Dorais Velodrome

1997/98, chromogenic print, 18 x 22 inches

—Stan Douglas

Eating

Meals have always been an important social ritual where people gather together and digest much more than food. Regular meals involve chewing over and swallowing ideas, discussing people and places, neighbourhood rumours and political conspiracies. Eating can be a vehicle for expressing affection towards family and friends, workplace loyalty, forbidden lust.

Globalization has changed the meaning of meals. People from the countryside have moved to urban areas to survive. The traditional group has disappeared. For a time meals were reduced to no more than the swallowing of food, and eating became a time when people experienced loneliness. The birth of the fast food industries was a response to this "aura" of loneliness. The longer one took preparing, eating, and cleaning up, the more unbearable the loneliness. McDonalds and Dairy Queen offer relief by eliminating both the anticipation that the preparation of a "meal" involves, and the tragic afterglow of loneliness produced by post-meal dish-washing.

It is no surprise that many people can be found in fast food restaurants: families with children in search of Disney products, students cramming for examinations, and vagabonds; they all spend time there. They do not need to communicate but can all exist together in a way that minimizes loneliness. There is no stress. But this is not "eating" in the traditional sense. What can we name this new concept?

—Maki Yagi

Ecology

The Greek roots suggest that "eco-logy" refers to knowledge (*logos*) of the home or dwelling (*oikos*). Ecology, which emerged as a scientific discipline in the latter half of the nineteenth century, is thus concerned with the relationship between organisms and their dwelling-place, or environment. One of its most important thematics has been an emphasis on

"interconnectedness"—perhaps best captured by the slogan "everything relates." "Environment" in this sense is a set of relations between various organisms and inorganic systems. The conceptualization of "environment" as a set of relations and feedback mechanisms rather than an inert thing, has allowed ecologists to challenge some of the traditional distinctions of conventional science, for example in James Lovelock's provocative "Gaia Hypothesis," which suggests that the earth itself can be understood as a single, highly complex organism.

In spite of its affinities with Darwinian evolutionary theory and its emphasis on interconnectedness, however, it was only in the 1930s that ecological study began to include the study of *Homo sapiens*, and the relation of that particular species to its environment. But by the latter half of the twentieth century, the notion of a "human ecology" has become virtually impossible to avoid, as the globalization of the industrial revolution has resulted in a (human-induced) transformation of the global environment to an extent unprecedented since at least the extinction of the dinosaurs. As the scope of this transformation was becoming evident, beginning in the 1960s, "ecology" received a political inflection, as the term more frequently referred specifically to the study of how human beings' interactions with their environment has resulted in the radical transformation of that environment. Moreover, the politics associated with ecology have generally been of a critical sort. As in the case of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (a landmark study of the effects of human pesticide use) ecology has become concerned to diagnose particular human ways of relating to the environment as being pathological. Ecology as a political term has thus sought to not only describe the relationship of a particular human community to its environment, but also to demonstrate the destructive character of that relationship, and to advocate political changes that would reduce the human impact on the environment. The "ecology movement," with an emphasis on reduced consumption or "voluntary simplicity" and other socio-political changes that might allow us to "get back to nature" (or live in a more "harmonious" relationship with our environment) thus became associated for many with the New Left politics of the 1960s.

Another important step in the transition from ecology as a scientific discipline to ecology as a social movement was marked by Arne Naess' distinction between "shallow" and "deep" ecology. Naess' argument in favour of radicalism rather than reformism, sought to distinguish between, on the one hand socio-political changes that simply allowed for the extension of current human modes of interacting with the environment (changes to allow for "sustainable development," for example), and on the other hand, more far-reaching changes that fundamentally alter the ways in which we interact with our environment (i.e. a rejection of "develop-

