VARIANT
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Cover: Cath Whippey, images from Dress the Bear an interactive animation.
A conversation with
James Kelman

In September 1999 the first new play by James Kelman for five years was ready for production on a profit-share basis by a small Glasgow-based company, the actor Gary Lewis had already committed to it. At the time Kelman was joint holder of the Scottish Writer of the Year award. Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre was the first venue approached. It was Kelman's choice; during past years three of his own plays and one of his translations have been produced there. The Traverse requested that in the first instance Kelman should submit the play for consideration by the "literature committee". He replied to the effect that he didn't do auditions these days. The Traverse insisted so he withdrew the play and wrote to the Scottish Arts Council to express his feelings about the situation.

This is an informal conversation, more than an interview, recorded in late August 2000, which reveals something of what it is to be a writer working in Scotland.

William Clark

James Kelman When I got involved in this thing last September [1999], almost a year ago, I thought of it as something personal and was wanting to keep it personal. I'd just come home from the States, I had been away about a year so things were kind of hectic and I didn't want to get too involved. I didn't have the time to get involved anyway, I had a lot of stuff to clear up: the new novel, get on with my essays, then the plays. But I thought about going public. There seemed to be a lot happened within the Arts Council in the last couple of years that was detrimental, and it should be taken on. The changes to do with the Book Trust for instance, as I understand it the Book Trust is now responsible for a lot of work the Literature Department used to do. Things that had been the case are no longer the case, such as money. Before, if you were ever taking part in a gig, doing a reading or whatever, where the audience were charged to get in, you'd always be paid a minimum wage. The writer wouldn't take part in something where there was an admission fee and no payment and the Arts Council would not have supported such an event. There was always a basic payment for the writer. That was part of the way things used to operate so there's been a lot of changes, all these rip-off readings from places like Borders and Waterstones, writers never getting a paid a penny, why don't they boycott them. I remember a couple of years back the Edinburgh Book Festival broke the guidelines, they offered me a fee of fifty quid. I couldn't believe it. At that time the minimum Arts Council fee was £80, maybe £70. It was extraordinary they tried to get away with it. They were surprised when I said no! I don't know how it is at the Book Festival nowadays, I haven't been back since.

No writer should ever take part in that kind of shit. The public getting charged money to get in as well, why don't they pay the writers a proper fee! The same with financial support to arts magazines, the main reason the Arts Council gave it was so the writers who wrote for them got a payment for the contribution. So there was that, then the way the education department has crept into the Arts Council reckoning as well. Does that mean their criteria will start being used to deal with writers, censoring or suppressing the ones school inspectors don't want to be seen or heard in a classroom? So now writers who are in any way radical are going to stop getting readings? is that what it means? I'll just be all the safe bastards who'll be earning the fees from school or university readings. Of course that is the way it is just now anyway when you look about, I'm talking generally, the ones getting all the 'creative writing' and residency jobs. You just have to look at the literary brochures and flyers coming at you, quite a cosy wee scene, and then there's the usual team that gets all these invitations to British Council events—Burns Suppers in Turkey and Israel, Saudi Arabia, etc.

So a lot of different things, I felt there was a lot of questions needing to be addressed. Other writers feel the same. And if I had got too involved in this thing of mine with the Arts Council I thought I would wind up having to address these other issues and I didn't want to, so I was being selfish, no time no energy. I tried to keep it at that personal level, just me moaning. Here was a situation pertaining to myself, one writer, a writer who has done this much work, x-amount, it doesn't have to be good, bad or indifferent work either, just that if this writer gets a new book out people will read it and if he puts on a new play audiences will want to go and see it. Good bad or indifferent. Just because the writer has already done all that work in the past and the audience know it, and now here he's got a new work out, that's why the audience are going to be interested. They might go away and criticise it, condemn it, but they'll go and see it in the first place, because it's a particular writer they know: "Kelman's first play for five years, let's go and see it." The Traverse wouldn't have lost, it was just a profit-share, no wages, but we would've got some expenses. So these kind of arguments, basic arguments, I just wanted to let the Arts Council hear my side of it, I can't get my work on in this country unless I'm prepared to put up with these stupid insults. Not even for nothing! Submit your work for consideration! They're so fucking naive, they don't even know they're insulting you. Or do they? I felt part of the strength of my case was because it was one writer, it didn't matter who the hell you were, to the extent that even somebody who was joint holder of the Scottish Writer of the Year Award, Booker Prize blabla blabla, even a writer like that could not get a play on without auditioning, getting approval from some sort of literature committee, without meeting their criteria, whatever that might be, amazing crap. A profit-share remember, we weren't looking for any commission-type payment from the theatre, just a percentage of the box-office, we were doing all our own rehearsals, finding our own space, in our time, every damn thing, props, the fucking lot, we were asking nothing from them at all except the space to perform the play for a week or two—well, a week, five or six days, they told us there was no chance of a fortnight—nobody gets a fortnight for a touring show, so they
say, I thought the strength of the case lay in keeping it personal. A general case could come about but only as an effect of the personal thing. Also as
that I felt it was something that could be put right if I explained the situation as clearly as I could, "I cannot get a play on at the Traverse Theatre for nothing, not even for no money." Just something like that.

William Clark You wrote to the Arts Council?
JK Yeah.
WC There's an expectation that they can do something. There's also an expectation—you were saying—you assumed that people were aware of your work or that people had some kind of attitudes you would get from papers like the Sunday Times, not the Scottish edition.

WC It's not proper literature.
JK Yeah, they regard me as a 'primitive', 'precur-

support': writers like me are 'savages'. But it surprised me, even at this stage in your writing life how you still get the vaguely patronising, vaguely irritated attitude coming to you from the Scottish Arts Council. It's an anglocentric thing, quite a common attitude to Scottish art from people in high Arts Council positions. So there are two points there Billy, the first thing relating to what you say, the idea of the Arts Council being able to have some kind of influence on their own employees, I mean the staff at the Traverse Theatre. Of course they saw the Traverse employee's attitude coming to them, they're in a position with. Whatever the employee says goes, and they'll back them up to the hilt. They see you as being the for-
eigner, the artist. The artist is the alien figure that they're in opposition to. They don't see themselves as people who are there in order to support and assist artists. They don't see themselves as that.

WC Not at all.
JK So the first point you made is dead right. Yeah I wouldn't have illusions about that. Except I did get expectations! In relation to the Traverse you've got to remember I'd already had a play produced there—two plays. In fact it's been four I've had there now. One play was actually commissioned by them, and I had one translation commissioned from them as well, a play by a French writer, both about 10 or 12 years ago. So with the Traverse... You've got to remember I was One-two-hey with the Blues Poets band—you felt, well, there's no question here, no economic question either. They were aware of that?
Jeffrey Knowles (Jeffrey Knowles is another playwright)
Yes. "I thought I should make you aware of what's going on here?"

"Creative-Scotland" awards information through the letter-box recently. It came through my agent believe it or not...

WC Ha! Yeah, "I thought I should make you aware of what's going on here?" She's right, but of course she should make me aware of it, that's the sort of thing she gets paid for, she's a good agent. The first time I was sent it was in the middle of all the shenanigans, it was from the director of literature or maybe the overall Arts Council director. Probably an obscure form of put-down. You could only apply in a cyni-
cal way because like I said it's got certain atti-
ditudes towards art which one cannot share in the year 2000. To give the Arts Council the benefit of the doubt, these were very old fashioned attitudes, not beyond first year art theory or something. They make these assumptions about how "we" value art. It's like, 'What? in order to discover the merit of your work you have to kid on, the audience responds to it!' I beg your pardon! The beholder's response to a work of art will define the value of the work of art. That sort of luidous shite. You expect it from first year students, not from people experienced in art. But it's very con-
venient in relation to funding if you're represent-
ing a public body dishing out so-called public funds to so-called artists, you get them on an effi-
cient individual who is putting the wishes of the public totally to the fore, it's pure crap.

