

way beyond the tautological human hoards to the earth, to the animals who are after all more subtle, less befuddled by epistemology, more worldly, more optimistic.

I think of the Parisian composer Messiaen's musical transcriptions of bird calls of the 1950s and 1960s. "No one gets to hear them in the city," he explained in an interview. I imagine him throwing them pieces of bread. "There is some for you too. What do you have to tell us?" The world becomes good just hearing such a story. I hesitate to add that Messiaen earlier wrote his *Quartet for the End of Time* (*Quatuor pour la fin du temps*) while interned in a Nazi camp, a piece which is today much more famous than the bird transcriptions. I imagine him listening to the birds in the camp; I imagine them helping him to compose—singing, coming and going, keeping the way open.

—Lang Baker

## Patagonia

Name of uncertain origin. Pata = foot (?), Gonia (?). The "ultimate ultimate" according to Bruce Chatwin who literally wrote the book *In Patagonia* about the vast, featureless lands of southern Argentina.

Early explorers called Patagonia a land of fierce giants and monsters. Later Charles Darwin called the inhabitants—the all-too human Fuegian Indians—"wretched" creatures. Paleontologists noted that the monsters were merely oversized sloths.

Legends of rivers of diamonds and rubies lured opportunistic Spanish and English privateers to a land that instead yielded wind and dust. Stories of a lost City of Caesars (inhabited by a race of robust Aryans and bursting with gold) nestled deep in the heart of the Patagonian Andes kept fleets of intrepid Jesuit missionaries busy as they plunged deeper and deeper into the heart of the Patagonian wilderness in search of Christian souls in need of salvation.

Later, homesick Welsh settlers (marooned in Patagonia after buying one-way tickets to what they thought was a New World paradise) established tidy farmsteads and proper tea rooms overlooking the barren pampas. The American cowboy Butch Cassidy was rumored to have made Patagonia his hideout (the Hollywood movie version of his life and death later changed the location to Bolivia).

Patagonia's modern day cachet is exemplified by the eponymous, multi-million dollar company whose expensive outdoor clothing and designer catalogues are found in shopping malls around the globe. Armies of ecotourists (socially responsible masses clad in neon-colored Patagonia brand parkas) descend upon Patagonia (the land) to shoot (with cameras, of

course) the seals, penguins and birds for whom Patagonia is only a nameless place to eat and shit.

The transformation of Patagonia from a *terra incognita* to a consumer product and global brand name is a logical one as humankind passes from the Golden Age of Exploration to the tarnished millennium of commodification and merchandising that extend to the outer reaches of the map.

—Jill Yesko

## Peace

“...AND NO KIND OF  
peace.

Grey nights, foreknown to be cool.  
Stimulus dollops, otter-like,  
over consciousness gravel  
on their way to  
little memory bubbles.

Grey-within-grey of substance.

A half-pain, a second one, with no  
lasting trace, half-way  
here. A half-desire.  
Things in motion, things occupied.

Cameo  
of compulsive repetition.”  
{Paul Celan}

—Paul Kelley

Excerpted from “...and no kind of,” (1968), *The Poems of Paul Celan*, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Persea Books, 1988), 281.

## People

Every interpretation of the political meaning of the term<sup>1</sup> “people” must begin from the singular fact that, in modern European languages, it always indicates even the poor, the disinherited, the excluded. One single term names, that is, as much the constitutive political subject as the class which, *de facto* if not *de jure*, is excluded from politics.

The Italian *popolo*, the French *peuple*, the Spanish *pueblo* (like the corresponding adjectives *popolare*, *populaire*, *popular* and the late Latin *populus* and *popularis* from which they all derive), designate both in everyday language and in the lexicon of political language, the ensemble of citizens

as a unitary political body (as in “Italian people” or in “member of the jury”) or those who belong to the lower classes (as in *homme du peuple, rione popolare, front populaire*). Although it has a more undifferentiated sense, even the English term “people” conserves, nevertheless, the meaning of “ordinary people”<sup>2</sup> in opposition to the rich and the nobility. In the American Constitution one reads, without distinctions of any kind, “We the people of the United States. . .”; but when Lincoln, in the Gettysburg Address, invokes a “Government of the people, by the people, for the people,” the repetition implicitly contrasts one people with another. The extent to which this ambiguity was essential even during the French Revolution (that is, precisely at the moment in which the principle of a popular sovereignty is demanded) is evidenced by the role played by the compassion for the people understood as the excluded class. Hannah Arendt has recalled that “the very definition of the word was born out of compassion, and the term became the equivalent for misfortune and unhappiness—*le peuple, les malheureux m’applaudissent*, as Robespierre was wont to say; *le peuple toujours malheureux*, as even Sieyès, one of the least sentimental and most sober figures of the Revolution, would put it.”<sup>3</sup> But already with Bodin, by contrast, during the chapter of the *République* when Democracy or the *État Populaire* becomes defined, the concept has a double meaning: *peuple en corps*, as the appointed of sovereignty, is compared to the *menu peuple*<sup>4</sup> which wisdom counsels to exclude from political power.

Such a constant and widespread semantic ambiguity cannot be accidental; it must reflect a discursive equivocation inherent in the nature and in the function of the concept “people” in occidental politics. Everything occurs as if that which we call “people” was, in reality, not a unitary subject, but a dialectical oscillation between two opposed poles: on the one hand, the whole People as an integral political body, on the other hand, the “part-people” as a fragmentary multiplicity of needful and excluded bodies; one as an inclusion which presumes itself to be without remainders, another that knows itself as being without hope; at one extreme, the total state of integrated and sovereign citizens, on the other, the outlawed court of miracles<sup>5</sup> or the group of the miserable, the oppressed, the vanquished. A unique and solid referent of the term “people” does not exist, in this sense, anywhere: like many fundamental political concepts (similar, in this, to the *Urworte* of Abel or Freud or to the hierarchical relations of Dumont), “people” is a polar concept which indicates a double movement and a complex relation between two extremes. But this also means that the constitution of the human species in a body politic moves across a fundamental split and that, in the concept “people,” we can recognize without difficulty the categorical pairs which define an original political structure: naked life (people) and political existence (People), exclusion and inclu-

sion, *zoe* and *bios*. The “people” always carries within itself a fundamental biopolitical fracture. It is that which cannot be included in the totality of which it is a part and cannot belong to the whole in which it is already included.