ment" as it is currently understood). For most "deep ecologists," this has meant a political program emphasizing a reduction in the human impact on the natural environment far more radical than those entailed in curbside recycling projects. At its most radical, it involves a claim for "biocentric equality"—that all life forms, human and non-human, are to be treated equally.[1] The implications of such anti-anthropocentric arguments are to treat human beings as a species that has a disproportionate (and largely negative) effect on its environment (the habitat of other species), and whose impact should therefore be reduced. Deep ecologists have argued for such a reduction through, for example, the development of "soft-path" technologies, preservation of wilderness areas on a large scale, banning or heavily restricting automobile use, and a drastic reduction in the human population, usually to be achieved gradually and consensually, but in some cases, by the extension of game management techniques to human populations.[2]

The lurking possibility that solutions to the dilemmas of human ecology might require massive amounts of political coercion is one of the ways in which "deep ecology" has gradually become disarticulated from the politics typically associated with the other social movements of the New Left such as feminism, movements associated with various racial and ethnic minorities, and even the peace movement. In particular, after the energy crisis of the 1970s, there was a sense that solving ecological problems might not be compatible with solving other social problems (such as distributional inequality) and might even necessitate the curtailment of previously acquired civil rights. Following the political path of least resistance typically meant that the "solution" of ecological problems would translate into unemployment for workers in heavy industry (who were more likely to be unionized and relatively highly paid) and the economic devastation of communities reliant on resource extraction industries. In a political environment increasingly characterized by discourses of scarcity ("jobs or the environment"), ecological exigencies were increasingly portrayed as being beyond the traditional political polarities of left and right. The once near-automatic equation of ecology with leftist politics simply no longer obtains: Earth First! founder Dave Foreman is a registered member of the (U.S.) Republican Party.[3]

That the radicalism of deep ecology's biocentrism can more or less comfortably coexist with the thoroughly mainstream individualism of the Republican Party suggests that radical solutions to ecological problems might require a more sophisticated theorization of the social than the Social Darwinism provided by the application of the paradigm of wildlife management. Such a rethinking has been provided by at least two relatively recent schools of ecological thought. Both social ecology (developed primarily by Murray Bookchin) and eco-feminism (inaugurated by

Carolyn Merchant's landmark 1980 text, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*) have sought to increase the awareness of the ways in which human ecology (our interaction with our environment) is structured by social relations. Social ecology has argued that the domination of nature is rooted in social relations of domination, and that the solution to ecological crises would therefore require a dismantling of the hierarchical structures of capitalism and the modern bureaucratic state in favour of more decentralized, anarchical, "organic societies." While somewhat similar in structure to acephelous "primitive" communities, "organic societies" would exist in a situation of "post-scarcity" that would be made possible by the adaptation of advanced technology to more rational, humane and ecologically sound ends.[4] Eco-feminism, on the other hand, has argued more specifically that there is a connection between the domination of nature and the domination of women in patriarchal societies (where women are identified as being "closer to nature"). It is a matter of some debate among eco-feminists as to whether the identification of women and nature is itself "natural" (a result of female biology) or is an ideological strategy to further female subordination within society. In the former case, the solution to ecological crises would be to achieve a "transvaluation of values" by "feminizing" social structures and ways of knowing nature, for example by implementing a more "nurturing" attitude, rather than the objective detachment of (male-dominated) science. If the identification of women and nature is itself socially constructed, on the other hand, then ecological crises cannot be resolved by appeal to some essential feminine principle, but rather can only be resolved (as in social ecology) by demystifying essentialized gender characteristics (both female and male) as the result of social structures rooted in domination.

