

Hamtramck Colonial Housing



1997/98, chromogenic print, 18 x 22 inches

—Stan Douglas

Hindism

A coinage for the hyper-saturated colours and constructed compositions universally employed in tourist imagery, especially landscape imagery, which act as agents in producing iconographies of nationhood. The most influential postcard manufacturer of the postwar era was John Hinde Limited, which began operations in 1956 on the outskirts of Dublin, and which continues in business today. John Hinde perfected the “modern” postcard, as it is called, by carefully choreographing his production operation. In the process, Hinde also perfected the idealizing imagery that lubricates global tourism at the millennial turn. In the 1950s, Hinde predicted the future look of tourism in Ireland—and unwittingly the look of tourism everywhere. Hindism colonized tourist iconography, so that now the beaches of Ireland are indistinguishable from the beaches of Bermuda, both of which are indistinguishable from the beaches of Vietnam. If Hindism is the look of the future, as I imagine, we should know the look of its past.

In the trade, “modern” postcards are also known as “chromes.” Chromes are not much prized by the marketplace of mass-cultural ephemera—\$5.00 will buy you a bundle of them from most dealers—because of their availability and their relatively recent vintage. The cards are as ubiquitous as the multi-coloured packaging of consumer goods, first introduced in the 1950s, such as the infamous Brillo Box, or as newspaper colour supplements, first introduced in 1962. The exploitation of colour for consumer display, in postcards and glossy magazines, as much as in consumer packaging and advertising, dates from mid-century. As widely distributed products manufactured by the thousand for the tourist market, chrome cards of the kind invented by Hinde utilized the new technologies of colour to participate in the construction of national ideologies. Postcards do an unusual amount of narrative work in the proclamation of national identity, particularly through representations of landscape. They conscript landscape and help to produce an iconography of nationhood.

In his invention of modern tourist imagery, John Hinde was exacting



about the purposes of manipulation. He regularly rearranged his subject matter, for example, by wiring foreground floral arrangements into place or by eliminating figures that disrupted the flow of his composition, and in the darkroom he intensified his colour juxtapositions to heighten their visual impact. "The lily has to be gilded," he once asserted, insisting that his company photographers become metaphorical gardeners and gilders. The compositional formulae Hinde imposed upon his photographers—strong vertical accents on the sides of the picture and winding diagonals through the centre—were conventions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European landscape painting. "They were quite strict about the kind of images they wanted," observed David Noble, one of the most accomplished staff photographers. "They wanted them constructed. You knew that you had to garden, as it were. You knew that you had to make the picture a bit more than it was."

In theorizing the postcard and tourist imagery, two of its categories might be called the picture postcard pastoral and the picture postcard sublime. These are terms for the millennium. Irish cards are exemplary of the postcard pastoral. There is a profound disjunction between the postcard Ireland of John Hinde Limited that one buys as a tourist to send home to friends and the mediatized Ireland one buys to keep abreast of the Troubles. Were there not differences between the two, we should wonder why (except in the case of totalitarian regimes, of course, where the dissemination of information is centrally controlled and newspaper and tourist images generally emanate from the same propagandizing source).

I think there is something astonishing and instructive about the degree of the disjunction one observes in Ireland, the extent to which one set of representations negates—even obliterates—the other. The postcards depict an island where no distinction is made between the north and the south, where political boundaries, like civil strife, are non-existent. This is one iconography of nationhood. Here Ireland is rural (which is to say, timeless), green (which is to say, satiated in colour), pre-modern (which is to say, without advanced technologies, save the automobile), and idyllic (which is to say, peaceable). In the newspapers, by contrast, boundaries are the defining element in the built environment, and urban tension overwhelms rural harmony. This is a second iconography of nationhood. Here Ireland is territorial (which is to say, obsessed with borders), urban (which is to say, cast in surveillance shades of gun-metal grey), religious (which is to say, obdurate unto the grave), and tribal (which is to say, vengeful and murderous).

The first Ireland represents a holiday fantasy, the second a fantasy nightmare. At the root of the disjunction is Hindism. For better or worse, Hindism has given us images for the millennium.