From here arise the contradictions and the aporias which it fosters each time it is evoked and put in play on the political scene. It is that which is always already and that must, nevertheless, realize itself; it is the pure source of any identity and must, however, redefine and purify itself continuously through exclusion, language, blood, territory. In other words, taken from its opposite pole, “the people” is that which is essentially lacking in itself and whose fulfillment coincides, nevertheless, with its own abolition; it is that which, in order to be, must negate itself with its opposite (from here begins the specific aporias of the workers’ movement, turned towards the people, and together, tending towards its abolition). From time to time, as the bloody standard of the reaction and the uncertain lesson of the revolutions and of popular fronts, “the people” has, in any case, a more originary split than the one between friend and enemy; an incessant civil war divides it more radically than any conflict and, together, keeps it unified and constitutes more firmly than any identity. To look closely, then, at that which Marx calls the class struggle and that, although remaining substantially undefined, occupies a place so central in his thought, is none other than this internecine war that divides every people and that will have an end only when, in the classless society or in the Messianic kingdom, People and people will coincide and there will no longer properly be a “people” as such.

If this is true, if “the people” necessarily contains at its core a fundamental biopolitical fracture, it will then be possible to read, in a new way, a few decisive pages of the history of our century. While it is true that the struggle between the two “people” was certainly always on the way, in our time it has suffered a last, paroxysmic acceleration. In Ancient Rome, the internal split of the people was juridically sanctioned in the clear division between *populus* and *plebs*; each had their own institutions and magistrates, just as in the Medieval Age the distinction between the hungry and the well-fed<sup>6</sup> corresponded to a precise division of different crafts and trades; but when, beginning with the French Revolution, “the people” becomes the unique testimony of sovereignty, it transforms itself into an embarrassing presence, and misery and exclusion appear for the first time, in every sense, as an intolerable scandal. In the modern age, misery and exclusion are not only economic or social concepts, but are eminently political categories (every economicism and the “socialism” which seem to dominate modern politics have, in reality, a political, or better yet, a biopolitical meaning).

From this perspective, our epoch is nothing other than the attempt—

implacable and methodical—to end the split which divides the people, thus radically eliminating the population of the excluded. This attempt joins, according to different formalities and horizons, the right and the left, capitalist countries and socialist countries, all of which are united in the project—futile in the final analysis but which has been partially realized in all industrialized countries—of producing a one, indivisible people; the obsession with development is so successful in our time because it coincides with the biopolitical project of producing a people without a fracture.

The extermination of the Jews in Nazi Germany acquires, in this light, a radically new meaning. Insofar as they are a people which refuses to integrate itself in a national political body (one presupposes, in fact, that each of its assimilations is, in reality, only simulated), the Jews are the representatives *par excellence* and almost the living symbol of “the people,” of that naked life which modernity necessarily creates at its core but whose presence it can no longer in any way tolerate. And in the clear fury with which the German *Volk*, representative *par excellence* of “the people” as a political body, seeks to eliminate the Jews, we must witness the extreme phase of the internecine war which divides People and people. With the Final Solution (which involves, not accidentally, also gypsies and other outsiders)<sup>7</sup> Nazism seeks obscurely and uselessly to liberate the Western political scene from this intolerable shadow in order to finally produce the German *Volk* as a people which has ended the original biopolitical fracture (for this reason the Nazi leaders repeat so obstinately that, by eliminating Jews and gypsies, they are, in reality, also working on behalf of the other European peoples.)

To paraphrase the Freudian postulate on the relation between *Es* and *Ich*, one could say that modern biopolitics is established from the secondary principle of “where naked life is, a People will have to be”<sup>8</sup> on the condition, however, of immediately adding that this principle is valid even in its inverted formulation: “where a People is, there shall naked life be.” The fracture that was thought to have been repaired by eliminating the people (the Jews which are its symbol), reproduces itself such that the entire German people is transformed anew in a sacred life dedicated to death and in a biological body which must be infinitely purified (eliminating the mentally ill and the carriers of hereditary diseases). And in a different but analogical way, today the capitalist-democratic project of eliminating, through development, the poor classes, not only reproduces at its own core the population of the excluded, but transforms into naked life all the populations of the Third World. Only a politics that has known how to settle accounts with the fundamental biopolitical split of the occident will be able to arrest this oscillation and put an end to the civil war which divides the peoples and the cities of the world.

### Translator's Notes

[This essay appears in Agamben's *Moyen sans fins: Notes sur la Politique* (Paris: Rivages, 1995).]

1 Throughout the essay, Giorgio Agamben has sometimes chosen words whose semantic richness are themselves indicative of the subject of his thought. For example, the word I have rendered as "term" is, in Italian, *termine*. The most apparent double-meaning of *termine* is "term" (as in a linguistic referent) and "end," "limit," "boundary."

2 In English in the original.

3 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963).

4 In French, *peuple en corps* means the people who are important, who *matter*, who have "substance"; *menu peuple*, on the other hand, means the people who are unimportant, inconsequential, trifling. Agamben is also emphasizing the difference (as he will at a later point in the essay when discussing a distinction in the Middle Ages between *popolo minuto*, literally, small or thin people, and *popolo grasso*, literally, fat people) by indicating how the *peuple en corps* are the well-fed as opposed to the *menu peuple* as the hungry.

5 *La bandita corte dei miracoli* cannot be properly translated. By putting *bandita* and *corte* together, Agamben has revealed the impossible position occupied by the peasant during the Middle Ages. A *bandita* is an area of land where, by public decree or proclamation (*bando*) it is illegal to hunt, fish, or put animals out to pasture. The *corte*, similar to the English "court," is the residency of a sovereign, i.e., a lord, as well as the territory surrounding the feudal castle. The Medieval peasant, therefore, belonged nowhere, for he was *al bando*, exiled and excluded; they had no place either outside or inside the castle. They were, even without committing any acts, deemed criminal, a *bandito*, an outlaw.