WC It's just a bureaucratic expedience. They're now get-
ing to the position whereby they prescribe the value of the work. 'We will fund a film like... and then they name a film maker who they like. That makes their job easy, it makes arts administration a very biased phoney rationing of resources. That's all it is.

JK There was a Scottish film maker based in New York, a young guy, he was wanting to do a film of my novel The Buscador Hines, a few months ago. So I did the first draft screenplay to get things moving, it was 220 to 300 pages, a full piece of work. Later on in the process the guy approached Scottish Screen. I didn't know he was doing that, but when he told me I went along with it. I thought there must be something in it, maybe a change in policy, maybe they were starting to
support actual writers... Then I was asked along to an interview with the Scottish Screen people. I liked the idea that there might have been some respect paid towards what he was saying at first. But then I realised that the only reason I was there was because they were wanting to work out if I was worthy of being given a weekly-up front sum of dough in order to complete a second draft, or maybe take it a stage further, get it finished, I can't really remember. That was all it was, all that palaver, just to see if they would deign to give me a wee sum of dough for the screenplay, they wanted to see if it was merited or not. To give me the fucking money I mean! I was supposed to submit the first draft of the screenplay to them so they could say whether or not I was worthy of getting this small up-front sum of dough.

I said, "No, you're not judging me at all, what are you talking about?" They were wanting to "consider" my first draft and chat about whatever or not the project was merited or some such shite! I had already done all the work—the slogging stuff—for nothing, for no wages, that first draft like I said, I done a full job on it. Remember as well that this was a film based on my own adaptation of a short story which I had written, which I had written all the way through. They didn't take it. 

"But we've already done the work—" well, that's the level I thought they would be at. You mentioned as and such an amount that'll get the screenplay up and running, so if we give them such and such an amount that'll get the thing moving, once we stick in something the overseas money'll start coming in. That's the level I thought the discussion was going to be at. Then I found out no, it was the same old story, it was back to that old stage where I was going to have to add in my work for a commitment of three weeks to see if I was worthy of the chance to develop my fucking screenplay. And not even to get proper dough, just a wee personal sum so I could revise the fucking script. There's a good boy, a pat on the head. I felt on Christ I'll call this off immediately.

The way I see it over the years Scottish Screen was always just a corrupt body, intellectually bankrupt, like the telly or something. All you have to do is see the people involved in writing the shoddy third rate work that comes out. It never uses real writers. Why is that? May be because once in a blue moon. It gives a lot of money to actors, directors and all these other people to do screenplays. How come they never pay real writers? The bottom line is they don't want real writers. It's like Hollywood in the 50s or something.

But a lot of American writers did work for the movies, Faulkner...

"Yeah it was a good period. But the 50s was a time when they started to get rid of real writers, for example, McCarthy era. What you saw was how the directors became the main figures, real writers were too political. So Scottish Screen in that sense is just a part of the usual Scottish Arts scene. All the time they want to open up a monumental shit, a kitchen-sink fantasy land, fucking hopeless. What a waste of time, all the emotional energy. For me never it's finished, Scottish theatres like the Traverse as well, finished in a personal way. I should have known that a while back when the Traverse refused to let me, Tom Leonard and George Gallacher's blues band use their space to play a one-off night, they didn't think we could get an audience—for a one-off night performance! Fucking hell man. Another profishare thing. That was less than three years ago, just before I went to work in Texas. Of course the theatre's been finished for a whole now anyway and I should have realised that I'm finishing this new book of essays of mine and there's a big debate I wrote back in 1987 or something, caused by the shit that went on trying to put on another play of mine. In the Night. So here I am just fighting a battle I wouldn't have wasted my time fighting before or thirteen years ago. I wrote a bit about it in the introduction to that book of plays of mine, Hardie Baird. Fucking waste of energy. It's shocking, but at the same time...

Earlier on we were criticising the history of Scottish theatre and now with all the closures and 'privatisation' there's no future. Some people would say there's a lot of things: some sort of resistance and ultimately it's come through. Theatres have come through 'Thatcherite' arts council policies whereby it's complete commercialisation and forget anything else. I felt that via the Arts Council the government pushed this managerialism—organisations were swayed through that, because it was policy, they were making everyone assume that it's all up in the air again: it's still totally tied in with government policy, there's no two ways about that. To get funding from the Arts Council you must follow and like the government policies and views or put up a believable impersonation of that. But what are the models for that kind of thing? Stalinist Russia? Who exactly is being helped along here? There's also the law of diminishing returns. How many plays that say the government policies are fantastic would you want to go and watch in a year? What defence is there against that, what awareness of it even? I mean the part of the SAG With Magnus Linklater— an appointee of the previous administration—the arts suddenly became an opportunity to negotiate a salary straight from the word go. For everybody else it's take it or leave it.

I suppose by myself when I wrote to Magnus Linklater I also wanted things to be on record. So I don't really regret all the time I've spent, because I have this correspondence here and the idea of making it known. Plus nobody can say I didn't try, when I tell people in the States I can't get a play on and they look at me, well, here it is, I was at this level and that level, this is me being stopped, I still can't get a play done at a place like The Traverse without doing a crown routine for the bastard, and I'm talking about for nothing, no wages.

But anyway you didn't really see it but at the time of the Booker Prize a lot of the coverage—like the Times and so on—would say it's an insult to the Booker Prize, you get Waugh or Julia Neuberger or Greer, somebody like that and their 'job of glibbish' but it must be quite effective. In some ways it suits the people's view of your work.

"Yeah... well it did up here too, MPs obviously, they took the Neuberger line and supported the hostility against me. Brian Wilson and Donald Dewar, they attacked, every Labour MP who opened his mouth—apart from Gordon Brown, he was the only one I saw that came out in print without attacking me. Like The Herald as well, after I won the thing just about the entire bunch that write that for it came out and attacked, they all found their own way of doing it, it was like tossing the fucking editor was reduced to defending me, Arnold Kemp. What was interesting too was that bodies like the Saltire Society attacked too. They just took the Neuberger line on language as having some truth to it. I remember the quote from the Saltire Society was something like "Oh yes, Scottish writers have to... tend to shoot themselves in the foot." Something like that. So here you've got people who are directly associated with contemporary writing in Scotland and just taking up that uncritical hostility position to a Scottish writer, basically acting on the word of an English tabloid, and you would have that hostility from a lot of the Scottish educational system, yeah and people involved with the SNP of course, they come out and attacked the novel as well, Paul Scott...

"But a great deal of the public money is tied up by the administrators of public money. You mentioned Scottish Screen: it emerged that previous director, gave himself a million pounds of Scottish Screen public money, over and above his salary as an administrator, for his own project. Some people are administering these things to try to get at the money first.

"Well they're succeeding.

"The government's policy may or may not be well-intentioned, but all they can ever produce ends up as an opportunists' charter. Certain perennial problems of government exist. We're asked to believe that with prohibition in Scotland there wouldn't be an existence of organised crime. We look at the drug laws now: they actually pretend they're undertaken, but all they can ever produce ends up as an organised crime. We asked to believe that with the Saltire Society was something like "Oh yes, Scottish writers have to... tend to shoot themselves in the foot." Something like that. So here you've got people who are directly associated with contemporary writing in Scotland and just taking up that uncritical hostility position to a Scottish writer, basically acting on the word of an English tabloid, and you would have that hostility from a lot of the Scottish educational system, yeah and people involved with the SNP of course, they come out and attacked the novel as well, Paul Scott...

