" and, while indeed there may be a certain lack of cultural value placed on intellectual activity, I think there is considerable symbolic value attached to the image. This 20th-century ideal of the intellectual operates strongly as both a sign and a commod-

ity within academia and culture, a kind of aesthetic copy (to borrow from Benjamin) with an organizing effect on the production and consumption of knowledge. The aesthetic of the intellectual influences how we mediate knowledge, who sits on bookseller's shelves, who is seen on TV, who speaks for this country or that national cause, who we read and listen to. It is a role that represents the ultimate subject of knowledge, the authorizing agent of culture, the moral voice that speaks both to and for the masses.

Such representative power is inextricable from a public sphere and only made possible through an economy of publication and communications. Access to this economy, at least historically, relied on particular attributes — namely being white, male, literate and propertied. Participation also relied on a facility with language, the ability to engage in rational, linear logic. While we may no longer require those bodily particulars for engagement in a public sphere, we still assume many of the particulars of language. We still abide by copyright laws and academic codes rooted in an ideology / value system that refers to a male subject of knowledge and philosophies of exclusion and privilege.

Hence, used as a symbol of intellectual life, or a standard of what real intellectualism entails, Benjamin's thesis obfuscates issues of access, privilege and accountability. My mother recently shared with me how hard my father struggled to make it through seminary shortly after WWII. At 40 he went back to night school to complete his GED, and was eventually accepted into the seminary program at the University of West Virginia. He spent three years trying to balance attempts at study with a growing family, a small farm, and two churches. I remember my father as a laborious reader and not a very proficient writer, and I have many memories of him mouthing words to himself as he read, following the line of text slowly with his index finger. I recently realized that he was quite possibly dyslexic. My mother described how one evening he threw a philosophy book across the room and collapsed with his head in his hands, almost in tears, exclaiming, "I just can't do it." He never completed his last year. My heart ached at that image of my father and, perhaps for the first time, I felt a sense of real connection, saw my own struggles somehow reflected. But I had something of an epiphany too: Any struggle to expand consciousness and learn, no matter how halting, incomplete, or seemingly fruitless by certain standards, can culminate in an experience of political radicalization.

I have come to the conclusion that the only reason I can write at all is because I am proficient at mimicry. As I was forced into exile in my own bathroom last night, attempting to finish this article while the rest of my family slept, I entertained this idea, and I now firmly believe that it is true. Throughout college and especially in graduate school, whenever I was confronted with a writing assignment I went directly to the library, not to research ideas *per se*, but to try to figure out how one talks about ideas at all. I am not a blatant plagiarizer, but I am guilty of copying form, style, ways of using language, as well as a whole vocabulary about as original to me as my current shade of L'Oréal. This led me to consider how writing in general, particularly academic writing, is really just a huge mimetic system. Copyright is designed to protect an author's right to the fruits of her labor, as well as to regulate how and when others may use the author's text. The concept is based on a line of logic regarding the value of original ideas,

and the owner/writer's right to determine how and where they may be used, copied, referred to, etc. I think, however, that the logic of copyright fails to incorporate the actual manner in which writing occurs. I am obviously not the first one to look at writing/scholarship/knowledge as derivative, an intertextual institution constructed via an elaborate web of legal precedents, citations, and footnotes. That aside, though, I believe that imitation is fundamental to how people learn, and an integral part of being a writer.

Copyright since the time of Wordsworth has been contested ground. However, ideas about what constitutes author, text, an original, or a copy are increasingly complicated by the everyday use of communications technologies and digital reproduction. Moreover, rapid developments in recording technologies and digital imaging have blurred the border between creative agent and property owner. Determining the parameters of authorship, fair use, and proprietary rights has become a convoluted process, and old concepts based on notions of print and copy are no longer useful in navigating postmodern textual terrains. I guess I would be remiss at this point to ignore Benjamin's own preoccupation with concepts of originality and reproduction. Benjamin's concern in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* was that the ease with which original work can be reproduced in a mechanical age creates a kind of cultural fracture in terms of representation, whereby an aspect or "aura" of the original is irrevocably lost. Underlying this concept is the idea that technology changes how we experience representation, and thus a sense of ourselves in relation to space and time. The age of digital reproduction complicates understandings of original even more, giving credence to Baudrillard's assertion that, eventually, events and productions exist only in their reproduction.

I prefer to look at such disorientations within language and representation as openings for alternative realities, politics, and subjectivities to emerge. The disembodied aspect of cyberspace creates a new social arena where virtuality is a phone call away (closer if you have a DSL line). Online I can plagiarize in a hundred different ways, create any body, gender, persona that I want, print anything I see, and pretty much use it any way that suits me. How does that change me as a subject of knowledge? How does that change how I participate in an economy of representation? When my son was still not sleeping through the night I spent considerable time perusing parenting chat boards, and one night found a great article that someone had pieced together, copying word-for-word quotes from several parenting books, interspersing it with her own experiences, opinions, and advice. Many other people had started threads of their own in response to her offering, and I printed the whole thing out, made several copies and passed them out to a few other semi-conscious, sleep-deprived parents I knew. I don't even remember what all of the information entailed, but I do remember it being a lifeline for me at the time, and I was largely comforted by the understanding that I wasn't alone, rather than by any particular solution it offered. Now it interests me as an example of knowledge, proprietorship, and authorship being mediated in both virtual and material worlds.



Online zines, chatrooms, bulletin boards, and journals are constantly creating alternative public spaces where all you need in order to "publish" are a computer and a modem. Representation, at one point in history so connected to particulars of the body, is now played out in ways that challenge and complicate both notions of the body and how the body experiences social relationships. Such cyberspace forms an amorphous network that not only changes the way that we store knowledge/information, but how we participate in it, interact with it, and claim it. It also recreates spaces where multiple, even conflicting, concepts of authorship can emerge. However, textual mutability and alternative ways of authoring culture and self are not limited to the Internet.

On a recent walk through the Mission district in San Francisco I was struck by how an alternative sense of public is collected, owned and contested through the tagging of public spaces. An intricate network of graffiti art covers alleys, the sides of buildings, billboard, and walls to create a mixed textual reality that is multiply signed and authored in an overlapping array of colorful, fat writing and images. Political missives protesting the arrival of the digerati into the poor, largely Latino neighborhood take up wall space between shops and buildings. In the margins other authors leave their marks, comments, and dire warnings. Something new is always overlapping old text until eventually it is covered or recreated. Paint wars are fought over turf, literal and symbolic, and access, ownership, and accountability are at stake.

Problems can also occur when representation exceeds itself. When the potential for reproduction and multiplicity exists so readily, important points of negotiation can be erased. For example, experiences of gender and race online can become consolidated and reconstituted in ways that reinforce Cartesian understandings of subjectivity and knowledge. While new forms can create modes for hybrid, oppositional consciousness to emerge, often it is at the expense of still other voices and visions.

Recognizing the collective nature of authorship and the contingent nature of knowledge is perhaps a first step in attempting to fashion a new politics of culture, creativity and ownership. Also important is consciously positioning oneself against hegemonizing tendencies embedded in modern concepts of authorship and copyright. Rather than adopt a view that alienation leads to radicalization, I would rather view political and intellectual struggles as complex, potentially integrative forces that always shape new subjects, often within the minutiae of everyday life. To me, one of the most radical notions in relation to intellectual practice, politics, and writing is that the ability to write and participate in a public conversation is built on series of connections, not separations.

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In-Between Days: Intellectual Work and Intelligent Life at the Crossroads

Scott Schaffer

Teacher preparation should never be reduced to a form of training. Rather, teacher preparation should go beyond the technical preparation of teachers and be rooted in the ethical formation both of selves and of history. But it is important to be clear that I am speaking not about a restricted kind of ethics that shows obedience only to the law of profit. On the contrary, I am speaking of a universal human ethic, an ethic that is not afraid to condemn the kind of ideological discourse I have just cited. Not afraid to condemn the exploitation of labor and the manipulation that makes a rumor into truth and truth into a mere rumor.