6 I have translated *popolo minuto* and *popolo grasso* as the hungry and the well-fed in order to correspond with the earlier note on *peuple en corps* and *menu peuple*. See endnote number 4.

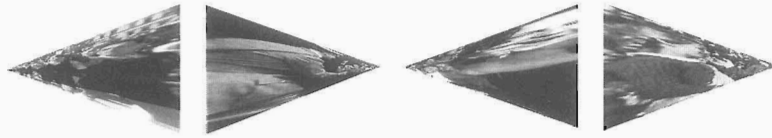
7 The word I have translated as "outsiders" is, in Agamben's essay, *inintegrabili*. This implies, at the same time, being unable to be "integrated," the inability to be "integral," (complete or whole) and even perhaps, by consequence, that which has no integrity.

8 Freud's postulate is found at the end of Lecture 31 of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. In the Strachey translation from the *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, (Vol. 22) it reads: "where id was, there ego shall be." The German, still the subject of debate, reads: "*wo Es war, soll Ich werden.*" My translation of Agamben's rendering has retained the slight change from the first (*un Popolo dovrà essere*) to the second (*là vi sarà nuda vita*). In the first, the emphasis is on the imperative *dovrà* (will have to); in the second, the emphasis is on *sarà* (will be).

### —Giorgio Agamben

Excerpted from "What is a People?," trans. Giosué Ghisalberti. *Public 12: Utopias*, 1995.

## Phantasmagoria



—Freda Guttman

## Photoplay

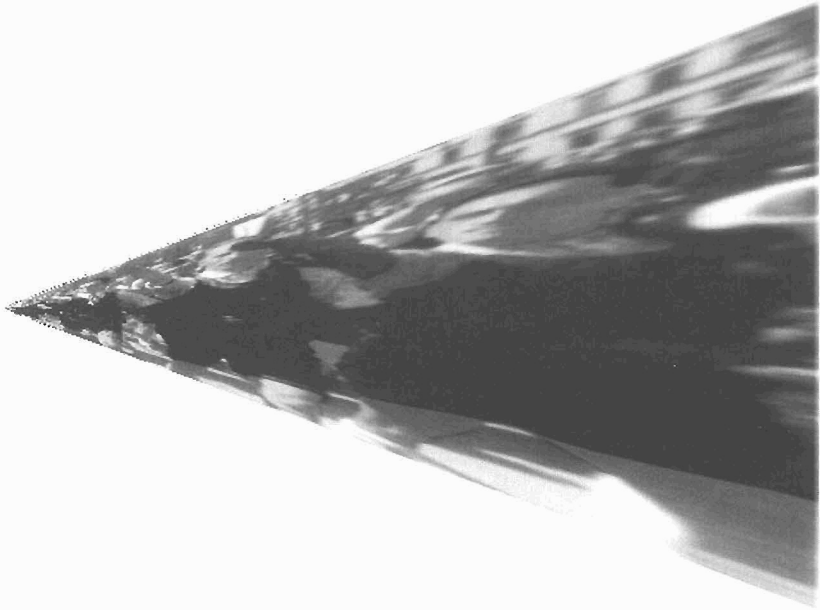
“This is what the film diva looks like. She is twenty-four years old, featured on the cover of an illustrated magazine, standing in front of the Hotel Excelsior on the Lido. The date is September. If one were to look through a magnifying glass one could make out the grain, the millions of little dots that constitute the diva, the waves and the hotel. The picture, however, refers not to the dot matrix but to the living diva on the Lido. Time: present. The caption calls her demonic: our demonic diva. Still, she does not lack a certain allure. The bangs, the seductive position of the head, and the twelve eyelashes right and left—all these details diligently recorded by the camera, are in their proper place, a flawless appearance. Everyone recognizes her with delight, since everyone has already seen the original on the screen. It is such a good likeness that she cannot be confused with anyone else, even if she is perhaps only one-twelfth of a dozen Tiller Girls. Dreamily she stands in front of the Hotel Excelsior, which basks in her fame—a being of flesh and blood, our demonic diva, twenty-four years old, on the Lido. The date is September.” (Sigfried Kracauer)

—Susan Lord

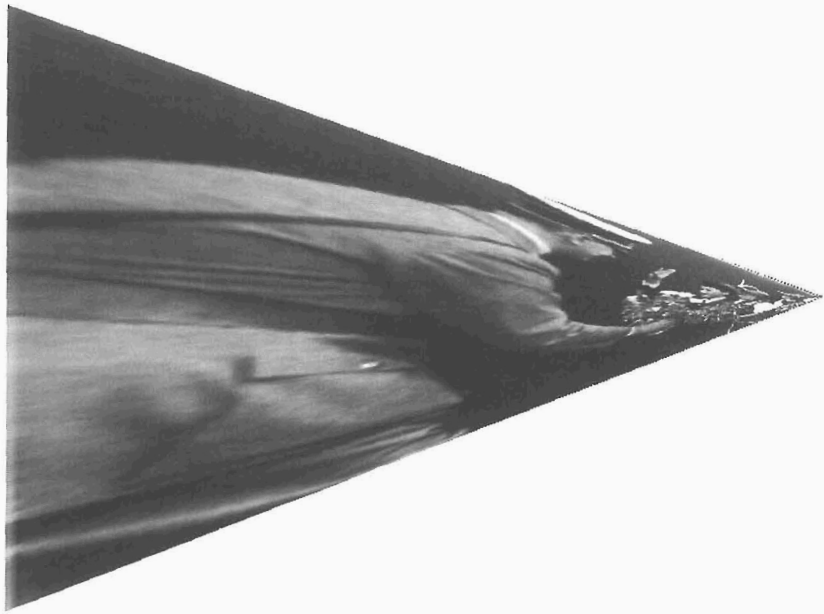
Excerpted from “Photography,” (1927) *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans., ed., and intro., Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 47.