Both the latter version of eco-feminism and social ecology are thus indebted to the Frankfurt School and their critique of instrumental reason which connects the domination of external nature with the domination of internal (human) nature. What the Frankfurt School-inspired forms of ecology suggest, in other words, is that the shortcomings of deep ecology are best addressed by further application of the fundamental tenets of ecology itself: if it is true that "everything relates," then the structure of social relations must be considered relevant to the pathologies of "environmental" crises. Given that the twentieth century has been witness to a massive trend of urbanization, this has meant that some of the most innovative recent "ecological" studies have been those that have been willing to see the object of ecology as diametrically opposed to what it was a century ago. Rather than the study of wilderness environments—natural environments that excluded human beings—"ecological" writers such as Mike Davis, David Harvey, and Andrew Ross have turned ecologists'

attention to cities, which have increasingly become human beings' "natural" environment.

Notes

1 The term "biocentrism" is derived from the writings of Aldo Leopold.

2 Timothy W. Luke, *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 33.

3 Charles Bowden, "Dave Foreman!" *Buzzworm* 2, 2 (March–April 1990), 46.

4 See especially Murray Bookchin, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1971).

—Andrew Biro

E-mail

Fantastic! Revolutionary! Couldn't have done this issue of *Public* without it.

—Janine Marchessault

End

a.k.a. The End

ant. the day after, Genesis, big bang. *syn.* the abyss, Armageddon, the Apocalypse.

By far, one of the most pervasive, and often annoying, aspects of the imminent twenty-first century AD is the public discourse on "The End," "endtimes," or any of the other various ways of expressing the more terminal aspects of contemporary life. The Millennial crisis—as exemplified by everything from Chris Carter's television series *The X-Files* and *Millennium*, to Y2K paranoia, to the popularity of films such as *Deep Impact* (1998) and *Armageddon* (1998), to changing weather patterns as portents of the Apocalypse—point to the necessity for the overproduction of transcendental answers to the complexity of questions raised by the seemingly abysmal geopolitical, cultural and social climate of late twentieth-century culture. When, as recently as the late 1980s, postmodernism could be seen proselytizing the end of both history and "the real," thereby allowing for, in its weaker and more lackadaisical formations, a pervasive relativism which diminished both the possibility of political intervention in the public sphere and the ability for anything to actually convey meaning, the pesky presence of AD 2000 has, to some extent, inverted these dubious aspects of postmodernist doctrine. This has been accomplished by uniting a theoretical premise—which can be understood as one which postulates that the paradoxical tension between disintegration and globalisation,

circa 1999, point to the explosion of a critical mass within First, Second, and Third World existence—with a quasi-theological justification ("God foresaw this"), culminating in an irrational, but seemingly justified, belief in the termination of culture, history and the world. This *smorgasbord* of cultural phenomena is united with what can be only described as a Quaalude-like acceptance of it all: "It's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine." This theoretical development in late twentieth-century culture can be conceptualised thusly: it represents a shift from the post-modernist position of believing nothing means anything to the Apocalyptic view of believing everything *has* to mean *something*, even if one has no idea what that might be. Or, as Canada's The Five Man Electrical Band put it quite succinctly in 1971, in another context entirely: "Sign, sign, everywhere a sign / blocking out the scenery / breaking my mind. / Do this, don't do that / Can't you read the sign?"

If modernism implies—and some would argue, includes—postmodernism within its own historical trajectory, then postmodernism does this also with regard to "The End," as it is the only thing which can logically exist after the "post." While "The End" supersedes postmodernism—and, in the theological sense, supersedes everything—it is still a premise built upon irrational anxiety and not critical reflection. What's more, there is no exterior vantage-point left from which to critique the postulation of "The End"; everything from Mark Kingwell's cultural anthropology of the Millennial crisis, to Stephen J. Gould's attempt at a rational, quasi-scientific deconstruction of the phenomena, to Jean Baudrillard's nihilistic-yet-ironic surrender to it all, simply feed the hyperbolic discursive activity which surrounds the *fin du millénnium*. Yet attacking the esprit de corps which surrounds the burgeoning Millennial cultural, religious and theoretical bandwagons begs a serious question which will not go away: why is the production of "end-times" so prevalent? Is AD 2000 simply an excuse for a global excursion into the carnivalesque, or is there something more portentous about it?