Paolo Freire, Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage

It was difficult to maintain fidelity to the idea of the intellectual as someone who sought to be whole — well-grounded in a context where there was little emphasis on spiritual well-being, on care of the soul. Indeed, the objectification of the teacher within bourgeois educational structures seemed to denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a mind/body split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization.

bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom

Pacing in front of my 11:30 class on minority group relations, talking about multiculturalism in the Canadian context (“acceptance of difference” rather than “tolerance of difference,” unless the different one is American,) and trying to get students to see how even something like the hyphenated “politically correct” ethnic identity makes possible certain kinds of relationships between members of ethnic groups, it hits me. They have no clue what I’m talking about.

I’m used to this kind of reaction. On campus, my reputation as a demanding instructor has given rise to a rather unique recommendation: he gives too much work, avoid his class like the plague, but if you want your head messed with, well, then take the class. Seeing confusion on my students’ faces is not a new thing at all. But today is different. Today, I realize a number of things about my students, myself as an educator, the educational system, and the state of the world. Academics, intellectuals, professors (whatever one wants to call us) and the entire concept of higher education are “in-between” things.

I’ve been academically in-between as long as I can remember. As an undergraduate, I took political science as a major because I wanted to save the world from the Cold War specter of nuclear destruction. But then the Berlin Wall fell, my Russian courses ended, and my Soviet politics professor talked seriously about moving to the history department. My existential condition didn’t change much after college. As an

erstwhile political theory Ph.D. student at my first graduate school, I spent more time writing justification letters for taking courses such as *Gender and History*, *Spectatorship and the Cinema*, and *Hermeneutics and Reader-Response Theory* than I did working on most of my “major” papers.

And at the institution where I ultimately obtained my doctorate, I was more liminal, more borderline, than I ever thought possible. I was an American at a Canadian university renowned for its anti-Americanism. I was a single heterosexual male in a program where marriage was practically a requirement. I was (or so I thought) a postmodernist who realized that while it’s alright for one’s subjectivity to be fragmented, one still has to pay Citibank. And I was becoming a real-world-oriented sociologist (mostly through the luck of scoring a TAship in that department) in a program where “the real world” was either an interesting theoretical construct or a poor attempt at American cultural colonialism.

Then I left. Two or three times, it turned out. “Who is Scott Schaffer?” or “What do you mean Schaffer’s defending this week?” were common refrains often heard uttered in my department’s office. I’d disappeared from the collective conscience of my graduate program. This kind of in-betweenness kept me going for a while. I saw myself as a rogue scholar, a bad boy in a program filled with good kids, an earth-bound boy in a program filled with ethereal Foucault and Heidegger scholars. I was comfortable being out of sync with everything else going on around me.

Then I started teaching. And I quickly realized that in-betweenness isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. I found myself on a career trajectory increasingly found at many teaching-oriented universities. It’s a trajectory *The Chronicle of Higher Education* only half-jokingly dubbed that of “the road scholar.” It’s a trajectory defined by the near constant struggle to pick up enough courses and temporary instructor positions to make ends meet. (At one point, a contributor to *The Chronicle* suggested that each new Ph.D. should be assigned a mobile home for the four years or so before their first tenure-track position, when they could transfer their portable digs to another recently minted, but under-employed Ph.D.. Ironically enough, my first graduate school had a mobile home park on campus.)

Every semester, and generally without advance notice, we part-timers have to scramble, beg for, and steal courses that have thrown to us by the tenured faculty. We never knew how many courses — and therefore how much money — we will get, a situation that sometimes remains murky right up to the first day of the semester. What began for me with a sense of joy and accomplishment, quickly soured, spoiled by the constant worry, the in-fighting between the faculty (part-time and tenured alike), and the creeping fear that I would never have any job security ever again.

Now, my discomfort with being in-between has been compounded by my new place in “the structure.” On the face of it, I’ve been lucky. I’ve momentarily ceased being a road-scholar.

I've got a full-time position, although it's only on a contract basis, which means, that at the end of each year, I could find myself out on my ear and on the road once again. But who's complaining? This isn't such a bad position to be in, or so I thought at the beginning of the school year. I looked forward to gaining the experience, the socialization, and the cultural capital that comes with appointment to a full-time position. And, I thought, I can still keep one eye on the job market, looking for a position more to my liking.

But recently three things have happened to dampen my initial enthusiasm.

The first thing is strictly within my institution. Our department is facing decreased enrollments and a decline in the number of students who choose our major. The solution, according to the administration, is to start offering more courses that are "palatable" to students' tastes. There are two versions of this solution. The first is to start offering new courses that are interesting to students and, because many of them are employed in fields related to our discipline, relevant to their jobs. I'd love to propose seventeen new courses that would reinvigorate the students and the faculty, get everyone engaged in the educational process again, and help turn us into one of the most cutting-edge departments in the university. But I can't. I'm junior faculty — no, even worse, I'm contract faculty. While colleagues respect me and my ideas, I simply can't make those kinds of waves, especially when (the spirits willing) I won't be around to see them through. Stuck, I am.



The second solution — I hate to mention this — is to reduce the workload in my courses to keep butts in the seats. As I said before, I'm renowned for assigning allegedly tyrannical amounts of work (100 pages of reading per week, three papers per semester, no exams). My "flight rate" ranges from 30% to 50% in any given course, and I've set the departmental record for the fastest first day departure (40 seconds, by my estimation, from handing out the syllabus to the first student hitting the bricks). Such incidents do not bode well for my retention hearing. So I'm left with two choices.

One, I can risk losing some students while I uphold my vision of the educational experience as a challenge to every thought both student and professor have had on a particular subject, a challenge so fundamental that it causes a change in one's being, a renewed awareness of personal responsibility for the mess the world's in, and the development of some ideas of what we can do about it. Or I can change the way I teach, go for the proverbial Scantron Massacre three times a semester, and essentially sell out for the fan base. Stuck again, I am.

Problem number two derives from the "selling out" quandary and involves my students. I go into every new semester hoping that this will be the class, that this group of students will be the

one that disproves everything faculty say about students when the doors to the lounge are closed. And every semester, I'm somewhat disappointed: the mass exodus on the first day, the feeble excuses for not doing work, and the blank stares when I talk about Canadian multiculturalism. Don't get me wrong — I love my students, and I understand that each of them has four full-time jobs, seventeen kids, nine classes that each assign 1000 pages of reading per week, and a 400 mile drive each way to campus. Their educational reality has changed, and so has their attitudes. So the question of maintaining enrollments (and thereby funding) becomes one of meeting the students where they're at, that is, fulfilling their expectations that this is a five-year drive-through experience, and a Big Mac, fries, and BA will be waiting for them when they reach the pick-up window. Stuck yet again.

Problem number three: I'm at a teaching university. I'm one of those individuals who insists that research and teaching are two sides of the coin — that it's only by teaching that the import of one's research becomes clear, and that it's only

through research that one maintains a vitality in the classroom with fresh knowledge. Teaching four courses each semester stands in the way of realizing this view. Trying to get a job at a research-oriented university is made that much harder trying to realize it nonetheless. There are, in essence, two different definitions of the university sociology professor. Either one is "productive" by publishing in two or three American Sociological Association journals every year and by going to more conferences than the travel budget will allow. Or one teaches. Ne'er the twain shall meet.

Right now, I teach. I want to be "productive." I want to go to a school that encourages research. I fear I want too much. Again, stuck.

All this adds up to a nasty sense of being mired in a completely unpalatable situation. Do I shirk my teaching responsibilities and ethical obligations solely to get myself out and into a research school? Or do I give up the research projects I want to pursue right now in order to keep what is in essence a good-paying job? Do I hold to a strict ethical code about education and ignore the awkwardness of lecturing to ten students? Or do I sell my academic soul and hit the textbooks instead of primary texts, the computerized testbank instead of research papers, and sit idly by while the university administration turns our evaluations into a popularity contest?