"What because everyone else was?

"Perhaps it was that. It was also because the conventional wisdom being peddled was that my work was "primitive writing" and they wanted to be seen as being on the side of "mature persons", "intellect" or something, the SNP, they didn't want to be seen as "parochial"! They were wanting to be seen as mature persons, they're big enough to negotiate the arts suddenly became an opportunity to a Scottish writer working in a Scottish kind of working class dialect bla bla bla... It's part of that colonial mentality again, inferiorisation, plus the usual anglophobic attitude, something like a between establishment. That would have been part of the crap that was going on from them, I don't know. One of the points that you were making earlier in relation to Thatcher and 1987, there were shifts in the arts. One of the ways it happened during the next ten years was the way funding went, American style Corporatism...

"The "if the private sector aren't funding you we're not funding you" routine.

"The whole attitude of Ian McGregor and the people who came in the 70s. Remember the title..."
McGregor's autobiography: The Enemies Within. A typical Thatcher-Reagan Cold War line. But before the Thatcher government we were already being put into that way of thinking so it's a mistake to say "Thatcherism". But between that and also as a way to control the arts—move it out of the public sector and into the private sector as means to an end of a government censor. BP [British Petroleum] was one of the major sponsors of the theatre, they had the Young Directors of the Year awards and so on. As soon as you have groups taking control like that, funding becomes a functional thing. There's obviously ways in which slowly but surely avant garde theatre—never mind left-wing, radical theatre—a hundred quid will slowly but surely... WC: ...know they're not wanted.

JK: What's wanted is the Kings and Lyceum Theatre, the Citizens—Shakespeare and P.G.Wodehouse, foreign writers and Neil Coward, pantomimes—and style as well, what you'd do. If I join the gang, give us a fucking Nike stripe. But what I was going to say is it is an error to fall into that way of thinking that says how before 1979 things were okay. It's crap. What you're talking about, the 784 company, Wildcat, that sort of thing. Really it was just what you would say Labour Party. And it was probably Manifesto Labour Party. It wasn't even Tribune. None of that stuff was left-wing at all, not if you step outside that thing. That in some ways it was really reactionary theatre. As far as they were concerned, political theatre...as a musician friend of mine used to say..."If you walked out, sang a song and said Fuck the Queen, then you'd get described as political theatre, and you'd get funding." That was what it was about at that period. Or so he would say. I don't actually believe you could've said that. It was mainly shit though. It wasn't political at all, nobody's got a right to get a play on, including me. I've got three plays just now, new ones, the one we've been talking about plus another two. Where do I go with them. I don't blame people like the Tron or the Citizens for not trying to stage my work because maybe they just don't want to stage it and they're entitled to that. In relaying, I could see them putting on Hardie and Baird after I'm dead.

WC: What does it mean to be historical?

JK: Yeah probably, that makes it safe. A couple of critics were amazed there was so much religion in it, they thought it was too much. But maybe that would make the Labour Party feel even more safe. If it was just religion, they would think there was no politics. I don't really know what's going on in Scottish theatre these days, I don't go very much. It's not just Scotland of course, it's elsewhere in the UK. A lot of things have happened. People down south are worried as well, it's not even politically radical, or experimental theatre, sort of "mainstream radical" where they're just trying to put on a new play or something.

WC: Certain there has been depressing changes in theatre and I think a lot of this is due to notions of national- ity. The Arts Council want to devalue power—and that's quite laudable in some respects—but all that comes down to is you cut touring companies and rep. because you don't have a national body to encourage that. The National Companies receive about half the total funding budget. Moves that came in the wake of the Audit report which castigated all the big lottery projects—it was really the Scottish government that you could make the present administration, well you never can, you perhaps that's why they change. Well it all centred on the Royal Opera House in '92, the fallings there and the vacuum that then was created. If you think of the ACE as the brink of collapse. This occurred as the new govern- ment came in with all their new ideas as to where the money should flow. A lot of people react against them but for fuck's sake they gave these people millions and when they needed more they gave them more. But a lot of that was obviously politically motivated. Opera got the money, but they did it through unusual ways and got caught and felt out at a bad time. Important people had their chance first. They blew it. That's what hap- pened. The report showed that the big companies fucked things up for the wee ones. Meanwhile a lot of cuts were made and the Scottish Drama committee just packed it in, which saved them getting rid of them. I don't understand these resignations. They should have stood at loggerheads with the Labour Party but it was the common enemy. It's a choice of being at the cutting edge of literature, christ, the- then it comes back and haunts you, as with this latest thing, you might get to a level but you never make it, you—well...to introduce other people into that equation, I don't particularly want to, but if I was thinking really off the top of my head it would be people like Aladjar [Gray] or someone like Agnes [Owens]...eff Terrington...anice Galloway, even Crichton Smith before he died, people who either have no money to get on with things or else they have to chase around artists like having to earn a living etc. but I don't see why at a certain stage they still have to be chasing around the country for paltry eighty quid here and a hundred quid there, people who have...
produced all that great work. I think that's a scandalous thing. Alasdair not being able to finish The Book of Prefaces because he didn't have the money, meanwhile the Arts Council are dishing out... I mean where the fuck are the...who's getting it? Where does all the money go when someone like Alasdair, he couldn't finish the 'prefaces' at that time because he didn't have enough money to get him through another year, he had to find private sponsoring, what's the fucking Arts Council for? These kind of questions which I don't really want to get into. Tom chasing up and down to England every week to survive, and Janice couldn't even do that, having a kid, and of course Jeff couldn't, and Freddie [Anderson] who's in his mid 70s. That brings you into other areas.

WC: The funding culture, the Arts Council stuff: its obviously a deeply bourgeois, middle-class, don't rock the boat, status quo values... that's it.

JK: And also Billy, the rent boy thing, that point you made—for them ultimately there is no belief whatsoever in art. And somebody whether it's myself, with as the theatre carry-on, it's how they have absolutely no belief in what you do. They put no value in the art you create. They still think that if they were to give you a bursary for example, it's just Kelman or Gray is getting £20,000...

WC: Would the see the error of your ways...

JK: They would just...no, it's just how for them they're giving you ten thousand quid and somehow you're "getting away with something", you're just getting the money, it's not for anything, it's not even old rope, it's just a game, there's no value in what you do. There's no value in it, the Arts Council don't see it. Some people might talk about your work in a pub or something, yeah, the Arts Council: officials know that, or maybe at least they'll see a book you've written on a shelf in a library, but they don't put any real value on the stuff you do, not in itself, they don't see it as art, not real art, there's no value in it.

WC: I don't think so. I don't think there is. If you look back to the original thinking with Keynes, it was Keynes that thought it up as an extenuation from ENSA, you know to help the troops (which gave us Stanley Baxter and Kenneth Williams), that was for the lower orders right. And CEMA was this thing which basically was designed to fund the big opera houses. The financial methodology was loans. It was never ever intended to be "here's money on you go we will support you..."

JK: Yeah that's a 70s thing.