To address this issue, we must go back through the looking glass of cultural history. The end, like all things, has a beginning. I can cite two beginnings, in fact, although there are most probably a multitude of others. Indeed, we can all pick our favourites or the ones which seem the most portentous, as the global village can't have a Millennial crisis or "end-times" without signs which read, for those of us who wish to see, that "The End is nigh." So, here are my two signs of the Apocalypse: the first is the 1967 release of The Doors' first album (a band which, along with The Velvet Underground, embodies the Apocalyptic underside of the spirit of the 1960s) which ends, appropriately enough, with *The End*. The second is in 1968, and the release of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a film which postulates a new beginning after the end; that is with the

dawning of the new millennium. In this new age, humans are swept off the earth not to meet their maker (at least not in the theological sense) but to be—in a manner which would send most Baptists running into the arms of the Devil—born again. There is then a lull, and a sense of false security emerges. And then, as a sign-post for what's to come (a premonition, one might be tempted to say) Kubrick and Jim Morrison are united in the final scenes in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now!* (1978). Here, 'Nam and Napalm provide an allegorical image of the judgment day that's to come and again demonstrate that all the signs are there for those who wish to see them. The first death-throes of the 1960s—and of the century—during the Summer of Love in 1967 can therefore be seen as the birth of the Millennium's "end-times." Further, in the cases of both Kubrick and Coppola, the technology which Western culture fetishises—the technology which has defined the twentieth century as a radical paradigm shift from what had come before—leads to our ultimate demise.

Now, I realise my own reading of signs is as arbitrary as those who really do predict the end is nigh; but that's part of the magic of the Millennium. One can take a questionable premise and prove it through retroactive textual analysis; "God foresaw this" is the first, although by no means last, example of this form of theoretical justification. More seriously, all of the above texts arise in relation to the utopianism of the late-1960s; and all three postulate the dialectical "other" of the Age of Aquarius: the looming dystopic disillusion which has historically always accompanied the *fin du siècle* and, *a fortiori*, the *fin du millénnium*.

But "The End" also provides relief and reaffirmation, not only despair, destruction and death. Or rather, these quite nasty categories become comforting in times of need, as the Millennium seems to be. For instance, these are the "Yahoo!" subject headings found during a Web search for "Millennium": "Full Coverage > World > Millennium"; "Society and Culture > Holidays and Observances > Year 2000"; "Business and Economy > Companies > Gifts and Occasions > Holidays and Observances > Year 2000"; "Science > Alternative > Paranormal Phenomena > Millennialism"; "Science > Measurements and Units > Time > Actual Start of the Third Millennium" and; "Net Events > Computers and Internet > Year 2000 Problem." These subject headings point to the fact that the Millennium can and is all things to all people; like Baudrillard's simulacra, it is all-encompassing, inescapable. There is no aspect of the human or social sciences that cannot be subsumed into the above categories; no aspect of the public or private spheres are left untouched. Indeed, the first category ("Full Coverage > World > Millennium") pretty much covers everything, like all good quasi-theological Apocalypses should. Yet in spite of this, or perhaps because of it, "The End" gives contemporary western culture hope: in a time of rampant instability, closure becomes equated with

meaning. And like Fox Mulder's conspiracy theories, the brilliance and the power of the Millennium crisis as embodied by "The End" is that it supplies answers for everything by quite ingeniously postulating the end of everything. Or, to put it in far more prosaic and perhaps sarcastic terms, world hunger, cultural imperialism and chronic poverty aren't very daunting problems if the planet itself ceases to exist. These answers—in both their serious and ironic forms—and their current popularity are essentially a means of avoiding the chaos that often engulfs daily life. The postulation of "The End" has often diverted media and public attention from the very real crises facing the planet on a daily basis and has instead turned cultural anxiety about the future into a parade of crystal gazers, false prophets and the continuous search for the best place where one can, on New Year's Eve, party like it's 1999. And all of the crises and anxieties of contemporary Western culture—which reflect a complex set of issues which cannot be avoided in the twenty-first century—are commented on the same way one might, with tongue firmly in cheek, report on the happenings at a *Star Trek* convention. By doing so, one elides addressing how these problems can be feasibly dealt with if the planet doesn't cease to be on 31 December 1999. And while I'd be the last person who would want to be labeled as a false prophet, all this displacement activity does not bode well if my prediction for the Millennium is right: the day after shall come.