I'm not alone in this. I know it sounds a lot like whining, but there's a point: namely, that "education," "thought," and "intellectual activity" all have become lofty ideals only relevant to the musty castle turrets that made those heavy academic robes necessary. According to the conventional wisdom, what's needed now is a corporate sensibility to the entire endeavor. In other words, I need to think of my lone skill set — to challenge others' ideas, to figure out how it is other

people understand the world, and to help them see the world in an entirely different way for better or worse — as lending itself more to The Gap than to bridging the gap between individuals and the world around them.

The Lunatics and the Asylum: The Commodification of Education

None of what's said above is meant to sully the good names of my graduate programs, advisors, colleagues, or students. Anyone involved in the educational system these days deserves respect, as the academy has turned into a battle zone between two different forces in our society: the ideational force of education as a liberatory praxis, and the actual force of corporate necessity.

Put bluntly, the university as an institution is being turned into a corporate training mill, motivated by parallels to the profit motive and to post-Fordist industrial restructuring that happened in the private sector during the past decade. From the proverbial “ninth floor” on down, the message sent to everyone within the ivory tower is this: Make yourself and your course materials relevant, immediately applicable to “the real world,” immediately and thoughtlessly consumable, or be downsized. Faculty who don't get big enrollments don't get retained; those whose offerings can't be tested on Scantron forms are “too abstract”; and those who require more reading are taking students away from their corporate lives, something neither they nor their employers want. Being an educator in the critical sense described by Freire is an economic loss activity, whereas giving the students “what they want” — their degree with a minimum amount of labor — ensures the expansion of the department, the hiring of new faculty, and the amassing of new resources for the department. The lunatics have taken over the asylum.

This transition from education to popularity contest, inverting what used to be the power relations in the university—giving students the ability to toss out faculty they see as “too tough”—can't be blamed on any one group of individuals. In the twelve years between my admission to undergraduate study and the completion of my Ph.D., numerous structural factors have impacted higher education and have made this manifestation of corporatism seem, at least in hindsight, inevitable. The economic recession of the late 1980s and early 90s increased tuition at public universities dramatically. At the same time, the recession drastically reduced state funding, put hundreds of thousands of people out of work, and made it necessary for more and more people to beg for financial aid — only to find that only loans were available.

Fast forward to the late 90s, when “fiscal austerity” became the watchword for governments, corporations, universities, and students alike. Universities, facing increasing enrollments due to the lack of post-high school job possibilities, hire new faculty, though with the same small quibbled-over pool of money that was available during the recession. The answer: hire part-time faculty, who don't get benefits, may not have terminal degrees in their field (and therefore

earn less), and can be laid off if enrollment trends change. Part-time faculty are subjected to the same kinds of apparently student-imposed strictures on their workload, teaching style, and course content as tenured faculty, with one exception: part-timers are expendable. This puts them in the “sell-out” quandary I described above, in between John Horseman in *The Paper Chase* and John Cleese hawking *Schweppes* tonic water.

This rebounds on students, who too have bought into the fiscal austerity mind set. Knowing full well that they can't readily afford a university education, many of them take what are considered to be “overload” course schedules — fifteen, eighteen, twenty-one course hours per semester — and work, sometimes full time, to support their education. (The realization kicks in later: Taking an overload every semester means having to drop courses, which means a longer time to graduation.)

At my university, most incoming students graduate 6.7 years after they enter college.) This leaves them in the unfortunate position of having too much academic work to do and not enough time in which to do any of it well. To boot, their exposure to the corporate world — and, for lack of a better way of putting it, many of my students are “corpies,” working for finance and mortgage companies, law firms, telecom corporations — reinforces the idea that a university education is good only to make a bigger salary. In addition to taking more courses than they can bear, they come in with the attitude that is anathema to a university education: get me out of here.

Students who work 40 hours a week and commute 30 miles or more from their parents' house (where they live to cut down on expenses) don't want to work, to challenge themselves or others. Can you blame them? Even students who carry a full-time load are no longer “full-time students,” despite what they put on their tax forms. They approach the university like clients, paying for a service, and they see nothing wrong with doing whatever is necessary to get their degrees, even finding the time required to do a search for “structure/agency” essays on EssayNet.com. Whether one chooses to follow Merton's analysis of “blocked goals” or a Marxist line about alienated labor, it comes down to the same thing: Students are as in between in the academy as everyone else.

So here's the end result, the situation I found myself in at the start of this essay: There's a bright, vibrant young teacher at the front of a seminar room, waxing philosophical about minority group relations. He wants to engage in the kind of liberatory pedagogy Freire and bell hooks clamor for, but he knows that just like any restaurant, if the butts aren't in the seats, his job is over. He's stuck between showing his students a liberatory path or commodifying education in the form of easily consumable knowledge. The thirty or so students seated around our young instructor find what they're hearing interesting, a bit intriguing, but over their heads, and, in a quick cost-benefit analysis, figure out that it's not really worth doing the work for it because, after all, they'll pass the course with a minimum of effort. So as much as they may want to engage their instructor in intelligent discourse, they're left with only one conclusion — to take out of today's lecture only what they can repeat for credit and move on. After all, if it

doesn't help get them a job, it must not be worth knowing. The professor professes; the students study. Welcome to academia at the crossroads. Welcome to Education Incorporated.

So what's caused this shift in the approach to higher education? There are more players here than simply fiduciary malaise. The culprits are, as ever, cultural and ultimately structural: the anti-intellectualism of North American society, and the sad, apparently necessary, and ultimately detrimental rise in relationships between the university and corporations.

Tom Wolfe's recent article in *Harper's* lamenting the absence of any celebration of what he calls "America's Century," displays this anti-intellectualism. In the midst of interrogating America's apparent withdrawal from the world, (or at least its move away from a kind of international co-dependency,) Wolfe claims that the reason we aren't building great monuments or writing opus magna to the US in the time of its greatest triumphs is, put bluntly, my fault. Intellectuals, that scourge of American society, who want nothing more than to avoid the masses and who turn everyday experience into an unrecognizable mess of jargon and incomprehensibility — these are the people at fault for what's become of America's sense of self. Judith Butler and Stanley Fish — Public Enemies #1 and 2 — suffer the most from Wolfe's lambasting, for they spend their time ferreting out the "phobes" — homophobes, ethnophobes, sexists, racists, classists, and so on — all the while struggling to maintain their position of hegemony over and against the fine people of the country.

America has always been an anti-intellectual country. It's a rare thing to see an academic on television. American society simply doesn't think that intellectuals have anything to offer the public. Sure, they want their children to grow up, attend a good university with lots of Nobel Prize winners, and graduate; they want their kids to have good jobs. But the American public doesn't want to see what we see, hear what we have to say, or engage in the same kind of mental work we do, since it's not really "work".

At the same time, there's been a gradual disengagement of intellectuals from social life over the last thirty years. The demise of the student revolts in the late 1960s left many people in the academy disillusioned, not only with the idea that Marxism or any other radical doctrine could be an efficacious model for political change, but also with the notion that intellectuals could have any place of relative importance in American society. France had philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and now has sociologist Pierre Bourdieu; Germany had, until Hitler's rise, the Frankfurt School, and after WWII, Jurgen Habermas. Who were we to have? Who

would be able to mobilize that many people's imaginations about the possibility for radical social change? No one, so why bother?

This isn't an ad hominem attack on those who suffered tear gas and billy clubs. Just look at the transitions in prescriptions for social change during the last generation: from Marxism to postmodernism; from decolonization to post-colonial critique; from the civil rights movement and Black nationalism

to identity politics and weak multiculturalism. The retreat from engagement — from the idea that we can make a difference in the world — has also meant a retreat from thinking outside of and acting against the status quo. We've re-entered the inert world, towards the Weberian politics/science divide, wherein social scientists can't do anything political; we can only diagnose the problems and let the politicians do something about it. (Tell that to Anthony Giddens, British Prime Minister Tony Blair's golfing buddy and policy wonk.)

We've come to a point at which the general public sees us as mostly useless, and we'd probably say the same thing about ourselves. The 2000 edition of *The Socialist Register*, entitled "Necessary and

Unnecessary Utopias", shows this much. Its calls for the development of prescriptive social and political theory are not so much "calls," but begging, pleading admonitions for us to begin to think — and to get the next generation, whose minds are in our hands, to think as well — of something outside the cubicle. Sure, we occasionally get the flicker of "light bulbs" when we say something in a classroom; but if we think we're useless, and the larger society and culture think we're useless, what effect does this have on our students and the rest of the world?