WC: Exactly. The notion of continuing funding. Now they're attacking that again. Keynes' notions are largely taken from an article in The Listener. His notion of artists were pretty muddled actually. The analogy is that they're like butterflies in a jar: give them art and they have freedom. It's quite flowery, apollitical...no social responsibility whatsoever. If they do still believe that they have also come to believe that if you let the butterfly fly out of the jar I'll go straight to the pub. That's what they think. If you give artists money they will spend it on their lives [laughter] they'll waste it, they'll pay bills with it. There is an anomaly there. I think at a very high level in the arts they have got to rediscover that the values of what we would call the 'counter-culture', all these things were wrongfully ditched by the establishment, actually revived art. They refuse to deal with certain sets of issues because they call their own roles into question. Until they address these sorts of things and stop putting nutcases in charge because they're 'good businessmen' I can't see anything changing and remember they're doing themselves out of a job. Look at the BBC for instance. It's ethos has been commercialised. So it will compete with all these commercial imperatives. If that's what it's doing then why am I paying the license? It will only do in the whole basis of the thing. You pay your license fee so that it doesn't have to be ruled by commercial imperatives and it's same with art's funding. I can't see any real way in a 'modern democracy' where they could say "we're going to have this fund which will force people to go along with the government's hastily constructed view on culture." That just doesn't make any sense. I want to believe there's a chance for them. I support the idea of an Arts Council in the same way I support the concept of the BBC. If you look at the ACE's website it says we will try and challenge this 'historical bias', they're persitent. But they're right for the wrong reasons, they're just saying that because they're told to say it. They actually admit historical failure. But they're still not going to change things. Departments and individuals within the Arts Council are very different, but I don't think I've ever read anything which honestly conveys what it's like to encounter the sheer crippling helplessness of the bureaucracy...most people just give up.

JK: You know I fought that damn thing for nine months, nine months wasted energy.

WC: Yeah, you know there's the time scale of these things. The day in day out...

JK: One of these letters I wrote took about five or six days work—because I'm watching my back...you have to be careful... See I knew the attitude was going to be: "Well what does he expect, he acts like the theatre's his or something I mean that right does he have to come walking in here?" That sort of attitude. These theatres are theirs, they belong to the admin officers, they've got nothing to do with us, the artists, that's the point. Well we knew that anyway that's just fucking banal. I landed myself in banalities for nine months. I got slapped down and put in my place. And how many times has that happened in the past for myself in this country, trying to get...you know...just get your work done.

WC: What is the root cause?

JK: What in other people's eyes?

WC: Well if somebody as you say hasn't got a track record well they'll say maybe later. Somebody in the middle position who's getting treated like shit can themselves say 'aye maybe one day'.

JK: When they're up there winning Scottish Writer of the Year Awards!...No but it is outrageous. So just to try and get it made public, that this is the reality here, this is what we're actually talking about, I can't get a play on for fucking nothing. This is what it is like to be a writer in Scotland. None of that is discussed. Meanwhile we get the usual crap from The Herald and The Scotstman, or Scotland on Sunday, attacking writers about this...what's that one by Tom, their "feather bedded life of luxury..."

WC: Yeah 'they're all getting funded and they're all meaningful!' But that's just sad wankers who haven't got a clue...

JK: Well they do have a clue...

WC: What are you trying to tell me that they're saying this to create a...

JK: Well some of the media are, yeah. And attacking people in a very underhand way. Just about every time I read a column about contemporary Scottish literature in The Herald we're getting attacked, in one way or another. I'm talking about the exciting stuff—all the reactionary crap gets supported. Look how they attacked Janice Galloway and Alasdair Gray in The Scotsman, or was it Scotland on Sunday? And when Janice and Alasdair replied they didn't even publish the letter they sent but again they attacked them, and they used bits of the letter for that purpose, imagine it, cowardly bastards. This is the kind of thing they do in Scotland. Imagine these little shits attacking writers like Alasdair and Janice! Christ almighty. Magnus Linklater is a former editor of The Scotsman, I see, no, that's the Andrew Neil team nowadays and Linklater is nowhere near as bad as that, I don't think so, if he had been I wouldn't have written to him in the first place. Who knows, he's an ordinary kind of right-wing guy, I suppose, in a position of authority. Another one! But take people like...what's her name...writes for The Herald and does stuff all over the place, for the BBC... Her that's the Labour Party, she's attacked me in the past because of Workers City, her that always backed up Pat Lally and whoever, the three stooges...

WC: Oh what Ruth Wishart!

JK: Yeah, people like Ruth Wishart, who have quite a strong position within the arts...

WC: She's the Labour Party hatchet for the arts...

JK: But these people really are the enemies in a sense, they try to hurt you and all that, and they succeed. I don't get so hurt because I'm maybe in a stronger position, I regard myself as quite strong, and yet for people who are less...in a worse economic position...they can get hurt really badly you know, they get stopped, they can't do their work. At least I know next year will not be as bad because I'll be in Texas, Texas half the year, England the other half.
zine & comics reviews

Mark Pawson

Apologies if you missed this column in the last issue, I had a late summer break and popped over to New York to sell out and track down some interesting zine creations.

Weird N.J.—Your Travel Guide to New Jersey's Local Legends and Best Kept Secrets is a round up of odd architecture, forgotten theme parks, urban folklore and just plain weird goings on in New York's ugly sister state. Issue 14 features the Palace of Depression—a quirky landmark built in the 1930s out of junk and odd car parts—and has a round up of boat-shaped tidal pools, a Cemetery Safari round-up, local Pirate tales, Roadside Wonders, a Cemetery Safari round-up, a Calendar of Events, a Cemetery Safari round-up, and a Cemetery Safari round-up. There's lots of lively input from their readers—always the sign of a good zine—but it's odd when they're not wise to the Andre the Giant graffiti campaign. Immensely readable, Weird N.J. is an engaging look at an American state that rarely receives anything other than bad press.

Tuli Kupferberg, best known as a member of The Fugs, is an East Village counter culture survivor. On previous visits to New York I've always spotted him selling tapes and booklets on SoHo street corners, but this time around he was nowhere to be seen, maybe Mayor Giuliani's zero tolerance policies have driven him off the streets. Tuli finally gets his very own Teach Yourself book, this collection of 200 collages and cartoons is called Teach Yourself Fucking. It's idiosyncratic, loosely drawn and scribbly thrown together just like his booklets always were, but maybe losing the sharper edge of his earlier publications and with a heavy focus on New York politics. "The old Fucks at Home" is his continuing series of two oldsters trying to make sense of the world as it comes through their TV. There's also the satirical "Great Moments in the History of Politics, Art, Literature, Journalism and Capitalism" cartoons. A couple of my favourites; cockroaches standing around discussing the merits of 'People Motels'—where people check in, but don't check out—and Tuli's ad for the Village Voice personal column; "Beautiful Woman! I saw you walking down village streets in the 80s, I should have spoken, but didn't. Please contact me."

Public Illumination Magazine, celebrates 20 years of publishing with issue 46, this "non-occational" print oddity is tiny—just larger than a business card. Each issue is themed, 'Busts' this time around, 'Luxury' for the next issue, and contains a mix of bite size prose, drawings, sketches and haikus. Originally New York based, editor Zagreus Bowery has relocated to Italy and continues to assemble this cute curiosity from works by contributors with equally unlikely, and obligatory pseudonyms, Crispypawn, Rank - Cologne and Guilty A. Rosebush all feature in this issue. I've got a treasured collection of previous Public Illuminations stashed away, picked up on previous visits to New York and bought here in the 80s when copies were on sale in London, and look forward to rediscovering them when I file this copy...

Cool (comics for you) is a free bi-monthly showcasing and forthcoming books by some of today's most interesting independent comic publishers from the US, UK and Canada. It's a collaboration between Top Shelf, Drawn and Quarterly, Highwater Books and Slab-Concrete. The low cost newspaper format means there's plenty of space to print sample strips from all of the books featured, some in full colour. It's a great idea that they could easily charge money for, and let's be honest, it's always better to see work for yourself than have it filtered and part-digested by some reviewer!