—Scott MacKenzie

Enthusiasm

See "Sublime."

Entrance

Passage in fascination.

—Ken Allan

Eurocentrism

An obscuring term, an obfuscating term. Europe itself is an ideological construct, a mythic, fictive construct. Other than an inscription of certain nations between the Ural Mountains and Atlantic Ocean, what is Europe? When does the term first appear? Christmas 800, Charlemagne, imperial coronation, Leo III, two groups out of eight (Lamberts, Franks) imposing unity, Pope in trouble, just left town, you remember the story? Nephew of former Pope ran him out of town, Empress Irene just blinded Constantine

her son in Greek-speaking Christendom and, most importantly of course, the power of the Arab Caliphs. This story is all about otherness for it is the Arabs that call Europe into being. In the face of heterogeneity and territorial particularity, an elite attempts to impose unity on Europe, to make it synonymous with Christendom. The attempt fails. Forty-three years later partition of three kingdoms. "Europe" first used as an adjective in 1458, Pious II, five years after Turkish takeover of Constantinople, Turkish menace again calls the idea of Europe as unity into question. Fails. Quick reformation, division of Christendom and subsumption under national governments. Hence, the grand Renaissance and Burckhardt's lovely characterization of a new individualism that would serve as a critique of all forms of collectivity: nationalities, political parties, races, and so on. And the stirrings of this notion of individuality which would become inseparable from democracy in subsequent decades. Napoleon, May 1804, puts a crown on his own head, to proclaim himself Emperor of France. Battles: Leipzig. Boom. Waterloo. Boom. Post-Napoleonic nationalism escalates. New tribalism hits Europe. Europe's fundamental conflicts, contradictions, heterogeneous clashes are all hidden and concealed by the term "Eurocentrism."

What does this term really mean? Certain nations whose elites constituted centralized powers and imposed white supremacist practices on different parts of the world. Say it. Male supremacy within a certain group. Say it. It is a typically bureaucratic move to bring an ahistorical characterization into a very complex debate. We know what George Orwell said about the decay of language working in tandem with cultural chaos and cultural chaos precluding the empowerment of subaltern people, subjugated people. Not only that, but it also precludes the coalitions and alliances requisite for any serious talk about social change. Intellectual clarity goes hand in hand with a certain moral sensibility and political efficacy. The left is feeble and obfuscatory categories do not help things out.

So what do we mean by "multiculturalism"? Europe is already multicultural, multinational, and so forth. Are we talking about certain other cultures that have been degraded by white supremacist practices? Say it. Europe does not have a monopoly on male supremacist practices; many cultures subsumed under multiculturalism have deeply embedded forms of gender and sexual oppression shaped by their own experiences—forms of domination that must not be concealed or hidden by bureaucratic terms.

What else do we mean by multiculturalism? To be sure multiculturalism addresses the identity crisis experienced by those who do not see themselves represented in, for example, the educational systems in which they matriculate. But what does seeing yourself signify? I teach in prisons—mainly black men and I ask them, "What does seeing yourself mean in terms of a Shakespeare versus an Ellison, or in terms of a Dante versus a Toni Morrison?"