Add to this less than encouraging situation the increasing corporatization of the university. Beyond the treatment of classroom materials and pedagogical approaches as things to be quickly produced, easily disseminated, and easily consumed, the university is becoming more and more corporate-run. In a move not unlike CIA funding of scientific research during the Cold War, large corporations have taken it upon



themselves to endow chairs or establish research institutes in order to support research and teaching that will, ultimately, benefit them. Two examples, humorous though they may be, suffice: Coca-Cola supposedly endowed Jean-François Lyotard's chair of 'Critical Theory' at Emory University (so much for the death of metanarratives, for there is "Always Coke"); and the company that manufactures Cliff's Notes recently endowed a chair in the English department at University of Nebraska. At my alma mater, York University in Toronto, one of the rumors going around during the 1997 faculty strike was that the university wanted corporations to "sponsor" courses, so that a course called *Postmodernism and Its Discontents* could very well be brought to you by your friends at *McDonald's*.

This is no accident. The 1990s recession made it necessary for universities to find funding outside of the normal channels, and corporations were all too willing to help out. After all, the exchange was apparently even: the university could expand its research prestige and cultural capital by establishing a McDonnell Douglas aerospace engineering research facility, and MD wins by getting immediate access to cutting-edge research and helping to train its future employees, even before they filled out a job application. The motive forces of these two forms of social organization — enlightenment and the creation of new knowledge by the one, advertising and the creation of new products by the other — don't readily mix. And as we know, when culture and capital collide, capital wins. So the corporate culture infects the university culture, resulting in the rethinking of the educational mission on the part of the university (consumable courses, new positions based on sales/enrollment figures, itinerant labor, and the mass delivery of product) and the screwing of faculty and students in the process.

The complaint we get from the very same industry types that wanted control over the institution, if not the curriculum, is that we're not educating our students. They're not "self-starters"; they can't "think outside the box"; they lack the kinds of critical skills necessary to help Corporate America maintain its dominance, innovation, and planned obsolescence strategies. The post-Fordist approach to producing an automobile hasn't worked in its translation into the academy. We're turning out thoughtless drones — the very same cogs in the machine that Leftists say capitalism needs to reproduce and expand itself. And now, capital is not happy. Our kids can't think outside the cubicle.

Jobs versus Duties: Reworking intellectual work

Higher education is at a crossroads. It stands between the tradition of expanding and developing knowledge and helping future generations to become better thinkers and members of society and the structural requirement of preparing our way-too-eager future corporate cogs. The critique above isn't meant to suggest that universities should not be preparing our students for their futures, their careers, or their membership in society — far from it. The question is this:

Must we sell out our ideals, our standards, and our vision of the intelligent and thoughtful life simply because our students and administrators want us to?

The answer here is a resounding no. But the reasons differ from those offered up by presidential candidates, theorists of the "postindustrial society," or anyone else. They would have us think that we need more rigor in our schools and universities because education is an end in itself (despite the fact that no one else in society thinks so). After the massive industrialization process and the assurance of some degree of security for everyone, or so the post-industrialist mantra goes, we will all have more time to concern ourselves with affairs of the mind, spirit and soul. Education rather than class warfare will become a pressing concern for us since industrialization gives us so much more "free time" (even though this isn't the case at all). We will become a philosophical society. But the way it's panned out, we are philosophical when Hulk Hogan decides to retire, or when Jennifer Aniston decides to style her hair differently. For those who make a living talking about education, education is the good to be attained — and that's not it at all.

University education is not serving as a good in and of itself, though it often seems that way. We generally work in relative isolation, with only the occasional laudatory remarks or scathing critique by our peers in the latest issue of our disciplinary journal or by our students on end-of-term evaluations to remind us that our work has an impact. But keeping in mind the purpose of the university — to create new knowledge and to educate future members of society — reminds us of our real importance in the world. Education is a means to a better world. Our job is to think critically and to induce that same kind of thought in those who follow us in history. Leaving aside the institutional questions raised by Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent* about our possible legitimation of the very system we critique, I know one thing: When we think critically about the possibilities for improving the human condition, we give our students the opportunity to learn about their respective places in the greater scheme of things. This is the resource that teachers ideally give to students to start questioning the legitimacy of the status quo.

But when education is seen as a commodity, then we fall into the standard pattern of capitalist production best outlined by Marx. We create a product (consuming other products in the process), distributing it through some socially agreed-on process, whereby it is consumed in the production of another set of products. And our patterns of consumption these days demand instant feedback. We want our Paxil because we want the quick fix to our alienation. We want our MTV, if only to catch the latest trends in fashion, and to avoid imagining our own version. Education doesn't fit this bill at all. It is a long, slow, often painful, process, requiring us to radically reshape our thoughts, ideas, and beliefs. Its benefits often don't appear until years down the road, when our students are no longer in contact with us, and generally not even in the academic world at all. In some sense, we get what every other worker gets — a paycheck, and the occasional positive reinforcement of having done "a good job."

Teachers are alienated, stuck between liberation and outright exploitation, between working with the future of the world and being just another cognitive cog in the educational-industrial wheel. We are alienated, in part because we see intellectual work as a job. Yes, we sell our labor to someone else in exchange for a wage. It's no wonder that my friends and colleagues "burn out" and begin teaching the same syllabus over and over again. But we also need to see educational labor as a duty, to see ourselves as more than factory workers of the mind, as people oriented to the possibility of positive social change. For anyone who's tried to teach four courses a semester, pursue research projects, and carry on some semblance of a regular life, engaging in the kind of front-line political action such as protests at the presidential conventions is a far-off dream, something to save up the sabbatical time for. But teaching, if it's done right — that is, critically engaging students and the inertial, corporatized set of ideas they come into our classrooms with, and compelling them to account for their beliefs and actions — are our version of that kind of change.

Think of the possibilities, of all the students we reach. If the one thing they take away from our courses is an expectation of accountability, a call to take stock of themselves, then we've done what we must do in order to be successful at our work. We've trained them for the future, and we've satisfied the ethical demand to improve the world. The situation of higher education today has provided us with two options, both lacking any kind of security. Institutionally, economically, and culturally, we are in the "in-between days," so we do our best to walk the lines. But as Merleau-Ponty once said, 'there is really no "in between" in any political situation.' Even by not choosing sides, we take a political position. If we are to see any kind of change in the world, we need to take a side. Teachers can work against the corporatization of the university, of our students' minds, and of society at large.

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The Selfishness of the Intellect: Why Eve Upset the Apple Cart

Amanda Shoemaker

In order to prove a point about the alienation of the intellectual, I would like to examine the plights of two women in tricky situations. The first describes me, faced with the need to initiate a relationship "talk." The second involves Eve, mother of us all, when faced with that shiny, significant apple. Both cases are intended to show ways in which society tells us that incessant analytical harping disturbs the peace.

But does it?

That's a more difficult question.

First, I invite you into a scene from my home life. My boyfriend and I sit on the couch in our living room. He puts his hand on my head, fingers gripping the top of my skull. He says, "What's this?"

If I don't offer the right response, I'll never get his hand off my head." It's a brain sucker," I am compelled to say.

"What's it doing?" he asks, his fingers still digging into my scalp.

"Starving," I answer, starting to laugh in spite of myself.

This is humor like being tickled is humor. It's well intentioned.

On the other hand, it reminds me of a thing I've noticed lately: The incidence of the "you're dumb" comments (considerable) compared to the incidence of "you're smart" comments (zero). It's an issue I've begun to worry about.

"I know you're just kidding," I tell him. "But have you noticed how often you make comments about being dumb? Have you noticed how rarely you say anything positive about my intelligence, or any of my capabilities?"