Vice is a freebie skate/skatehop lifestyle magazine out of Canada & Brooklyn, this distinctive zine distinguishes itself with a varied range of articles to amuse, offend and puzzle. Interpersed between the ads for overbranded leisure clothing and skate shoes for non-skaters (it is, after all produced by a chain of clothing stores...) there's articles on "The Joy of Eavesdropping", an interview with a Strawberry Farmer (a real farmer not a band name), A Backstreet Boys Impersonator, Horror Rap? (there's a whole lot more where chart-topping 'N Sync came from), "I didn't wear a shirt for a month". East Timor and Porno Reviews, plus there's a glossy colour comics section with short strips from Kaz, Kochalka and Fiona Smyth. Vice have a helluva lot of fun with their dos and don'ts pages, featuring photostory of cute guys and girls on the 'dons' page and mercilessly picking on the 'don'ts' atrocities on the 'don'ts' page. Vice embodies an anything goes spirit, occasionally going too far, but they've got their name to live up to.

Paper Rodeo, is another tabloid freebie, out of Providence, Rhode Island. A collection of some of the most disconcerting, dream-like, tripped out comics to be seen since the demise of Brighton's Watermelon Comic, I honestly can't tell if the strips are all by the same artist or ten different people! Ultra scratchy drawing styles are reminiscent of Gary Panter's jimbo and with a nice touch, the adverts for local Providence cafes, galleries and bookshops are all done in matching styles. Apparently they have a whole catalogue of other works by the artists...

Rockerbo is one of my favourite music zines, previous themed issues have focused on Masked rock 'n' roll, Monkey rock 'n' roll and Midget rock 'n' roll. I missed the last few issues, so was pleased to find this one in the racks at See Hear, New York's one record shop. Rockerbo is stocked with their track record for outstanding cover artwork coupled with refreshingly low production values of the interior pages! This issue has a long feature on the risque comedy records of Red Fox—who also stars in the US TV remake of Stepfie's Son—and an exclusive interview with wholesome whitebread crooner Pat Boone! Plus there's articles on Dolomite, The Dickies, Andre Williams, Swamp Dogg, Maceo Parker and Brazilian superstar Xuxa. Rockerbo has a knack for finding interesting offbeat musicans neglected elsewhere and always has a dauntingly long reviews section.

I haven't reviewed any of Mark Gonzales' zines here, much as I'd like to, sorry Mark but at £20/$30 a pop they're too expensive, yet but feel free to send review copies.

Paul in the country by Michel Rabagliati, is a delightful story which interweaves memories of the author growing up in french-speaking Quebec with a trip to the country, accompanied by his partner and yachts involved, to visit his aging parents. Beautifully drawn in a clear-line european style, this is only the first comic book from Rabagliati—who has worked as an illustrator and graphic designer for the past 20 years. It's up to publisher Drawn and Quarterly's usual high standard, and on the basis of this comic I'm waiting eagerly for Rabagliati's forthcoming graphic novel Paul has a Summer Job.

Back in the UK now, Weird Zines, is a new reviews issue, Issue 1 covers some zines you'll be familiar with from this column (Infiltration, Bodk Happy, From Parts Unknown) together with an unhealthy dose of zines.
focusing on trash, sleaze and exploitation cinema. Titles such as Mansplat, Streetdrainer, The Exploitation Journal and Cashiers du Cinemat are given you a good idea of what these guys are into! Just 22 reviews seem a bit scanty, they could easily have squeezed a few more in here, but there's plenty of illustrations, and heck! It's the first issue. Publishing a reviews zine is a thankless task at best, and previous attempts have fizzled out or floundered under mountains of mediocre zines sent to them, for this reason alone Weird Zines deserves your support.

Everything's a Pound, a survey of books weighing sixteen ounces oridupois, is both a practical examination of the size and weight of books (extremely pertinent to small publishers who rely on mailorder and are at the mercy of postage costs) and a homage to the Great British Pound Shop—where these days seems to be a global phenomena that happens to weigh a pound! This book weighs in at £5.00.

UK small press comics' stalwart John Bagnall's A Nation Of Shopkeepers takes us on a walk down an early 1970s northern high street, calling in at the supermarket, chip shop, butchers and boutique along the way. Each tableau is crammed full of accurately observed period details and hideous seventies styles, fish and chips wrapped in real newspaper, green shield stamps in the supermarket, listening booths in the Record Shop, Jimmy Saville hairdos, carcoats, tanktops and flares are regulation issue. It's a very British and decidedly unglamorous trip down memory lane. The latest book from the original badly-drawn boy, Scottish doodlemeister David Shrigley, Grip, is his largest yet and even has a colour section. This selection of drawings, ponderings, wondering and meanderings seem bleaker and loopier than his earlier work. If that's possi-

ble, Shrigley's work deserves a book this size, so you can flick back and forth through it several times choosing your favourite pages and gradually working round to the rest of the book, just reading from start to finish. Doesn't seem appropriate. Buy a copy so he can afford some more packs of felt-tip pens off the market. Grip is published by Edinburgh's pocketbooks, steered by Alec Finlay they've built up an interesting, eclectic list of titles in a short time, several come with accompanying CDs, check out their catalogue.

contacts
A Nation Of Shopkeepers, John Bagnall, 16 pgs, A5, £1.50, Beechnut Books, marc@corn-cob.co.uk

Everything's a Pound, A survey of books weighing sixteen ounces avoridupois, 84 pgs, A4, £5.00. RGAP, Britannia Mill, Mackworth Road, Derby, DE22 3 BL. rgap@derby.ac.uk

Roctober Comics and Music, A4 80 pgs, $4.00, 1507 E.53rd Street #617, Chicago, IL 60615, USA. www.roctober.com

Grip, David Shrigley, 200pgs, £7.99+£1.20p&p, pocketbooks, Canongate Venture (5) New Street, Edinburgh, EH8 8BH. www.canongate.co.uk

Paper Rodes, tabloid, 16pgs, free, send $ for postage & a catalogue, Box 254, Allston, MA 02134, USA. Weird N.J. A4 80pgs, $4.00+postage, PO Box 1346, Bloomfield, NJ 07003, USA. www.weirdnj.com

Paul in the country, Michel Rabagliati, comic 32 pgs, $3.50, Drawn and Quarterly, PO Box 48056, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2V 4S8. www.drawnandquarterly.com.

Teach Yourself Fucking Tulli Kuperberg, A4 192 pgs, $15.00, Autonomedia, PO Box 568, Brooklyn, New York 11211-0568 USA. www.autonomedia.org

Public Illumination Magazine, $1.50, 24pgs. Casa Sorci, 06044 Castel Ritaldi (PG) Italy. casasori@krenet.it

Weird Zines, A5 24pgs. £1.50+an S.A.E. Justin Marriott, 159 Falcondale Rd, Bristol, BS9 3J J Cool (Comics for You), tabloid, 28 pgs, free, 1536 West Randolph Street, Chicago, IL 60607, USA. www.coolbooks.com

Vice, Free, look out for copies in likely central London Record shops, or send £ for postage to Vice, 43 Lexington Street, London, W1R 3LG See Hear, 59 E 7th Street, New York
United States and NATO inspired 'psychological warfare operations' against the 'Kurdish communist threat' in Turkey

Desmond Fernandes and Iskender Onder

The shear extent to which the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have been responsible for consciously and structurally providing aid, training and technical expertise to Turkish contra-guerilla death squads, repressive state forces and far right fascist groups makes for chilling reading. In pursuit of US governmental and NATO Cold War and post Cold War agendas, secretive and often publicly unaccountable initiatives have been undertaken in order to organise, protect and support repressive and antidemocratic Turkish state military mechanisms in their targeting actions against the internal ‘communist threat’. The internal ‘communist threat’, observes Chomsky, is “used here in the technical sense of which (it) has (been) assumed in American political discourse, referring to labour leaders, peasant organisers ... organising self-help groups, and anyone who has the ‘wrong’ priorities and the sense (which) has (been) assumed in American democratic initiatives which were perceived to be anti-communist threats.”