I ask that at the beginning of the course, and I ask it again at the end of the course. If they don't see themselves in Shakespeare by the end of the course, then I've failed. And if they only see themselves in Ellison, then I've also failed. Why? Because human histories are interconnected and interdependent. Once you begin to differentiate and fragment identities, then ultimately I might not see myself in Toni Morrison because of gender barriers, or generation barriers, or because she is from Ohio and I am from California. And if I don't see myself in Toni Morrison I might as well drop dead because of the collective memory of what it is to be a person of African descent in the United States and what it is to be a human being who recognizes that a sense of history and struggle is inseparable from one's identity.

Seeing yourself is a very delicate and difficult notion. If seeing yourself means that your identity has to be solely limited to a community which itself is constructed in the modern world—fluid, changing, and hybrid— then we are reinforcing a parochialism and provincialism that is dangerous. We are actually disarming and disempowering those who need intellectual weaponry in the war they are waging.

Persons who refuse to see themselves in products and instruments of other cultures criticize Charlie Parker for blowing a European instrument. And of course, Charlie Parker never gave a damn because he did what he wanted to do with the means available to him. He was after weaponry in order to fight off the absurdity of being black in the United States before World War II and thereafter. He is no less black or African American for using African polyrhythm and European instruments. He is able to define himself through a variety of different cultural products: not only through the particular cultural community that shaped and moulded him, but also through the musics of Asia, Germany, Brazil, and Mexico. This does not mean that he is a "universal man." It means that he is grounded, entrenched in the best of his tradition. In that sense, he embodies a notion of universality that runs counter to the Enlightenment belief that the particular can be supplanted by the universal. Charlie says no, you have to go through it. This relation between universalism and particularity is one with which we have to struggle in our reflections on Eurocentrism and multiculturalism.

—Cornel West

Excerpted from "Beyond Eurocentrism and Multiculturalism," *Public 10: Love*, 1994.

Exile

"Dearest You,
An exile's dream/trauma is that home is elsewhere. An artist exile's dream is that her audience is elsewhere. There is always this 'other' place to desire, to mirror your self-image, your fantasies, where you will 'belong.'

Yet one of the processes of colonization is to teach the colonized that they do not belong. The colonized deals with a perpetual embarrassment that she does not know what her nationality is... If the process of colonization constructs me, it also constructs 'me' as an exile whose subjectivity compulsively tricks me into believing that home is elsewhere, while simultaneously being traumatized by the awareness that home is but an illusion." {You Ching}

—Janine Marchessault

Excerpted from "The Sublime Object of Home" in *Felix: A Journal of Media Arts and Communication* vol. 2 no. 1, 1995, 56.

Film

A sheet of dirt covering a surface; twentieth-century art and entertainment.

—Janine Marchessault

Filth

"One man found, aged 63, living in his own filth..."

"He peed in mason jars that he stored in the basement. Other times he used a litter box..."

"The walls were literally crawling. The whole place was rat-, roach-, mice-, flea-infested. You name it..."

It is with us from birth to death, regardless of age, race or class. Dirt, decay, trash, garbage, excrement—we are constantly generating it, removing it, generating it, removing it. Filth is instrinsic to life itself.

Freud theorized that the repulsion from feces is learned. At first "his majesty" the baby glories in shit, it is his special gift to his mother. Only later is shit detestable, only later does shitting become an activity to keep hidden. Even dogs seem to absorb our aversion—looking shyly over their shoulder as they poop on the public sidewalk. It is an awkward position, yet absolutely vital to maintaining the body's, and by extension, society's, integrity: the elimination of waste.

The phenomenon is familiar to all modern urban societies: the trash house, the cat lady. And it is all too understandable, for the tide of trash is so enormous, the impulse to dissolve your aversion and sink into abjection seems so temptingly near. The amount of energy spent in constant vigilance is considerable. No wonder the sick, the old, the lazy, and those of us who just don't care, so quickly subcumb and begin to slowly accumlumate detritus. We cease to place distance between ourselves and filth, and instead come to live amongst it. We throw the trash in the basement instead of out in the alley and save our urine instead of flushing it away.