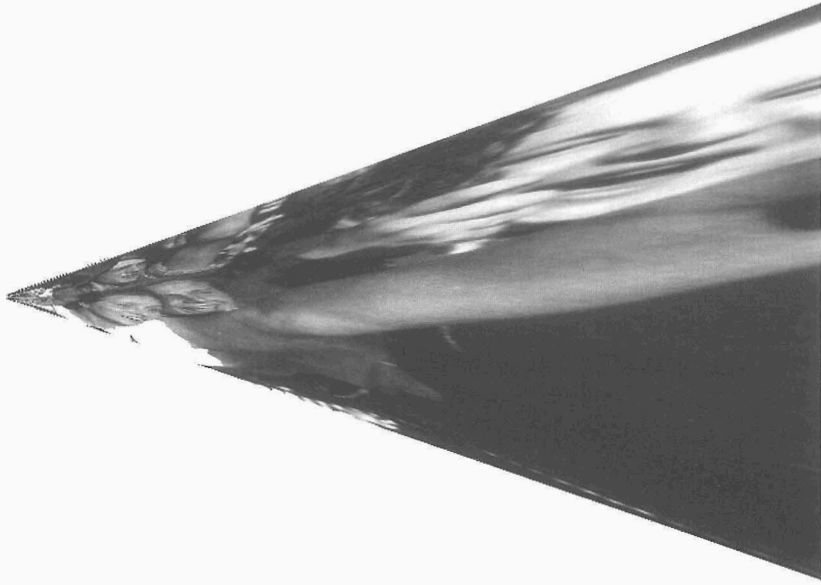
## Planetarium

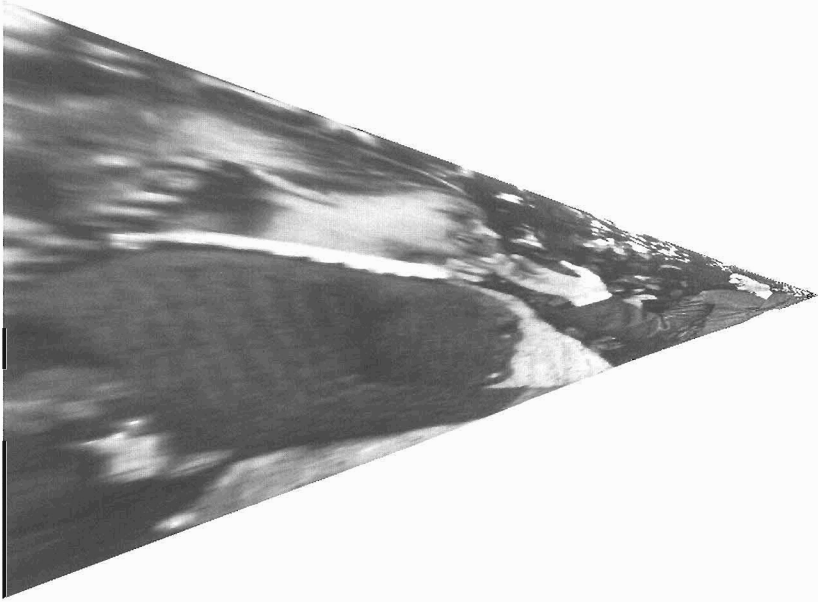
“If one had to expound the doctrine of antiquity with utmost brevity while standing on one leg, as did Hillel that of the Jews, it could only be in this sentence: ‘They alone shall possess the earth who live from the powers of the cosmos.’ Nothing distinguishes the ancient from the modern man so much as the former’s absorption in a cosmic experience scarcely known to later periods. Its wanting is marked by the flowering of astronomy at the beginning of the modern age. Kepler, Copernicus, and Tycho Brahe were certainly not driven by scientific impulses alone. All the same, the exclusive emphasis on an optical connection to the universe, to which astronomy











very quickly led, contained a portent of what was to come. The ancients' intercourse with the cosmos had been different: the ecstatic trance. For it is in this experience alone that we gain certain knowledge of what is nearest to us and what is remotest to us, and never of one without the other. This means, however, that man can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos only communally. It is the dangerous error of modern men to regard this experience as unimportant and avoidable, and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights. It is not; its hour strikes again and again, and then neither nations nor generations can escape it, as was made terribly clear by the last war, which was an attempt at new and unprecedented comingling with the cosmic powers. Human multitudes, gases, electrical forces were hurled into the open country, high-frequency currents coursed through the landscape, new constellations rose in the sky, aerial space and ocean depths thundered with propellers, and everywhere sacrificial shafts were dug in Mother Earth. The immense wooing of the cosmos was enacted for the first time on a planetary scale, that is, in the spirit of technology. But because the lust for profit of the ruling class sought satisfaction through it, technology betrayed man and turned the bridal bed into a bloodbath. The mastery of nature, so the imperialists teach, is the purpose of all technology. But who would trust a cane wielder who proclaimed the mastery of children by adults to be the purpose of education? Is not education above all the indispensable ordering of the relationship between generations and therefore mastery, if we are to use this term, of that relationship and not of children? And likewise technology is not the mastery of nature but of the relation between nature and man. Men as species completed their development thousands of years ago; but mankind as a species is just beginning his. In technology a *physis* is being organized through which mankind's contact with the cosmos takes a new and different form from that which it had in nations and families. One need recall only the experience of velocities by virtue of which mankind is now preparing to embark on incalculable journeys into the interior of time, to encounter there rhythms from which the sick shall draw strength as they did earlier on high mountains or at Southern Seas. The 'Lunaparks' are a prefiguration of sanatoria. The paroxysm of genuine cosmic experience is not tied to that tiny fragment of nature that we are accustomed to call 'Nature'. In the nights of annihilation of the last war the frame of mankind was shaken by a feeling that resembled the bliss of the epileptic. And the revolts that followed it were the first attempt of mankind to bring the new body under its control. The power of the proletariat is the measure of its convalescence. If it is not gripped to the very marrow by the discipline of this power, no pacifist polemics will save it. Living substance conquers the frenzy of destruction only in the ecstasy of procreation." {Walter Benjamin}

—Susan Lord

Excerpted from "One-Way Street: To the Planetarium," trans. Edmund Jephcott *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 1, 1913–1926*. (Cambridge, Mass; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 486–87.