—John O'Brian

Hissar



1999, oil and wax on canvas, 17 x 14 inches

—Sean Scherer

Hoi Polloi



—Stephen Andrews

Hologram

We approach a point of no return. No up. No hope of ever coming down

Icons of Lenin and Mao drift along a ghost-index of numbers. A rendezvous with an ex-spouse in a power-vacuum. Every radar swivels position, standing by for the birth of a new child

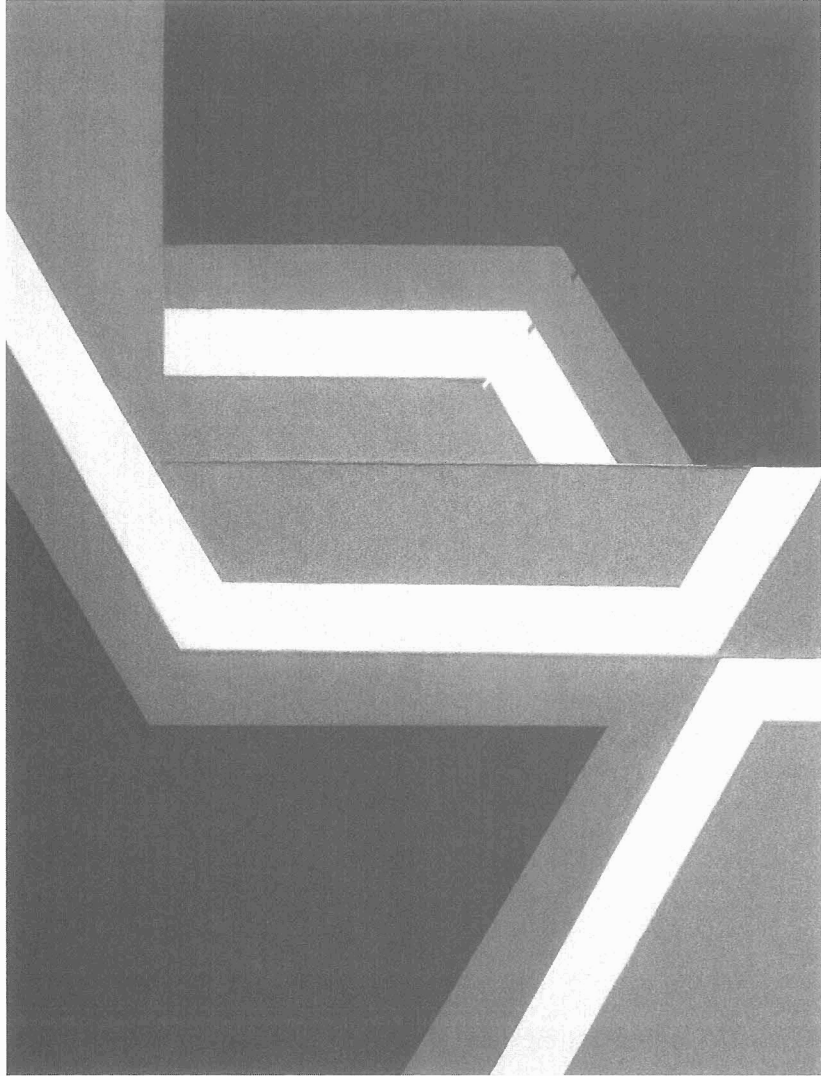
We approach a point of no return. We approach a return with no points of intersection. No solar system whirling from the double shot of tequila. No Spanish galleon navigating black holes in search of genetic hair loss. No Bigfoot lonely for rainforests wandering the escalators of Japan

Everyone speaks perfect English. Everyone scrutinizes their private contours in a private Plexiglas dome. In funhouse chambers, clouded and mirrored. Waters so pure it would turn your hair white

The last fertile man to be preserved on violet emulsion. Eternal daylight savings for those who auto-ovulate at poolside

All this to catch on in a very big way

Whatever will be will exceed the balance. Whoever balances can keep their chequebook. A little spittle at the corners of his or her mouth. Excellent monthly flow and opportunities for advancement. Pleasures commingled with species with complex nubile joints



And the monkey shall lie down with the stealth plane
 The dying shall speak through the living
 All of your radical friends will prove interchangeable

—Ryan Kamstra

Home

“Woman-headed households, serial monogamy, flight of men, old woman alone, technology of domestic work, paid homework, re-emergence of home sweat shops, home-based business and telecommuting, electronic cottage, urban homelessness, migration, module architecture, reinforced (simulated) nuclear family, intense domestic violence.” {Donna Haraway}

—Janine Marchessault

Excerpted from “Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science Technology, and the Socialist Feminism in the 1980s,” *Public 6: Violence*, (1992), 119.

Home

...let me just say that these words—dom, Master, bottom, whore-fem, butch, Daddy-boy, cruising, play, play-mate, and so on—have their place. Rather, they make a place. They describe, circumscribe, inscribe a spectacular space, a made-up, unreal, larger-than-life and certainly more interesting space that people like myself sniff out and crave and live in and want to call home...

—Sue Golding

Excerpted from “Sexual Manners,” *Public 8: The Ethics Of Enactment* (1993), 161.