In my ideal world, he responds, with a note of concern, "No, I hadn't noticed that. Are you sure it's true?" Then, after we go over some examples, we begin to examine the behavior. Do I do the same to him? Is that problematic? Is there a gender issue here, or is it a balance-of-power problem? Should we take steps to correct it? Etc.

In the real world, he covers his face with his hands and groans. "Can't you take a joke?" he asks.

"Let it be" is the motto of the non-examiner. "Can't you take a joke?" falls into that category as well. Is the unexamined life worth living? I don't think so. But could examination be an addiction - and a destructive one? Sometimes I'm afraid it might be. Dostoevsky said, "to think too much is a disease, an actual, real disease." Can we not look though history - especially art history - and see numerous examples of artists, literary characters, and others driven mad by brooding, de-

stroying their lives for the sakes of highfalutin' passions, guilty consciences, and intellectual obsessions?

In my own relationship, I have real fears about driving my boyfriend crazy. I don't want to "talk things to death"; I believe some silences are sacred. Over-intellectualization would be as depressing to me as it would be to him. Moreover, my conscience whispers that this tendency toward intellectual analysis might be a form of selfishness or self-consciousness, actually. To be self-conscious in the most basic sense seems a virtue: to be self-aware. But the phrase has so many meanings. To be self-conscious could mean to be self-preoccupied, maybe even blind to the needs of others. That's not a thing that I would want. To be self-conscious could also mean to be paralyzed by self-doubt, embarrassment, and shame.

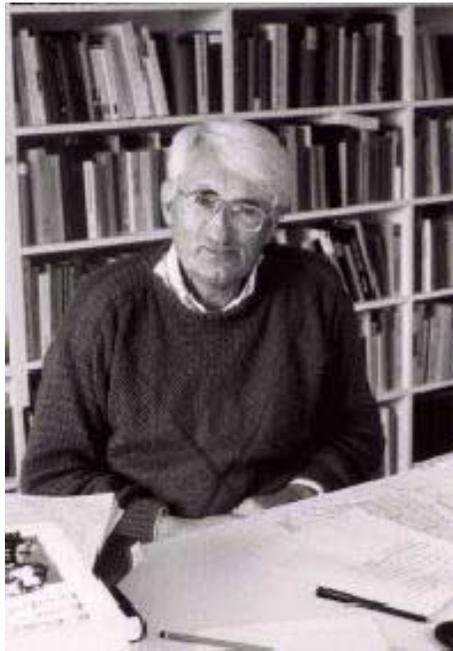
If you have any doubts about the ability of an intellectual argument to ruin simple happiness, just read Milton. The tale re-told in *Paradise Lost* is here to show you that you had better leave well enough alone - you had better take the joke, let it be, and take instructions on faith. The consequence of failing to do so is to be driven from the status quo with a flaming sword.

Look at the kernel of the story: the temptation scene. The serpent approaches Eve in the garden, and knocks down her arguments, one by one, as to why she should not eat the apple. First, he assures her that she won't die. Look at him, he says; he ate, and yet he lives. And even if eating from the Tree of Knowledge did pose a deadly risk, would not God be proud of her for risking death for knowledge?

... will God incense his ire
For such a petty trespass? and not praise
Rather your dauntless virtue, whom the pain
Of death denounced, whatever thing death be,
Deterred not from achieving what might lead
To happier life, knowledge of good and evil ...

Milton endows the serpent with a powerful argument. Knowledge is good, and ignorance evil; therefore, Eve should eat the fruit. The serpent goes on to say that knowledge, far from being harmful, in fact offers the path to greater virtue. Why would God not want Adam and Eve to know the world for what it is? Knowledge used to recognize good can only be good, he argues. And as for knowledge of evil:

... if what is evil
Be real, why not known, since easier shunned?
God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just;
Not just, not God; not feared then, nor obeyed



Having listened to the serpent's argument, Eve begins to believe. She even elaborates on his logic, questioning the point of living unconsciously:

For good unknown sure is not had; or, had
And yet unknown, is as not had at all.

We know what happens at the end of Milton's temptation sequence. Eve eats the apple, and everything is ruined.

... her rash hand in evil hour
Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat!
Earth felt the wound; and Nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
That all was lost.

Eve chose wrongly. The moral of the story is that she should never have disobeyed God because God is good, and the devil's logic was flawed, selfish, and dangerous. Milton's poem - to say nothing of the Bible - hinges on the hierarchy of values that places importance on trust in God over information and critical thinking.

This argument gives me goosebumps. It brings to mind visions of German citizens throwing books onto bonfires at the urging of a paternalistic Hitler; and U.S. school libraries banning "Harry Potter." Citizens and grade-school students, beware! A higher power does not always have your best interests in mind when it protects you from the taint of knowledge.

The apple of knowledge in "Paradise Lost" represents more than just faith and obedience. In the poem, "knowledge" is closely tied to intellectual analysis. As the serpent points out, the apple represents the tools that people need to examine their lives (in the context of good and evil). That means that in this case, the unexamined life is Eden.

I equate my boyfriend's "Can't you take a joke?" with the idea of divinity telling humanity, in essence, "Can't you just do what you're told?" There's no question about this being a difficult choice. Why ruin your own happiness, and that of others, by asking tough questions?

Maybe some things are best left unsaid. Maybe intellectuals run the risk of poisoning for themselves the simpler joys in life; joys that are primarily emotional, not intellectual. The dangers of over-intellectualization and analysis pale beside the awful threat of non-examination and ignorance. If I were Eve, had I known the consequences, I'd have eaten that apple in a heartbeat. I think real intellectuals do that every day.

Anandan's Wall

Min Sook Lee

I was walking to the laundromat today when I met an acquaintance, Paulos, on the road. After a few small words about this and that, he said, "We need a writer." I asked why and he told me about Anandan's wall.

Anandan is a mutual friend of ours; he's a 14-year old graffiti artist and burgeoning community organizer. Recently, Anandan approached the owner of a building he lives near on Bank St., with a proposal to paint the side of the building. Anandan sketched out a horizontal graffiti mural, one that would read along the wall boasting the tags of six young artists. The wall has been a popular site for tags, and a full fledged graffiti mural would not only provide young artists a sanctioned forum for their work but was also a practical means of controlling the spread of random hits.

Anandan's wall faces an alley, and it is very Toronto in that it's seen and used by a mixed bag of people: the building's tenants, the shoppers and students on their way to class, the restaurant workers carting waste and produce, and the drivers who use the lane as a shortcut. There's a string of independently run retail fronts: small clothing shops run by elderly Portuguese families; a young designer off-the-rack store opened by the collective dream and vision of three friends; a used CD and book store where you can find Nietzsche, The Fall and Klimt on the same counter; family run eateries like the Chinese buffet and the modestly priced cafe favored by the weekend brunch crowd; and the (now-closed but then-central) small bar run by two young women who organized mass off-site parties featuring the likes of Ursula Rucker and Movement. The artists, families, workers and students who live on top of these storefronts know each other by name and face. There are nods all along the strip between regulars, shopkeepers and sidewalk fixtures like the guy in the wheelchair who smokes hardtop Camels.

The neighborhood of Anandan's wall is part of the community of Toronto that I see vanishing all around me. South of his neighborhood is Kensington Market; to the east, the University of Toronto, and west, a non-stop party of fashionistas rubbernecking in synthetics.

Just around the corner, the Comfort Zone hums into the night with underage raves; the Silver Dollar rents out rooms for a bill; and the Salvation Army beds the city's growing homeless population. 14 year olds have to be resourceful to hang onto whatever's left of their youth. They have a lot of choices, some exciting, some scary, and some just boring. From the drug-free arcade to the 5 am rave to the 24-hour coffee shop, the places to hang out in are plenty.

Like a lot of boys his age Anandan has started to really, really dig graffiti. He's almost obsessed with it. He draws constantly, reads the magazines and hangs out with other graffiti writers. This

year he was accepted into the Etobicoke School of the Arts, on a portfolio that was largely graffiti-based.