## Poetics

One is offered, under normal circumstances, many opportunities to write. The potential author reads, as best as he can, the intentions of the person offering the opportunity and makes, in delivering up his or her piece, a counter-offer. If published or presented, the author then watches his piece become the object of a peculiar, pre-set kind of literary evaluation. That is, he or she, having put the piece up for adoption, then watches the critical reception of the piece grow. The likelihood is great that the piece will be (1) accepted to extolled or (2) rejected to deplored or (3) ignored (it's all the same). All the parties involved will basically get what they deserve. The process is rigidly predetermined on the editorial, poetic and consummatory levels. Normally, such literary enterprise is ideological, boring, tedious and irrelevant. Whatever decisions are made throughout this process are based on conservative or experimental (it's all the same) notions of the necessary or sufficient conditions for something to be considered literature and/or for it to be considered to be in possession of an aesthetic/poetic.

The notion that people agree or disagree (it's all the same) about the status of something as a piece of literature is appalling. It is not that opinions would not vary, but that they should or should not is an idea that has to go.

I understand the new poetic of literature (the poetics of the new literature interests me very little) to be a situation within which something may be offered to become whatever it will become, one alternative of which is that it may become literature possessed of a poetic. All of this has nothing to do with the nature of the thing being offered.

The new poetic is largely a matter of serendipity. It is the process by which an individual assigns a thing to such and such a region of writing. It is also the process by which an author recognizes the possibility that an individual may assign a piece to such and such a region of writing. It is not the beliefs that the reader or author may hold which give reason for thinking something or other possesses a poetic. It is not the qualities in a piece against which these beliefs are applied or withdrawn.

One might say that the new poetic is a kind of "found situation." I would like to see a concept of literature that did not require anthologies. The new poetic, and the new literature by which it is characterized, require an unprecedented openness and lack of pre-committment on the parts of the editors, publishers, authors, and, although somewhat less so, the readers.

I would be pleased if this piece could be appropriated as poetry or

science, religion or philosophy or, for that matter, anything else. That it possesses a poetic or that it does not is a specific condition of how it is appropriated. What is appropriated, how it is appropriated and by whom it is appropriated remain open questions.

At stake is a work's potential as literature and not its literary potential. Just as the artist has traditionally aestheticized activities such as politics, so now virtually anyone who poeticizes writing, who endows it with a poetic, will tacitly lend it status as literature. This is not a situation of literary freedom, but freedom as a prerequisite to the condition out of which a thing is appropriated as literature and which may or may not bear a poetic.

The approach that I am offering here has been applied as an explanation, justification or theory for both the avant-garde and the academy, as a means of characterizing the conventional or the new, the stereotypical or the novel, the cliché and the revelation (it's all the same). This, however, is just another case of extending the boundaries of art. Even though new criteria frequently entail the rejection of the conventional and stereotypical (the academic), the choices of what the new criteria constitute proceed from the same basis. The freedom here does not so much apply to the condition out of which a thing is appropriated as literature so much as to the licence lent those responsible for literature and the revision of its necessary and sufficient conditions.

The problem so far has been exactly that the concepts of literature and the attributes of the poetic have both been fluid. This implies an evolutionary rather than situational or transactional frame of reference, a kind of functional and necessary interrelationship between literature and its attributes which can no longer be defended. The new literature and its corollary poetic should, as should anything else, take its cues and definitions from usage. Usage should follow from the author's or reader's recognition of a situation in which a work can advantageously present itself for consideration aesthetically or be appropriated as literature.

Presented things seek work. They seek an identity. Refusal of a thing is wrongheaded if it is refused on principle. Acceptance of a thing implies some kind of need but not necessarily the one that motivated the author to present the work in the first place.

Y may offer an ideal situation within which things may present themselves as candidates for becoming a something. X may feel an affinity for the qualifications of this situation for presenting a work. The basis for this affinity may, in less flexible situations, be entirely absent from the mind of the person offering the situation, or even be antagonistic to his intention. Z may perceive that the situational circumstances are such as to encourage his appropriation of something as 1, 2, or 3 and that, from among things present, one of them offers less obstacles to one of these goals than

to others. The actuality of the objects and the situation bear no necessary relationships.

The concept of literature is of a kind with the concept, say, of exercise. It is nothing other than what becomes that thing. It cannot work the other way around. Literature is nothing if it is not what has become literature. The becoming of literature is not, properly speaking, the business of the one responsible for what it is that becomes literature.

There is no new literature—only the concept of literature. There’s no theory of the new literature—only the concept of literature. There is no renewal of literature. Neither the poet nor the reader are in any position to identify literature, but only the nature of the process whereby something is appropriated as literature. Literature cannot be identified until it has become literature. The poetics are the specific and not the generalizable course of the becoming.

The “intermedia” artist or “poly-artist” is a theoretical construct for a person who can no longer predict what he is but lacks the courage to extend the possibilities beyond the extended family of the arts. Still, it is the closest we have come. The question then must be raised: who is responsible for the new literature—the new poetic? The answer is clearly that no one is.