Horizon (Utopian)

The concept and image of horizon comes from phenomenology (Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur) and it was refunctioned by Ernst Bloch into a consciously sociopolitical tool within his “warm stream” Marxism. It is a spatial metaphor necessarily associated with the cognate spatial concepts and images of *locus* and *orientation*; these are “the Ur-form[s] of theoretical work,” with etymological roots in astronomy¹ and geography. Beyond that, the roots reach into the desire for understanding and the ancient metaphoric cluster in which seeing stands for cognition. “Locus” is the place of the agent who is moving; “horizon” that toward which the agent is moving; and “orientation” a vector that conjoins locus and horizon. The horizon changes with the location of the moving agent, as was exhaustively argued by Giordano Bruno. But orientation can, through

all the changes of locus, remain a constant vector of desire and cognition.

The use of these terms is predicated on an analogy with the empirical world. The claim of the “Possible Worlds” approach to fiction, as well as to all other forms of social imagination, is that the social types’ imaginative structures are necessarily taken from “natural worlds” (i.e. dominant conceptions thereof). For “the term of ‘world’ is not a manner of speaking: it means that the ‘mental’ or cultural life borrows its structures from natural life.”² Our here-and-now has a preferential status. “The natural world, as an organized and perceptually structured spatiotemporal ensemble, constitutes the original text... of all possible discourse, its ‘origin’ and its constitutive environment... All possible discourse is enunciated only against the ground of the perceived world’s significant space, by which it is surrounded.”³ The fact that we can meaningfully effect this metaphoric analogy from practice to signic constructs constitutes itself a highly significant meta-meaning.

The freedom of the users (originators and addressee-modifiers) of Possible Worlds consists in the fundamental fact that these can be and are expressly modified in the newly articulated signic constellations. I shall discuss this further on the example (valid with suitable modifications for other uses too) of utopian fiction and imagination.

The goal of utopia is in principle not a defined, localized or fixed humaneness but a not-yet-manifest type of human relationship, a hominization in Engels’s or Teilhard’s sense. This is “a depth dimension of the Onwards,”⁴ from which it follows that there can be no final, “classical” or canonic locus of utopianism. This can be systematized as *the dominance of Horizon over Locus*. Locus does not coincide with but interacts with Horizon: this makes for a dynamic, open utopia (e.g. Platonov’s *Chevengur*, Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*). Action and agents embody here the orientation toward a moving (in these cases, an anarcho-communist) utopian horizon.

The second possibility is that *Locus coincides with or swallows Horizon*: this makes for a dogmatic, static, closed utopia (e.g. Campanella’s *Civitas Solis*, Cabet’s *Voyage en Icarie*): Such a doctrinaire or *dogmatic* text “asserts the utopian focus as ‘ultimate’ and drastically limits the possibilities of the utopian horizon; an *open-ended* text, on the other hand, portrays a utopian locus as a mere phase in the infinite unfolding of the utopian horizon, thereby abolishing the limits imposed on it by classical utopian fiction.”⁵

The third possibility is *Locus alone*, i.e. without a utopian Horizon (which makes it a pseudo-utopian locus): this makes for *heterotopia*. The best theoretical example is of course Foucault, and the best fictional one his disciple Samuel Delany’s *Triton*, also a direct polemic with *The Dispossessed*’s “ambiguous utopia.” While both these novels “refuse the doctrinaire identification of the utopian locus with the utopian horizon [,] Delany... also does away with the utopian horizon itself... [The utopian]

horizon and the urge are [in Delany] absent, and that absence leaves his characters purposeless and confused.”⁶

The final logico-combinatorial possibility is to have in a text *Horizon alone*, without a utopian Locus. This is where non-localized “utopian thought” belongs, such as all the abstract blueprints, utopian programs, etc. I have difficulty in seeing how a horizon without concrete locus—without Bakhtin’s chronotope—can be a fictional narration in any strict (not ironic or loosely metaphoric) sense.

To resume the above locus/horizon combinatorics:

- 1/ $H > L$: *open-ended or dynamic utopia*;
- 2/ $L = H$ or $L > H$: *closed or static utopia*;
- 3/ $L (H = 0)$: *heterotopia*;
- 4/ $H (L = 0)$: *abstract or non-narrative utopia(nism)*.

These terms (as well as a further set of agential terms) might be applied as analytic tools to the whole range of utopian studies—fictions, projects, and colonies.

Finally, the interaction of locus and horizon in the dynamic utopia constitutes it as not too dissimilar from—possibly as a special case of—Eco’s definition of a semiotic encyclopedia:

It appears not as a finished object but rather as an open project: not a utopia as *terminus ad quem*, i.e. a state of perfection to be reached, but a utopia as a regulating idea, as a project *ante quem*, whose force stems precisely from the fact that it *cannot* and should not be realized in any definitive form.⁷

Eco himself identifies such an open utopia with a rhizomatic encyclopedia only, which I would rather liken to my possibility #3. I would not share the Post-Modernist taboo on global organization of knowledge as in my utopia #1 above: *on condition* that this globality is conscious of itself as a synchronic cross-cut for well-defined interests and with a limited pertinence. There is no reason that would necessarily prevent such a dynamic utopia from defining strategically central cognitive trees available for action aimed at radical change at any given point.