Tagging in the city is and always has been a peripherally dangerous pursuit. It's illegal and graffiti artists are renown for their skulking skills. You'll probably never see them unless you go through the alleys at dawn. With capped heads they tow knapsacks filled with cans, rags, chalk, pencils and paper. Generally they go out in groups, both for the protection and the company. In order to do really serious work you have to be organized: scout your location, take heed of the nearby alarm posts, measure your wall, and keep an eye on the watch.

Anandan took these organizing skills and decided to coordinate a large-scale, publicly supported graffiti mural in his neighborhood. He drafted a contract for the landlady to sign, showed her the design sketches and collected financial support from business owners on the strip, as well as from friends, and family. Last weekend Anandan and five friends emblazoned the wall with their flashy tags, in color and proud bolded edges. They spent the whole day painting, and the neighborhood gathered to watch; it became an impromptu street party. There weren't any cheap give-aways from corporate sponsors, shiny flyers advertising looming sales, rented speakers booming too much bass, or any of the other paraphernalia we've grown accustomed to expect from festive gatherings.

As the young men carefully gleaned their tags onto the crumbling wall, the storekeepers, pedestrians and tenants stood around trading stories, pointing out popular flourishes and commenting on the day's news. The creation of Anandan's wall quietly became a part of the unfolding history of this busy street.

A few days after the mural was up Anandan received a phone call from the landlady. She planned to paint over the mural. She'd received an angry phone call from the building owner down the lane, a photographer. He doesn't live in the neighborhood; he drives into his studio for work and disappears to his suburban enclave when his picture taking is done. I've always noticed his studio because it stands out like a Bauhaus grimace in the middle of an alleyway cobbled by age. The studio is a slate of greys angled by modern architecture. It is a clean, technically efficient space, the kind favored by minimalists with maximum cash flow.

The photographer (we found out later) is a corporate photographer whose clients include IKEA and other major brand names. He angrily calculated the potential damage to his property value and voiced fears that the mural would attract more of the same kind. He wanted the mural gone, to the point that he was ready to organize a community meeting around the issue, threatening to bring in big local law-enforcement names like recently appointed police thug Fantino. Anandan's

landlord capitulated to the photographer's rage and agreed to paint over the mural.

Throughout all of this Anandan tried to reason with the photographer: the wall was a traditional target of taggers; the mural kept the area free from tags, the mural was beautiful, and artistic... Anandan pleaded with his landlady: a contract was signed, "You agreed to the sketches and there was a breach of trust." The adults ignored Anandan. After all, he was only a kid.

So now, the graffiti mural is going to be re-painted. The photographer is talking about setting up a surveillance camera outside his studio doors. The landlady is choosing a grey shade of cement to re-paint. And Anandan is biking angrily throughout the city wondering what to do. He organized a petition for supporters to sign and showed this to the photographer. The photographer arrogantly assured Anandan that he could gather a bigger petition against the mural. And he's probably right.

We're living in a funny moment right now. We fear youths and simultaneously talk about saving them. Recently the city of Toronto, with the help of the Mayor's office and the storm troopers we used to call cops, have waged a crack-down on youth culture. Raves, graffiti, squeegee kids and mall rats have all become sources of evil in the eyes of local landlords. Just as zero-tolerance policing is being applied to anything youth create autonomously, youth are being spoon-fed institutional drivel about "democracy" and "freedom" from government sponsored information campaigns. In this climate, the irony bites metallic when you consider how much energy is spent legislating and policing youths; not just through cops on patrol but also through school systems and government-funded 'youth employment schemes.'

The specter of youth violence is wielded as an ominous threat upon the citizenry. The aggregate reaction is the extensive legislation and criminalization of youth activity, however benign such activity may be. The latest schoolyard slayings will hit the headlines with titanic force to reinforce a social policy towards youth that is largely reactive and thus irrelevant. The attention generated by episodes of 'teen violence' spur committees, reports, government funded youth programs and paper towers of 'youth initiatives' which themselves breed an administrative infrastructure to control the spasm.

The reality is that youths socialize in packs; they gather, hang around and 'do much of nothing'; and a congregation of youths on one site is seen as a premonition of violence around the block. One thing not recognized is the intense

boredom youth experience when looking out at the world set up for them. It's a commodified world where they're encouraged to accessorize their personalities through vapid culture vultures. We set them up and offer youth nothing. And probably they're too cynical to buy into much of what's set up for them anyhow.

When youths do create a culture of their own, it's immediately legislated, franchised and anthologized - subsumed within the insatiable capitalist economy hungry for ready-made markets and consumable goods. Thus you have hip-hop, graffiti, raves, 'zines and 'alternative' culture re-packaged for the EZ-lifestyle replete with How-To's and Do's and Dont's.

Graffiti 101

Graffiti is not a new craze. It's not a passing fad or a trend. The art form has been around since the late 50's, which means it has survived longer than hula hoops, the Rubiks Cube, and many other pointless pop culture phenomena that truly deserve the word fad. Its endurance speaks to its importance in youth culture. Graffiti is not a static genre, meaning (like any art form) it's gone through genuine stylistic, technical, and demographic metamorphoses.

Modern urban graffiti was used primarily by political activists to make statements and street gangs to mark territory. Graffiti acted as an important voice of protest up through the 1960s. It was a supplement to the extensive methods of protest concerning the various social and political movements of the time.

It wasn't till the late 1960s that graffiti writing's current identity started to form. The history of this underground art movement begins in Philadelphia, and is rooted in bombing. The writers credited with the first conscious bombing effort are CORNBREAD and COOL EARL. They wrote their names all over the city, gaining attention from the community and local press. It is unclear whether this concept was imported to New York City or spontaneously arose there around the same time.

In 1971, the *New York Times* published an article on a now infamous writer. TAKI 183 was the alias of a kid from Washington Heights. TAKI was the nickname for his given name, Demetrius. #183 was the number of the street where he lived. He was employed as a foot messenger, so he was on the subway frequently and took advantage of it, doing motion tags. The appearance of this unusual name and numeral sparked public curiosity prompting the *Times* article. He was by no means the first writer or even the first "king". However, TAKI was the first to be recognized outside the newly formed subculture.

To appreciate the meaning of this autonomous subculture created by inner city, working class youth, you have to appreciate the poverty of imagination of the world around them. Nothing they



saw in American pop culture reflected their experiences, particularly during the period when tagging began to really take off, during the late seventies and early eighties. Black music - historically appropriated and renamed by white culture - was being stolen again, the term "disco," having been created only when white people started dancing to soul and funk. As for visual art, it took a long time for the Basquiat pique to claim any space in galleries. The Andy Warhols of the world were decidedly interested in investigating their middle-class white, alienated angst, apart from the rest of the consumer debacle that they called American culture.

Graffiti has its roots in a multi-media cultural explosion of creativity, emerging as one of the primary elements of hip-hop culture. It captured a generational zeitgeist that spanned the continental coasts; it was spawned as a highly formulated way of imprinting the urban landscape. Pretty soon kids in LA, New York, Chicago and every other major urban core were spraying trains, listening to hip-hop, and break dancing. It was a culture heavy in language play, in monikers, street rhymes, rap extempore and word duels. It was redolent with inspired fashion and accessories, and defiantly political in its expression of self.

Graffiti makes a lot of sense, when you think about the landscapes writers had in front of them. Not lush, rolling, green pastures but cement and endless underground train systems; grey everywhere you look. These are kids who grew up in tenements, high rises, government housing or row houses. The banality of grey, prison like walls high-rising above their heads was a spite to their very faces. Does it surprise anyone that kids would start covering these walls with color? And with something even better, their names.

In academic-speak, graffiti is "an alternative system of public communication for kids who otherwise have little access to avenues of urban information." Graffiti allows mobility in a number of ways. The work surpasses the normal spatial boundaries of the city; it covers walls citywide and exists in neighborhoods not ordinarily penetrated by working class youth. Graffiti also violates the city's everyday ethnic segregation by incorporating kids of various ethnic backgrounds. Graffiti penetrates the psyche of the society from which it rebels, addressing and questioning social and artistic boundaries. Graffiti resists authority and changes the visual scope of the city, creating complicated urban subcultural preferences.