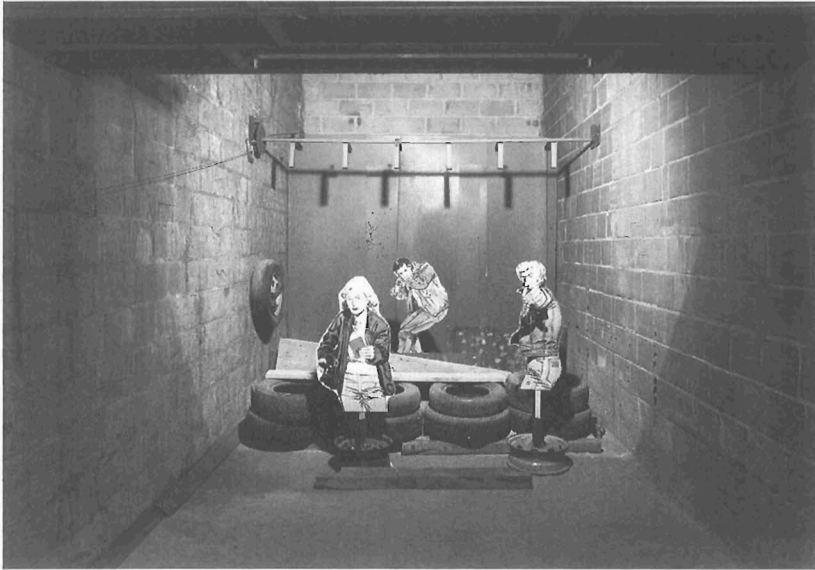
The poetics of the new literature are not packed with uncertainty, confusion or even permissiveness. The only confusion is with how and where things were offered and how and where things are offered (the things themselves matter rather little); how and where things were appropriated and how and where things are appropriated. So long as those involved in the literary trades have a hand in the conditions under which a thing is appropriated as literature, we are condemned to conservatism, radicalism, academicism and experimentalism, all upshots of manifestly old concepts of literature. The poetics of the new literature amounts to nothing more than a piece in its becoming.

—Stephen C. Foster

## Police Range



—Lynne Cohen





## Political

“Political” shares its root with “polis”—referring to people in a place or a society. The “polis” was, ideally, a society in which debate and decisions could be achieved since it was a small, intelligent, and flexible society in which there were few enough members that regulatory bureaucracies could be kept to a minimum if not entirely dispensed with. “Political” is the adjective referring to disciplines and practices involving the polis or politic—political science, political processes, political animals perhaps?

“Political” is very frequently deployed as a negative adjective. The word now so often connotes irksome bureaucracy and debates that have become non-debates since they are in fact irresolvable. “Political” people—whether or not they are individuals, committee members or indeed members of legislatures, are those people who stall important and inevitable decisions, or who truly do make mountains out of molehills. “Political” people and institutions are true specialists at thinking globally while being unable to act locally.

The word “political” becomes tricky to define when it is deployed in relation to art or artistic practices (or artistic mentalities). Art, and not only according to high modernists, is supposed to be somewhere between apolitical and *beyond* political—free of ideological baggage not to mention state, corporate, or self-censorship. How many of those concerned with political or “identity-related” representational issues have not been accused of being *non* or *anti*-artists because of the accusers’ inability to grasp that the artworks in question have their own intrinsic formal logics that must encompass so-called “bad politics?” Of course, the most negligible consequence of “political correctness” is political incorrectness for its own sake; an aggressive insistence that “political incorrectness is subversive.” For every inspired individual who may well problematize rote ideologies either by means of radically-subjective associations or by (sigh) virtuosity of execution so stunning that it cannot be simply ignored or refused, there are so many hack “artists” who feel threatened by serious representational issues and who thus “act out” by pandering to the (not necessarily) cheap seats. In such an arena, there are allegedly no politics. There is only the question of whether it is beautiful or ugly, funny or painfully earnest.

The actor who becomes a successful politician is of course mirrored by the politician who is really an actor. For some time now it has been a reality that professional politicians are in fact anything but politically-motivated. The desire to achieve executive power and then maintain it for its own sake does not necessarily involve having any sort of political agenda. Agendas are often the last complication that the mythical average voter or citizen needs to hear about. “Political” is now more often than not deployed to refer to what is either not at all actually political or what is an

unintended parody of political discourse. The word “political,” in fact, is now frequently a derogatory term for a perception of over-bureaucratization. An individual who causes meetings to drag on interminably because she or he always has to ask too many either legitimate or trite questions is “political.” Nothing ever gets done within or by such organizations because decisions can never be made—the organizations actually become the antithesis of “political.”

The labeling of individuals or organizations as being “political”—however tongue-in-cheek or sarcastic such labeling might intentionally be—does reek of a barely-latent modernism that has never quite disappeared even through the decades of postmodernism during which “art for art’s sake” and “art devoid of all possible meanings except for those intrinsic to its literal formal realities” have been scorned and ridiculed by so many countless academics, cultural theorists and pundits. The reality of granting-agencies, curators and selection committees has always rested upon concepts of excellence regardless of politics, or perhaps excellence regardless of whether or not the art or artist actually has any politics. When an artist or artwork is labeled “political,” the labeling is prompted by the fact that such art or artist cannot easily be homogenized or airbrushed. The political agenda is too apparent, too much a part of the art’s or artist’s intention to be safely formalized. The labeling may be derogatory or complimentary, but, within selection processes founded upon an apolitical notion of “excellence” such a labeling can easily become a means of denial or censure. He/she/it is simply too damn *political*.

For many global citizens, largely but not at all exclusively young or youthful, the words “politics” and “political” have come to refer to processes removed from immediate situations and realities. “Politics” is quasi-synonymous with parliamentarism, democracy with all of the signs but without any significant decision-making and subsequent actions. The people comprising the legislatures are far removed from those who could (or did) vote them into power. Members of parliament need to be wealthy to even consider standing for election and are hopelessly compromised by their contradictory funding sources. Positional adjectives such as “left” and “right” have lost historical meanings and relevance. Is this shift indicative of the fact that Marxism is all but extinct and that social democracies are obsessed with achieving and then retaining power and are thus so obsessed with trying to please everybody that they have in fact abandoned politics? Or is this more an indication of frustration and anger at useless bureaucracies of all ideological stripes that merely serve to impede site-specific decisions that must be made quickly and without delay in immediate situations where rational rather than irrational efficiency is exactly what the doctor must order. Political individuals are in these situations dinosaurs—well-intentioned liberals who only slow everything

down in the ultimately irrelevant interest of “fairness” and simulated democracy. Ironically, this impatience with big politics and cumbersome parliamentary procedures returns political discourse back to the polis in which there were many but not far too many voices with the right to be heard and in which cacophony and false anarchy could be avoided as long as people were willing to listen and concentrate on the problem at hand.