The Truman Doctrine, the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) and psychological warfare initiatives.

With the Truman Doctrine of 1947, millions of dollars worth of military equipment assistance was provided to the Turkish terror state to counter the internal and external ‘communist threat’. As President Truman’s address to Congress on March 12th, 1947, made all too clear: “I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures ... Should we fail Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far reaching to the West as well as to the East. We must take immediate and resolute action.”

By the end of fiscal year 1950, resolute action had been undertaken: Over US $200 million in military aid had been received by Turkey, “along with 1,200 US military advisers.” Between 1950 and 1979, a further US $5.8 billion in official military aid was forthcoming “Arms supply and training programmes helped to integrate the Turkish military, police and intelligence services into those of the United States. Under the Military Assistance Programme, 11,193 Turks received US military training between 1950 and 1979.” Lord Kinross, indeed, suggests that a much higher number of Turkish troops were, in fact, trained. By 1954 alone, “the American Military Mission claimed to have trained, in the Turkish army, a force of thirty thousand technicians.”

US advisers also assisted Turkish authorities with their covert monitoring activities of Kurdish political prisoners. Musa Anter, for example, confirms—in his Memds—that a “Special Team” from the US was sent in 1959 to the Turkish prison he was in, to assist the authorities with the decoding of messages between Kurdish prisoners. Interior Ministry reports further reveal that Turkish governing circles clearly understood that they would be provided with economic support and US military and ministerial government in their implementation of the ongoing Kurdish genocide as long as they could keep official and public identification of the Kurds as a ‘communist threat’ to American officials on their agendas. Clearly did not represent such a threat, and could not produce any evidence to the Americans to that effect: “This (Kurdish targeting) operation should be used ... to obtain economic aid from the US. The event should (merely) be represented to the American authorities as a ‘Communist Kurd Movement’. To the relatives of the suspects (targeted), the event should be explained as a ‘Communist Movement’ (despite the fact that) ... so far, there’s no evidence that can be used against the suspects.”

Ghassanoliou and Kendal have also established that the US government, which was “in control of all (the military decisions)” of a Cold War Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) Pact between Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Britain, had decided that a central purpose of this pact was to assist the Turkish and Iranian governments with their psychological warfare operations against “any attempts on the part of the Kurdish people.” As Randal has confirmed: “In the 1950’s, the Baghdad Pact—rebranded CENTO when Iraq dropped out following the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958—amounted to Western approval of anti-Kurd animus, enshrined in the Saadabad Treaty of 1937.”

Besikci further argues that US government supported ‘psychological’ research projects were conducted in the 1960’s in order to strategically assist the Turkish state with its assimilation and anti-Kurdish policies: “In 1962, Professor Frei, an American, carried out a survey throughout Turkey, in conjunction with the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) Pact with the US government’s Agency for International Development (AID) ... From the information provided at the end of the research project, it becomes clear that a number of high-ranking officials proposed to the Turkish government that the best way to fight against the spread of the Kurdish struggle was through the creation and institutionalisation of a party for profiteering.” Besikci confirms, this advice “was taken seriously by the Turkish government.” There was also an apparent offer by the US government in 1962 to establish a ‘Kurdish’ radio station—costing US $33 million—which would broadcast psychological warfare propaganda which would be anti-communist, anti-Kurdish nationalist in nature, and in keeping with “the USA and Turkey’s ideology.”

The CIA’s role in covert action operations.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), moreover, began to covertly fund and train fascist paramilitary right wing gangs and virulently anti-Kurdish organisations in Turkey—including the Organisation to Fight Communism and the National Action Party (NAP) using the successful lines of the Bischiera ‘anti-communist paramilitary gang in Italy. As Christopher Simpson has ascertained, “the role of this (Bischiera) band”—which was financed by the CIA using ‘black currency’ which “came from captured German NdA assets, including money and gold that the Nazis had looted from the Jews”—was that of left wing candidates and activists, breaking up political meetings and intimidating voters. Bischiera’s troops became the forerunners of a number of other similar paramilitary groups funded by the CIA in Germany, Greece, Turkey and several other countries over the next decade which were used to destabilise wider democratic initiatives which were perceived to be inimical to US interests.

The ex-Director of the CIA, William Colby, has further conceded, when pressed, that “there is a possible CIA backing of (such) anti-communist organisations to stop Turkey falling into the hands of communism.” Clearence to actively proceed with covert ‘psychological warfare’ of this nature was provided at the highest level. Through the National Security Council (NSC) Directive 4A in 1947, the CIA was “secretively authorised ... to conduct these officially non-existent programmes and to administer them.” As Simpson clarifies, “the NSC action removed the US Congress and public from any debate over whether to undertake psychological warfare abroad. The NSC ordered that the operations themselves be designed to be ‘deniable’, meaning ‘planned and executed (so) that any US government responsibility for them is not evident to unauthorized persons and that if uncovered, the US government can positively disclaim any responsibility.”

National Security Council Directive 102 (NSC 102), which replaced NSC-4A in 1947, similarly authorised the Office of Policy Co-ordination (OPC)—“the covert action arm of the CIA” — to carry out “any covert activities related to propaganda; preventative direct action including sabotage ... (and) assistance ... (in support of) indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries of the free world.” As Frank Wisner, the head of OPC (dubbed the United States Psychological Warfare Organisation by the NSC) has since conceded, these operations were “conducted in a covert or clandestine manner to the end that official US interest or responsibility” in these terrorist ‘anti-Communist’ actions could be “plausibly disclaimed by this government.”

The OPC’s psychological warfare objectives, according to Wisner, included: “1. Political warfare including ... support of indigenous anti-Communist elements in threatened countries of the free world.”
2. Psychological warfare including ‘black’ and ‘grey’ propaganda;61
3. Economic Warfare.
4. Guerrilla and partisan-type warfare.
5. Sabotage and counter-sabotage.
6. Other covert operations.”62

It is important at this juncture to also clarify just what ‘psychological warfare’, as termed above, actually meant. To Christopher Simpson, who has analysed much declassified material related to the above issues:

“the primary object of US psychological operations during this period was to frustrate the ambitions of radical movements in resource rich developing countries seeking solutions to the problems of poverty, dependency and the entrenched corruption. At heart, modern (US) psychological warfare has been a tool for managing empire, not for settling conflicts in any fundamental sense. It has operated largely as a means to ensure that indigenous democratic initiatives in the Third World and Europe do not go ‘too far’ from the standpoint of US security agencies. The problem with (US) psychological warfare is... its consistent role as an instrument for maintaining grossly abusive social structures.”

“Several points should be underlined. First, psychological warfare as a concept has consistently made use of a wide range of violence, including guerilla warfare, assassination, sabotage and more fundamentally, the maintenance of manifestly brutal regimes in client states abroad. Second, it has also involved a variety of propaganda or media work, ranging from overt (white) newscasting to covert (black) propaganda...”

A re-examination of (the US) record, even as it applies to Turkey, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, the Philippines, Indonesia and Panama, inescapably leads Simpson in short order to an inescapable conclusion:

“The role of the United States in world affairs during our lifetimes has often been rapacious, destructive, tolerant of genocide and willing to sacrifice countless people.”

In the case of Turkey, there are clear indications that the US government directly facilitated the Turkish government’s genocidal programme against the Kurds through its endorsement of the GENDO part, its provision of military equipment and its training of state backed ‘anti-Kurdish’ psychological warfare death squads, intelligence gathering organisations and ‘commando’ groups.82

Marcus Raskin, an NSC staffer, has conceded that these psychological warfare “activities around the world... were criminal by other nations’ standards as well as criminal by our own.”83 To George McGovern, US Senator between 1963-81:

“We were involved in assassinations, assassination attempts. We were operating paramilitary operations with mercenary forces hired in other people’s countries with no knowledge on the part of our own Congress, our press or the American people. All of these things are alien to a system of constitutional democracy.”