(Phase II)

The key element in graffiti is tagging your initials or nickname. A tag is your identity. Every aspiring graffiti writer spends a lot of time developing the design that will eventually become their tag, their urban calling card - recognized throughout the city as their graffiti signature. It says, "I was here," "I count," and even, "I rule."

Tagging often invokes territoriality; in claiming a site as your own, you're like a dog spraying the corner. It's a very male-

oriented pursuit, probably because men are socialized to take over space, to conquer, name, and discover land. Graffiti is what happens when post-colonial kids of color subvert the colonizers' logic and twist it to their own design. They are taking space that has historically been denied them. They are claiming ownership of land that will truly never be theirs in any titular sense of the word. Instead of disappearing into the caricature of shadows of what they are supposed to be, by tagging, graffiti artists are defiantly re-naming themselves.

Before graffiti, young kids of color and working class youths in urban cores had no access to these routes of power. Instead, they created their own avenue towards immortality. Using cheap cans of spray (and every color in the universe), they took over the city at night and laid claim to the concrete, the trains, the walls and the very land that they would systematically be forced to labor on but never hold ownership to.

And the kids could get around. In New York, a special feat was painting the whole subway car - end to end, top to bottom (including the windows). In 1973, Flint 707 painted the first car in its entirety. It was doubly amazing because it was also a 3-D piece, 20 feet long and 12 feet high. Designs would be planned out in advance in writers' "black books" (artists sketch pads; carried everywhere). Because of the vast amount of spray paint needed, the writers would often "rack" (steal) the paint needed to create their artwork.

Writers who did whole cars were well respected among other writers, especially when the whole car had good style. By the mid-1970's whole cars had become graffiti masterpieces, with caricatures, backgrounds, messages (some involving social criticism, such as Lee's piece *Stop the Bomb* in 1972), scenes and well-known cartoon characters taken from American popular culture. The underground comic artist, Vaughn Bode (1941-1975), was a great influence to many writers who used his characters in their pieces.

"The Freedom Train," painted on July 4th 1976 by Caine, Mad 103, and Flame One, took graffiti to a new level. The first train to be entirely painted, its life was short - it was taken out of regular service and repainted after just one day. Lee, of 'the Fabulous Five' crew suggested that this move by authority was "...stupid. They did something for the United States and somebody 'dropped a dime' (informed) on them. And they busted them."

Corporate Graffiti

One reason graffiti seems so threatening is that it's the only art form that seems to depreciate material possessions. Property owners say it devalues their land, storeowners call it vandalism and others see it as part of 'gang' culture. All of these characterizations elaborate on racist and classist concepts of culture and communication.

Historically, art is a thing for the rich, to be enjoyed by the wealthy and a pastime for people whose lives are subsidized by the well off. In an art market driven by million dollar

auctions of Van Gogh classics and franchised spin-offs of Bateman prints, art has always commanded respect, because it bestows legitimacy onto its owners by virtue of its market value defining 'taste.' Art galleries and museums are spaces cordoned off from the ruder masses, but heavily subsidized by working people's money through private and government grants.

Corporate Canada supports these artistic spaces because decisively unglamorous businesses like Wal-Mart and Esso need the glamour and prestige of the art-world to rub off on them. After exploiting natural resources and de-populating indigenous populations into involuntary resettlements, companies like Chevron need to buy respectability in the world, and they do this through culture. We have every right to ask, Who is this culture created for? Who is expected to enjoy it? What are the messages this culture conveys? We need to have different ways of seeing art all around us, and we have to ask: "Where am I in this picture?"

When a yuppie corporate-art fuck decides he doesn't like the graffiti in the alley way leading up to his studio because it devalues his property, he is saying people of color who do not belong in this neighborhood have shown evidence of their entry. That means my land is no longer safe and therefore people will not pay as much to purchase it should I decide to sell it. He is also saying people without a lot of education or class, meaning poor people, have had the gall to show evidence of their lives near mine. Their scent makes my land smell bad to others who only want to smell money.

What this corporate art fuck is doing is re-staking the stranglehold corporate culture already has on most of our lives. Youth are a demographic relentlessly targeted by marketing scams engineered by record labels, clothing designers and other major cultural industries. Clothes as status symbols, corporate branding, collectible flash, the whole

gamut of consumer frenzy are tailored for youth. Cultures youth create are criminalized, pathologized, shut down, and silenced, and the powers that be start worrying about losing control of the youth. What is preferred is a generation of unquestioning consumers, primed to buy.

Ads swath the city in all their brain-wishy-washy glory, from toilets to highway lawn-sides to subway tunnels. Ads speculate about a world that's never really ours, and make most of us hate our clothes. The minds behind ads are a collective project of some of the hardest working creative minds in our society today, who work feverishly away to design cutting edge campaigns for tooth-paste, shoes, and gum.

Advertising is so dominant that we don't really even think about it anymore. This is where ads do their more effective work, when we stop thinking and react emotionally, triggered by subliminal cues. So intimate is our knowledge of ad language and the routine of the sales pitch—such educated consumers we are—that they don't even have to do half the set up work they used to.

Corporate graffiti—buses wrapped in advertisements, commercials in classrooms and childcare centers sponsored by multinational corporations are the real danger. With the tacit approval of our government and the protection of our police force, corporations have re-manufactured public space as controlled sites of incessant commerce. Forget about property. What about our freedom?

Min Sook Lee is a writer, trade unionist, and artist living in Toronto. Her own community art project, a series of environmentally-themed murals on the sides of the city's garbage trucks jointly painted by artists, environmentalists and sanitation workers, was censored by Toronto's City Council when one City Councilor deemed a mural 'offensive'. The censored mural criticized the municipal government's decision to export garbage into landfills.

Bad Reviews

Don Lennon -- Self-Titled CD

review by John Brady

The other day, flipping through the channels, I chanced upon one of the many tabloid talk shows that on weekdays fill the airtime between the end of the soaps and the beginning of the sitcom re-runs. I forget which show exactly, but I can't forget the show's theme that blinked out luridly from the graphic at the bottom of my TV screen, "I'm sixteen and I like to strip."

And indeed there on the screen was the sixteen year old stripper, a young woman clad only in bra and panties (why

clothed? a stripper, shouldn't she be naked?), hands on hips, her chin (and breasts for that matter) thrust out defiantly, provocatively. As I tuned in she was yelling at the audience, almost screaming in fact, that it was her right to do what she wanted with her body and that, since she didn't find sex or desire dirty or nudity anything to be ashamed of, why shouldn't she take off her clothes for money? The audience, goaded on by the host, who like some telegenic, moralistic mother hen clucked at the young woman's every assertion, would have nothing of this. Ignoring the undeniable kernel of reasonableness in the stripper's position, however artlessly it may have be expressed (really, did she think the skimpy bra and panties would make her more convincing?), the audience members hooted, stamped their feet, and yelled back, loudly proclaiming their moral outrage at the notion that anyone, let alone a young woman, would want to dance around naked in public.

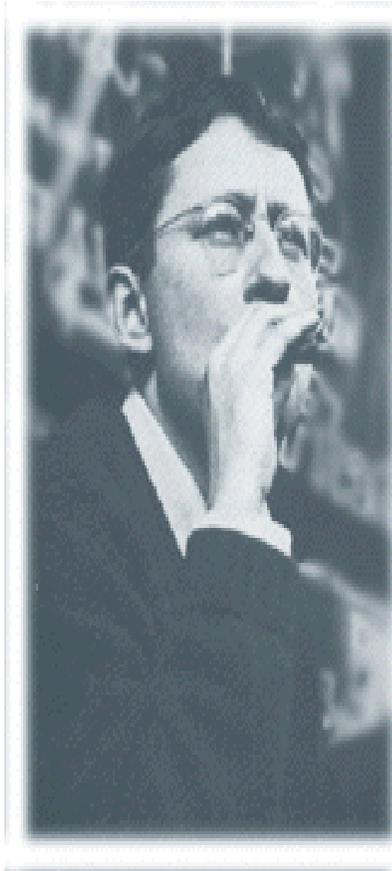
What's so astounding about this situation is not its occurrence, but its omnipresence. Popular culture is awash in examples of individuals taking advantage of the opportunity afforded them by the culture industry to engage in the spectacle of personal revelation, in the very public, most often sensationalized, display of their private and intimate lives — their desires, needs, misdeeds, thoughts, wishes, experiences, motivations, fears, and secrets. Afternoon talk shows, Peoples Court, Divorce Court and the various Judge Shows (Judge Judy, Judge Joe Black, Judge Dread), primetime news shows and their staple of personal tragedy segments, Big Brother: all have provided individuals a chance to offer an audience a view into their personal world. In a sense, then, it wasn't unusual that the young woman was screaming. Her yelling can be taken as an indication of the communicative conditions that pervade contemporary culture. In a popular realm so chock full of people vying to tell their individual stories, one of the only ways to be heard is to scream (and perhaps shake your tits for good measure, too).