So . . . is the vacillating hostility and indifference to politics and the “political” an indication of a post-political *Zeitgeist*? And what might be meant by “post-political?” That political discourse itself be taken for granted and then acted upon? That citizens of the globe might actually be up to the daunting task of anarchy—referring not to chaos but to self-government? Is anarchy even remotely feasible as long as profit motives for both individuals and multi-national corporations not only exist but are celebrated? Is “post-political” synonymous with “post-historical,” meaning that superficially-unregulated free enterprise has won the war and become the governing ideology by pretending not to be an ideology? Is “post-political” anarchy by default? Are there any viable alternatives or is it simply fatigue and exasperation camouflaged by bravura? Are “post-political” and “apolitical” synonymous? I hope not, but I often suspect so.

—Andrew James Paterson

## Popoloid

ponder a popoloid segment

shape shifter propels zings through space whistling alien  
whooooistles hoooo oooo oooo

where’s my brain

I left in Spain or maybe it slipped down the drain  
I left it in haloes above my head

a poisonous flower

pulls stretches taut twists curves bend snakelike wraps around compresses  
tight

whisper blow breathe through it hollow

from one ear to the other

listen

pompous and portly worn on head or haloed a crown

around a waist a throat atop a head encircling a wrist ankle a charm

positively possesses portent powers and possibilities to posture as  
propellers through

space whooooooistling dixie bird sounds under water  
 whooo oooo ooo are you whooo oooo ooo am I

powerless motionless piches mystically gnarled coiled squat tight  
 pops crinkles stands upright scales low to high  
 joins itself or others  
 the quicker the velocity the higher the frequency to peak  
 the slower the lower wavers tones at varying drones

hollow hose hosery rosery accordioned  
 bellows airing a vacuum on high  
 pour your worries into me  
 I am a hollow  
 for you to fill  
 I'll bend like a willow (a tube) to please  
 but will you follow when I need?

20th Century A.D.iou

—Laura Calvi

## Postmodernism

Pickled pandemonium.

—Ken Allan

## Privacy

“It is with respect to this multiple significance of the public realm that the term ‘private,’ in its original private sense, has meaning. To live an entirely private life means above all to be deprived of things essential to a truly human life: to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others, to be deprived of an ‘objective’ relationship with them that comes from being related to and separated from them through the intermediary of a common world of things, to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself. The privation of privacy lies in the absence of others; as far as they are concerned, private man does not appear, and therefore it is as though he did not exist. Whatever he does remains without significance and consequence to others, and what matters to him is without interest to other people.

Under modern circumstances, this deprivation of ‘objective’ relationships to others and of a reality guaranteed through them has become the mass phenomenon of loneliness, where it has assumed its most extreme and most antihuman form. The reason for this extremity is that mass society

not only destroys the public realm but the private as well, deprives men not only of their place in the world but of their private home, where they once felt sheltered against the world, and where, at any rate, even those excluded from the world could find a substitute in the warmth of the hearth and the limited reality of family life.” {Hannah Arendt}

—Susan Lord

Excerpted from “The Private Realm: Property,” *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 58–59.

## Progress

“I used to be at the top of my profession,” the well-dressed middle-aged man declares, “but then things changed, technology changed and I couldn’t keep up. So I went to DeVry Institute and got the skills I need to succeed in today’s world. CHANGE IS GOOD!” the advertisement concludes. “Change is good!”

The most important thing that happened in the last millennium is that the entire world became convinced that change is good. To have believed and openly expressed this idea at the beginning of the millennium would have gotten you burned at the stake or worse. To believe the contrary at the end of the millennium will doom you to a similar fate. The belief that change is good is the core of a belief in progress. In and of itself the statement “change is good” is of course absurd. To determine if a particular change is good or bad requires a standard by which to judge a particular change. Defenders of the idea of progress would argue that technological change which brings economic benefits is what is meant. But from the introduction of the first machine in the textile industry in England, technological change has brought economic benefits to a few and social and environmental changes to everyone. Technological change is not just technological change, it sets in motion a chain reaction of social, political and environmental changes. The economic benefits of a technological change can readily be counted, but the social and environmental costs cannot. Whether a change is good or bad is impossible to determine. Thus the belief in progress is ultimately based on faith.

The belief that change is bad, to put it crudely, was the central glue that held societies together at the beginning of the millennium. It took many forms in many parts of the world, some benign others brutal. North American natives who saw themselves as a part of a web of life that they could not change without retribution; Catholics believed that God created the world, including its social order, as he wanted it and any change was therefore against his will; the caste system in Hindu India . . . all of these had this orientation to change in common.

The belief that change is good has equally become the central glue, the myth of modern societies around the world. How else could the entire world link itself to an economic system that by definition cannot stand still, and which demands that people, communities, societies, nations and the earth itself yield to its dictates, even if it results in their dissolution or destruction. The system wipes out the livelihoods of millions every time it incorporates a new technology into its systems of production, distribution and consumption. The myth of progress is as important to capitalist societies as the myth of the divine right of kings was to feudal Europe.

This orientation toward change has had perverse effects in all sorts of areas. If change is good today it must have been good in the past as well, and if this is the case then all of human history must logically be one progression from bad to better. Indeed even a cursory look at our past surely proves this to be true. Were humans not originally mere animals, ignorant, homeless, unclothed, subject to the forces of nature? Are we not much better off today? Has science not answered most of our questions and technology given us the means to put a man on the moon? It has proved possible to find evidence of this progression everywhere one looks. Even in the arts one can discover a progression from “primitive art” through the ages to the perfection of techniques leading to ever “higher artistic achievements.” In music too there appears to be a sort of progression from the music created by “primitive” societies to those of more and more “advanced” societies leading to the present. And who could deny that science has progressed over the centuries. Change has even taken on fetishistic qualities in the realm of fashion and pop music not to mention computer technology, where only the “latest” is of any use at all.

Humanity has been affected by this reorientation on many subtle levels. If change is good then the work required to produce it must also be of high value. So the project of convincing the world that change is good also entailed convincing the world that work is good, that work is the road to salvation. This went against the grain of most of humanity, which always considered work to be a necessary evil. When change was still bad, anything that produced change like science, technology and excessive work was also suspect. Some philosophers went so far as to argue that the things humans did as a means toward an end, such as work, were no different than what animals did to survive. What differentiates us from animals is what we do as ends in themselves.