Thus I would conclude, with Bloch, that we should hold a steadfast orientation toward the open ocean of possibility that surrounds the actual and that is so immeasurably larger than the actuality. True, terrors lurk in that ocean: but those terrors are primarily and centrally not the terrors of the not-yet-existing, but on the contrary simple extrapolations of the existing actuality of war, hunger, degradation, and exploitation of people and planets. In order to understand how to approach such open adventist possibilities, we may have first to learn the lesson of the dynamic utopias, where locus constantly tends toward and yet never fuses with horizon.

Notes

- 1 Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (Frankfurt: Zweitausendeins, 1981), 1002.
- 2 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: NRF, 1945), 225.
- 3 Louis Marin, "Pour une théorie du texte parabolique," in Claude Chabrol et al., eds., *Le récit évangélique* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1974), 167 and 175.
- 4 Ernst Bloch, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 147.
- 5 Bulent Somay, "Towards an Open-Ended Utopia," *Science-Fiction Studies* 11.1 (1984), 26.
- 6 *ibid.*, 33.
- 7 Umberto Eco, "Quattro forme di enciclopedia..." *Quaderni d'italianistica* 2.2 (1981), 108.

—Darko Suvin

J. L. Hudson Company Building



1997/98, chromogenic print, 18 x 22 inches

—Stan Douglas

Human (The H in HIV)

Two points on a long trajectory of philosophical reflection on mortality may serve to suggest that the culminating event of human existence is always and by definition a death that is premature. Seneca begins his essay "On the Brevity of Life" thus:

Most human beings, Paulinus, complain about the meanness of nature, because we are born for a brief span of life, and because this spell of time that has been given to us rushes by so swiftly and rapidly that with very few exceptions life ceases for the rest of us just when we are getting ready for it. . . . Hence the dictum of the greatest of doctors: "Life is short, art is long." Hence too the grievance, most improper to a wise man, which Aristotle expressed when he was taking nature to task for indulging animals with such long existences that they can live through five or ten human lifetimes, while a far shorter limit is set for men who are born to a great and extensive destiny. You are living as if destined to live forever; your own frailty never occurs to you; you don't notice how much time has already passed, but squander it as though you had a full and



overflowing supply—though all the while that very day which you are devoting to somebody or something may be your last. You act like mortals in all that you fear, and like immortals in all that you desire.¹

Reading and writing in our own time, Derrida takes up Seneca's argument:

But after having wondered, in sum, why man—and not the animal—always dies before his time, while also understanding that he dies immaturus, immaturely and prematurely, Seneca describes the absolute imminence, the imminence of death at every instant. This imminence of a disappearance that is by essence premature seals the union of the possible and the impossible, of fear and desire, and of mortality and immortality, in being-to-death.²

If man always dies “prematurely”—if untimely death is a defining condition of humanity itself—in what terms are we to parse the diversity of the forms death takes: for example, in the case of HIV/AIDS? Is the “pandemic” (itself a term contemporaneous with the advent of AIDS) in the last analysis merely an instance of what is always the case?

A noted clinical researcher concluded in a recently published study that “At its core, anxiety about AIDS consists of nothing but anxiety about dying before one's time.”³ While his “nothing but” might be understood to minimize the consequences of immune deficiency, it might also be read as a simple logical exclusion meant to elucidate. In either case, if it is true that “anxiety about AIDS” is tracable to a loss not only of time but of the opportunity to constitute a lifetime—if such a loss must be counted among the effects of the pandemic—then, as Alexander Garcia Duttmann notes in *At Odds with AIDS*, “one is obliged to take into account the possibility of such a threat whether or not one successfully brings to bear a vaccine against AIDS.”⁴ In this way, AIDS marks “the imminence of a disappearance that is by essence premature” and hence “seals the union of the possible and the impossible,” as Derrida observes. But more than this: in the case of AIDS, premature death—dying “before one's time”—becomes the very paradigm of the impossible and untimely experience that is human lifetime.

Notes

1 Seneca, “On the Shortness of Life,” *Dialogues and Letters* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), 59, 62.

2 Jacques Derrida, *Aporias* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 4.

3 Martin Dannecker, *Der homosexuelle Mann im Zeichen von Aids* (Hamburg: Ingrid Klein, 1991), 31.

4 Alexander Garcia Duttmann, *At Odds with AIDS: Thinking and Talking About a Virus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 5.

—Deborah Esch