Make no mistake, I am not one of those conservatives who bemoan the breakdown between the public and the private spheres and who argue that personal matters don't belong in the public eye. On the contrary, the boundary between these two realms should remain permeable. Making the personal political — as the women's movement has demonstrated repeatedly — is often the first necessary step to be taken in order to address injustice, oppression, and domination hidden from view within the private realm's confines.

No, what makes me uncomfortable about many of the instances of personal revelation that flit across the TV screen, float through the ether, or appear in the high gloss of mass circulation magazines, is the form they take. Sharing aspects of one's private life with others can be an extremely meaningful moment. In personal relationships like friendships or romances, revealing an aspect of one's private self often serves to deepen the relationship, making it more intimate and thereby solidifying the bond of friendship or love. In politics, calling attention to one's personal suffering can be a catalyst for political action as other people, acting out of solidarity or empathy or care, ask themselves why such suffering exists and what can be collectively done to put a stop to it. In these cases, sharing aspects of one's private life becomes part of a communicative chain that promotes greater understanding between individuals and groups.

It is a rather different story with the spectacles of personal confession and revelation that dominate our media-sphere. These moments of personal revelation come in a form that, if anything, tends to erode the rich potential for increased sociability con-

tained in sharing one's life story with others. These spectacles are constructed to shock or titillate the audience. The focus is often on aspects of private experience that can be expected to generate attention and controversy: thus sex, sin, and scandal are in. What is more, these spectacles often pit the individual and audience against one another, fostering not understanding and mutual recognition but rather hostility, aggression, and, at very the least, moral condemnation. In the end, these spectacles, which try so mightily to present individual authenticity, manage to strip individuals of their personality, reducing them to objects of pity, or revulsion, or scorn, or amusement.



Against such a cultural backdrop, Boston singer-songwriter Don Lennon's second full-length album is welcome indeed. Like many others today, Lennon reveals aspects of his private life, singing about everything from his debut album, to his feelings about Halloween, to adventures with friends, to the reasons he feels the need to sing. But he does so in a refreshing way, one that cuts against the grain of today's obsession with confession and private life. Lennon does nothing shocking, doesn't reveal anything lurid, doesn't pretend to be breaking any social taboos. Instead he sings about things that verge on the banal. And if it weren't for the way he presents the mundane details of his everyday life, the album would quickly get tiresome. But Lennon has a delightful dry sense of humor and he presents his personal stories with the right amount of irony and self-deprecation. What's more, he doesn't try to add undo melodrama to his stories by drawing on bombastic or overblown musical conventions. Instead he frames the various episodes from his daily life in a wonderfully economical use of the pop medium. As a result, what could be an irritating display of navel gazing, turns into an entertaining tour of one urban hipster's

everyday life.

There's nothing profound here. We don't gain any real insight into why Lennon does the things he does or sings the songs he sings. Indeed, Lennon's slightly ironic self-presentation seems to say, "Don't believe everything you hear. You now know something about me, but certainly not everything." But this lack of profundity, this lack of complete personal revelation is just fine. Lennon, in keeping things simple and slightly ironic, manages to appear all the more real. And in a culture dominated by moments of private revelation whose sensationalized presentation only points to their essential artificiality, this is no small accomplishment.

Don Lennon is a Martin Philip release, PO Box 15097, Boston MA 02215

Matmos — *The West*

Review by Joe Lockard

Matmos has an original and contemplative beauty derived from an understanding that lived sound is an assembly of possibilities. To reassemble the sounds of human life, which characterizes the Matmos style, is an inevitably political act. This is materialist music rewoven from fragments of daily soundscapes: Marxism does glossolalia. No sound, whatever the apparent strangeness of its source, is alien. A plastic surgeon breaking cartilage for a nose job is as useful as a whoopee cushion is as useful as a sweet fart. Writing has ended; sonic quotation prevails. The originating sense of fragments disappears into the mix and another life of audibility emerges.

The Matmos duo of MC Schmidt and Drew Daniel, occupy themselves with mixing this rich array of adapted clamor into tense, nervy rhythms. These rhythms remain understated and the subject of reiterated explorations. The first track of this album, 'Last Delicious Cigarette', establishes that Schmidt and Daniel like taking their time to explore. Turning pages, repeated guitar chords, war sounds, and mechanical noises populate 'Action at a Distance.' A pressure builds that remains on the quiet side of explosion.

Sit back and pay attention: Matmos will teach you to listen differently to the world. Their contemplative inquiries last for lengthy tracks: the composition does not rush. As one British critic accurately described this effect, it is "a crunchy, micro-techno which evolves over long periods into gibbering splendour." It all might be compared to listening to a Cubist painting, where separate sound elements are delineated and then assembled into a composite panorama. A wiggly line of understated humor sometimes plays here too: when it does, listeners are never quite certain whether Matmos is entertaining the audience or themselves.

An orchestral track like 'Sun on S at 152' begins with a guitar solo and pursues the possibilities of repeated chords into a quick forest of repetitive notes. A new electronic soundscape spreads from a pattern that began as a couple guitar chords as the composition eventually fades back into a re-established harmony of guitar, bass, and percussion playing a slow American folk motif. Yet the electronic hum and

sliding minor notes that percolate through again remind listeners that they inhabit an acoustical world where certainties are not possible, where expectations are the subjects of alteration.

That same sense of the familiar gone awry characterizes the re-issued title track, 'The West', where the musical topography of the Western-style song is first stated and then re-made. It's the missing soundtrack for the ruminative landscapes of Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, at moments pocked with gloom and at moments moved by musical purposes that will reveal themselves shortly. An impressionistic percussion line runs like a backbone through most of this closely-assembled composition, surfacing occasionally to link everything from the sampled sounds of a car engine starting to an electronic keyboard underlay to voices trapped within their own repetition. What is striking here is the breath of sound and how far the composition moves from its original themes. The West of this lengthy montage is a mosaic of possibility, undefined as to aesthetic prospect or prospective threat.



A Matmos song often follows a vein of expression by working to achieve a fixated stare at its own circularity. An initial flat affect gains new features as the song continues. A mood builds, crystallizes and fragments into another mood. 'Tonight, the End' has a somber edge; then its dark mosaic splinters and dissipates. Sometimes the mood can head into the dramatic, with large and sweeping background notes, as in 'Sun on 280 to the 1.' The recombinatory unspecificity of the Matmos compositional style and its assemblages create continual mood shifts. For sheer fun, 'Count Tweakula' is a very attractive piece, good for dancing to the sounds of creaking. Somberness returns in the last two tracks of the album, 'The

Struggle' and 'You Can't Win', which are reflective instrumental essays.

San Francisco-based Matmos is popular in Europe, beginning with their first self-released album and rising further with the 1998 full-length, *Quasi-Objects*, recently made available on import in the US via the band's home label, Matador. *The West* may be difficult to find, since it came out last year and only recently came back into print, but the reissue of this extremely important record is well-worth the effort of seeking out. In the meantime, Matmos has since released *Full on Night on Quarterstick* as a mutual remix effort with their friends The Rachel's. This is a group that my intuition tells me would almost be more interesting to see live, because if my interpretation of *The West* is correct, Matmos lives where sound is being reborn.

The West is a Deluxe Records (Seattle) release.