If change has been so good to us then is it not also our duty to help those “less advanced” by encouraging change elsewhere, is it not even our duty to do so even if those “less advanced” peoples are too ignorant to recognize the wisdom of change? It was of course a considerable part of the “white man’s burden” to rid the other peoples of the world of their laziness and sloth. Through hard work humanity could change the world

to suit its purposes, to build a utopia in which hunger, disease and even inequality could all be eliminated. Once at that point even the need for work and further change could be a thing of the past.

Cracks in the foundation of this “Myth of Progress” appear to be visible even now. As the means of producing change have become more and more potent, the utopia they were intended to construct has proved to be the Fata Morgana at the door of death. But change is not reversible and all of our intellectual tools, even our languages are useless in charting a path forward. Once self-sufficient communities have been torn apart by market forces and new technologies, putting them back together is like unscrambling an egg. Extinction means forever, as the slogan goes.

—Arnd Jurgensen

## Provocation

—Nada Seferovic

## Psychoanalysis

Merleau-Ponty (1945) claimed that a theory of the body is, *ipso facto*, already a theory of perception, and he was, in my opinion, absolutely right in a depth-psychological sense which no psychoanalytic metapsychology has yet been able to account for. It is easy to be distracted from the extraordinary sensuality of the psychic process, to forget its vividness in order to make some point about pain, need, desire, the phallus, power, conflict, morality, and the like. All of the arguments which Freud, Klein, Lacan,

and others make about the facts of psychic life, sexuality, language, and dependence have been illustrated abundantly in the technical literature. But rarely does one find any explicit appreciation of the sheer wonderment of psychosomatic functioning, the utter *funktionslust* of ordinary being. In this respect, psychoanalysts are just as uncomprehending as linguistic philosophers and cultural theorists: they can talk forever about the intricate and seductive structures of signification, the ways in which this body part or that signifier slides into another, corresponds to another, substitutes for another, refers to another—and they can go on about history and society until everyone is blue in the face—without really encountering the blunt substance of meaning, the crude semantic fact of the body, which has no structure in itself, no status within any system of signification: it just means.<sup>1</sup>

People reveal the internal world in various ways, but its *internality* is never so clearly evident as it is in the psychoanalytic setting. [Allon] White has argued that the psycho-pathological phenomena associated with hysteria in Charcot's day—Freud's 'discovery of the unconscious'—may be explained as a kind of return of the social repressed. According to White, the sensuous body of pre-modern societies has been fragmented, marginalized, and neurotically sublimated in contemporary civilization. He describes a suppressive transformation of "material, physical practice into purely *textual* semeiosis,"<sup>2</sup> in which a robust communal expression of the body politic has degenerated into a morbid private fantasy. This insight is pushed into an argument against psychoanalysis, in favour of "a thoroughly historicized, social understanding of mechanisms that Freud mistakenly thought to be more or less universal."<sup>3</sup> Yet, as Burgin has pointed out, "Psychoanalysis does not construct a realm of the 'subjective' *apart* from social life." If the internal world is "more or less universal" (sic), this is true in the same sense that 'society' is universal: it is an irreducible dimension of human experience, not to be mistaken for an historical construct such as juridical individualism.<sup>4</sup> But one does not have to believe that the internal world is an ephemeral effect of the historical process to appreciate White's central point—that the dynamic experience of the social body has been reintrojected and repressed in industrial civilizations. The situation that we are facing is not so much that the breakdown of communal life has forced the symbolic universe into a psychic underground (as if unconscious fantasy were a purely modern invention); what has become private, fragmented, and precarious is not the activity of the internal world (which, if anything, is more public than ever), but the forms and means of its *ritual* expression in social relationships. We can see now that the therapeutic function in contemporary urban societies is a distillation from traditional social dramaturgy;<sup>5</sup> it is bottled and sold in the form of technical professional healing relationships.



## Notes

- 1 But in the best technical formulations, the aesthetic phenomena which presumably correspond in some way to the concepts of pleasure, experience, and drive remain latent and thus become accessible to reflective observation.
- 2 Allon White, "Hysteria and the end of carnival: Festivity and bourgeois neurosis," *Semiotica* 54, 1–2 (1985), 109.
- 3 *ibid.*, 85–86.
- 4 Charles Levin, "Art and the Sociological Ego: Value from a Psychoanalytic Point of View," *Life After Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture*, ed. John Fekete (New York: St. Martin's, 1987), 22–63.
- 5 Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive: A Critique of Civilization* (New Brunswick, N. J: Transaction Books, 1974).

## —Charles Levin

Excerpted from "Metapsychology of the Infant Body: Psycho-analytic Aesthetics Reconsidered," *Public 3: Carnal Knowledge*, 1990.

## Quiet Revolution

It is within the common sense of public life in Quebec to frame the Quiet Revolution as a cultural revolution leading to the interlaced development of new formations of sociality: secularization and educational reform; democratization and reconstruction of the state apparatus; the formation of a "national" business class. In other words, both erudite knowledges and popular memory frame the Quiet Revolution as both a process of modernization and the emergence of Quebec into modernity.<sup>1</sup> The cultural character of this interlaced development is most often viewed as a structuring shift in and between institutions, practices and *mentalités*. Thanks to this shift, the ratio between private and public action as well as between the "people" and the public institutions of state and economy are understood as having been transformed.

At the same time, less attention has been paid to the concomitant elaboration of a complex field of governmental action centred on the domains of culture: "elite" culture and the arts, popular culture and the cultural industries, heritage and museums, the cultural geography of the regions, language policy, immigration and the "cultural" communities. In addition, while the successive ministries of culture have acted as a central agency in this action, its interventions have extended into the actions of the majority of ministries. The most recent Cultural Policy, for example, lists fourteen ministries directly involved in intervention in the cultural field. Just as important are the relations between these domains of state action and the elaboration, inside and outside of the state, of a public discourse of Québécois identity subtending the more general claims to sovereign action of the