Recently declassified ‘Psychological Warfare’ methods used by the US Army and CIA advisers during the early ‘Cold War’ years again confirm that the US’s operational definition of the ‘psychological warfare’ was it actively engaged in—be it in Turkey, Italy, Greece or Iran—clearly did include terrorist acts of ‘warfare’ that “employs all moral and physical means, other than orthodox military operations... Psychological Warfare,” as recommended and practised, must “employ any weapon to influence the mind of the enemy. The weapons are psychological only in the effect they produce and not because of the nature of the weapons themselves. In this light, overt (white), covert (black) and grey propaganda; subversion; sabotage; special operations; guerrilla warfare espionage; political, cultural, economic and racial pressures are all effective weapons. They are effective because they produce dissonance, distrust, fear and hopelessness in the minds of the enemy.”84 Psychological warfare ‘special operations’ were defined in the above context to additionally include ‘miscellaneous operations such as assassination (and) target capture.”85

According to Philip Agee, a former senior CIA secret operations officer, CIA stations regularly used “offensive weapons of psychological and paramilitary operations” which involved surveillance measures and “includes the placing of anti-Communist propaganda in the public media, the frame-up of officials for police arrest, the publishing of false propaganda attributed to the revolutionary group in such a way that it will be difficult to deny and damaging as well, the organising of goon squads to beat up and intimidate... American devices to break up meetings, and the calling on liaison services to take desired repressive action.”86

“Within the US governmental bureaucracy itself,” notes Peter Dale Scott, “intelligence agencies and special warfare elements have recurrently exploited,” trained and even protected “drug traffickers and their corruption political allies” to facilitate these types of “anti-Communist and anti-subversive operations.”87

As Adams has concluded in ‘Secret Armies’, the US military and “the CIA... under the single USSR umbrella... managed to embrace every aspect of covert warfare from espionage to psychological operations and subversion.”88 Widespread and chilling actions and atrocities against Kurdish communities and ‘radical’ human rights and ‘leftist’ activists in Turkey/North West Kurdistan were clearly committed as a consequence of these ‘anti-communist’ inspired US-CIA-NATO linked ‘psychological warfare’ training and operational programmes.89 To effray Bale, writing in the Berkeley Journal of Sociology and Latitude, the CIA was “instrumental in establishing the contraguerilla” death squads in Turkey.90 By 1969, moreover, Turkish ‘commandos, who had been trained by American specialists in counter-insurgency,” were despatched into Kurdish regions “under the pretext of a general ‘arms search’ to terrorise the population.91 These commando actions “rapidly became associated with arbitrary brutality and torture that had marked the suppression of Kurdistan four decades earlier.”92

According to the Journal Derin, one comman-
do report which focused upon its anti-Kurdish psy-
chological warfare operations, ran along the following lines:

“Since the end of January, special military units have undertaken a land war in the (Kurdish) regions of Diyarbakir, Mardin, Sirnak, Cizre and Hakkari under the guise of hunting bandits. Every village is surrounded at a certain hour; its inhabitants rounded up. Troops assemble men and women separately, and demand the men to surrender their weapons. They beat those who deny possessing any or make other villagers jump on them. They strip men and women naked and violate the latter. Many have died in these operations, some have committed suicide. Naked men and women have cold water thrown over them, and they are whipped. Sometimes women are forced to tie a rope around the penis of their husband and then to lead him around the village. Women are likewise made to parade naked around the village. Troops demand villagers to provide women for their pleasure and the entire village is beaten if the request is met with refusal.”93

These actions, which have mirrored those of other US inspired and trained commando groups in El Salvador, East Timor, Indonesia, Guatemala, South Vietnam and Nicaragua, followed a “general pattern... A village is surrounded by armoured cars and helicopters move ahead; all the villagers are rounded up without any explanation, then herded into specially prepared camps. They are then called upon to surrender their weapons. Should a peasant declare that he has none, he is severely beaten and humiliated. The Turkish troops force both men and women to strip; often they rape the women. ‘Suspects’ are hanged by their feet from a gallows. Sometimes strings are attached to the genitalia of naked men whom the women are then forced to lead through the streets in this manner. Many die under torture.”94

Kendal confirms that these targeting actions continued throughout the 1970’s: “During the more or less fascist period which followed the US military coup on March 12th, 1971, the commandos’ activities were considerably extended and became a real ‘Kurd-hunt’. The troops raked through the Kurdish provinces one by one; several thousand peasants were pursued, arrested and tortured... in counter-insurgency centres which had been set up by Turkish officers trained by the US in Panama... (When) Demirel [who went on to become president of Turkey] returned to power, commando operations started up with renewed intensity in Kurdistan. In the towns, the state police and the fascist militia assassinated sixty six people from March 1975, to April 1976. (Even under the ‘democratic parliamentary regime’ of the late seventies, the commandos were still at work in Kurdistan. There were more than 10,000 of them patrolling the frontier province of Hakkari from October to December 1975.)”95

Despite being aware of such atrocities, US-NATO funding, active training and protection of racist and fascist, genocidal, anti-Kurdish psychological warfare teams and militias continued. One such militia was “the CIA/drug-linked terror gang known as the Grey Wolves,” the “paramilitary arm” of the National Action Party (NAP/HMP) as according to Berch Berbegolu, “attacks by the CIA trained and equipped death squads of the fascist NAP intensified during 1979.”96 A report by the Turkish Internal Ministry acknowledges that these NAP death squads were ideologically “akin to Hitler’s Nazi organisation,” NAP supporters, for instance, were clearly encouraged in a 1977 party leaflet to act in the following fashion: “Those who destroyed (the Ottoman Empire) were Greek-Armenian-Jewish converts, Kurds, Circassians, Bosnians and Albanians. As a Turk, how much longer will you tolerate these dirty minorities? Throw out the Circassian, that he may go to Caucasus, throw out the Armenian, throw out and kill the Kurd, purge from your midst the enemy of all Turkmens.”97

As Kendal has clarified, “the NAP is violently and militantly anti-Kurdish... The liquidation of the Kurds is thus an integral part of their agenda.”98

Investigative research by Colik has uncovered the following details: “The intelligence services of NATO ally Germany and other European coun-

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tries ... protected the NAP/MHP."57 Despite being fully aware of the ideological slant and character of the organization. "This protection continues to this day. The CIA openly protected the NAP/MHP in Turkey ... against its 'internal threats'”57 MIT’s own Turkish intelligence service (MIT), the CIA, the Turkish military and Turkish military intelligence (MIT).52 From its station in Athens, Greece, the CIA Technical Services Division (TSD), a group provided particular psychological warfare operational expertise to its staff operating in Turkey. "TSD stations ... surveillance, special weapons for clandestine operations, drugs for use in such operations, forged documents and other similar material ... . The TSD activities involved aggressive operations."53

The CIA's role in assisting MIT in targeting actions against the 'Kurdish' and other 'internal communist' threats was publicly exposed in 1977 when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MIT, acknowledged that “the CIA has a delegation when Sabahattin Savasman, the deputy director of MI...
Reports in the Turkish Daily News (13 July 1994),46 furthermore, confirm that OHD linked Turkish military officials, it is instructive to note that NATO welcomed and did not seek to dispute its placement as Head of the NATO Department of the Armed Forces Headquarters in Turkey by 1980, or its role as a principal actor between the Turkish General Staff and NATO in its operational activities.47 CIA’s inspired support for the NAP and Grey Wolves’ objectionable and murderous activities, under the guise of "anti-terrorist activities,"48 has been exposed in a number of investigative reports. Brothhead, Friell and Herman, for example, draw upon a number of reports which detail the way in which "Frei Terpil, the CIA agent and international arms dealer, had supplied the NAP and the Grey Wolves with weapons and explosives in the mid-1970s"49 to proceed with their terrorist ‘activities.’ CIA’s inspired support for the NAP and Grey Wolves’ objectionable and murderous activities, under the guise of "anti-terrorist activities,"48 has been exposed in a number of investigative reports. Brothhead, Friell and Herman, for example, draw upon a number of reports which detail the way in which "Frei Terpil, the CIA agent and international arms dealer, had supplied the NAP and the Grey Wolves with weapons and explosives in the mid-1970s"49 to proceed with their terrorist ‘activities.’

Despite clear awareness of his pro-Nazi past and highly disturbing, fascist and racist anti-Kurdish leanings, the international community, its officials, has failed to note that the German writer Jürgen Roth had information obtained from the German police and claimed in his book, ‘Die Verbrechen der Juden-, Faschistischen, Nationalsozialistischen Bewegungen’, that Nazi and fascist organisations, ‘death-teams’ and fascist organisations

MIT Deputy, Sahibettin Savasman, has confirmed that the intelligence service of Turkey’s NATO partner, West Germany, regularly liaised with MIT and held meetings with representatives of the Turkish and Ankara to discuss and evaluate operational matters and Turkey’s ‘internal’ problems in NATO countries, moreover, have apparently actively engaged in the training of anti-Kurdish ‘death-teams’50 as called by Catli, Agca and Celik. Recent Celik investigation uncovered the following: ‘In 1984, a force was set up to counter Kurdish guerrilla warfare. It was known as the ‘Special Team’. Even at the beginning, the team was on the loose. For a month, the personnel were trained in the use of the most effective weapons and in the use of guns, torture, sabotage, polling, interrogation, camouflage and learning about the culture and religions of the people in the region they were to serve in ...’ Some Special Team members were trained in other NATO countries such as Germany. An army officer from Germany, Hauptmann Weggold, was interviewed by a Turkish newspaper called ‘Tercuman’ on 1st February, 1987. He informed the paper that he had trained 2 groups of Turkish Special Team units at St. Augustine in USG-camp, near Bonn. The German newspaper, ‘Suddeutsche Zeitung’, in its 1st March–1st April, 1987 edition, also stated that 3,000 Special Team members from Turkey—also known as ‘Black Insects’—were trained in West Germany. These teams were trained ideologically and in military terms to look upon Kurdish people as enemies... In their manifesto, Special Teams are described as ‘Special Activity Teams’. They may join in with Turkish armies and operations. They also had other different assignments. An army unit might surround a group of guerrillas in a village but the Special Teams were trained to then take over the operation. It was usually they who carried out extortion operations... or... mine... or set traps on roads, interrogate, torture and lead operations in disinformation. There are hundreds of people in Kurdistan disabled as a result of the treatment and operations of the Special Teams... Special Teams have also executed guerrillas even though it was clearly impossible to arrest them. In addition, they have raped, women, seized gold and money and treated people brutally.’

Randal confirms that “the so-called Special Teams which members included former civil defence workers were feared as the cruellest of the cruel.”

Turkish state collusion with anti-Kurdish, fascist and Nazi collaborator criminal gangs also appears to have been actively encouraged and promoted by the US and NATO ‘Glaucoid-styled’ Stay Behind Network. As Simpson’s study, ‘Blowback: America’s Recruitment of Nazi’s and its Effect on the Cold War,’ has asserted, “in Greece in 1944 and 1947 also taught that the CIA that could employ former Nazi collaborators’ and “other fascists” on a larger scale in clandestine and psychological warfare "operations" and get away with it. US national security planners appear to have concluded that extreme right wing groups who once collaborated with Nazis should be included in US sponsored anti-Communist coalitions, for the participation of such groups became a regular feature of US covert operations in Europe in the wake of the Greek and Italian events.”

In Turkey, this resulted, in the opinion of Supreme Court Justice Erim Dege, in the endorsement of a close working collaboration between the fascist and anti-Kurdish National Action Party (NAP/MHP) armed ‘commandos,’ or ‘Bozkurt’s,’ and the Turkish states CIA and NATO linked ‘counter guerrilla’ units.52 This collaboration directly led to ‘NAP commandos’ being ‘trained by the CIA.’53 The leader of NAP, Nezih Ozer, was colour Barbarian Turks, an "enthusiastic supporter of Hitler during World War Two." As Harris has ascertained, "during the Second World War, he had been leader of the pro-German movement which hated him in exchange for financial support from Berlin and in the hope that a victorious Reich would allow Turkey to annex those parts of the Soviet Union invaded by people of the Turkic race."54 It is also known that "Turks established close ties with the Fascist leaders in Germany in 1945 and ... maintained his contacts in the post-Second World War period "with the German neo-Nazis underground."
mined beyond any doubt that Abdullah Câti and Oral Çelik ... had been used by Western secret services. He said that Çâti and Çelik had been doing business with another Turk, Bekir Çelik, who in turn was working with Henry Arsam, a man who co-operated with the CIA and with a number of secret organisations, fascist groups and terrorist gangs.112 CIA agent Frank Terpil is also reported to have publicly confirmed his involvement in helping to illegally release the extremist Grey Wolf, Agca.113

According to Herman and Brodhead, there can be no denying that “there was a close tie between the counter-guerrilla and the CIA. Deger charged further that the CIA, acting through MİT and the consultative body known as the ‘shadow government’, or ‘the unofficial government’ in Turkey, were working on behalf of the Turkish government to mould their policies...”114

3. Northern Alliance

Saley Aay elaborates: The coup “was engineered not by fringe groups with fringe agendas, but by the web of security agencies that had been woven by the CIA. Following the coup, the disappearances, murders, arrests and tortures of Kurds and others led to the increased volume and intensity, hence (CIA’s) coup—which was engineered by his good (NAP) friend Turkes—...”115

5. The effects of this ‘inspired’ psychological warfare policy were devastating: The “group of army generals” (sic) carried out (the) coup d’état ... made it clear that they intended to brook no expression of the Kurdish movement or identity whatsoever.”116


16. Anter, Hatiralarim, p. 214. Translated into English by Isikder Ozden. Anter notes, however, that the Turkish state chose to “...turn down this suggestion as it would indirectly have the negative effect of promoting and legitimising the Kurdish language (p. 214)—a process already in ‘Kemalist’ political circles found unacceptable.”


23. As quoted in Lewis Lapham’s investigative documentary, Taderon Press.

24. According to Agee, “...white propaganda is that which is openly acknowledged as coming from the US government, e.g. from the US Information Agency (USAIA); grey propaganda is ostensibly attributed to people or organisations who do not acknowledge the US government as the source of their material and who produce the material as if it were their own, black propaganda is unattributed material, or it is attributed to a non-existent source.”—Agee, J. (1975) Inside the Company: CIA Diary. Hammondsport, Penguin, p. 70.


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34. As quoted in Lewis Lapham’s investigative documentary American Power: Episode 4—Omnipotence,
screened on Discovery Channel, 1999.


32. As cited in Simpson, The Science of Coercion: Communication Research and Psychological Warfare, p. 12. Simpson interestingly notes that the army’s definition of ‘psychological warfare’—quoted here—"was classified as top secret at the time it was promulgated (early 1948) and remained officially secret until (as late as) the early 1980’s," p. 12.


35. Anter notes, for instance, that “the leader of MIT, General Ziya Selisik, sent a letter ... in 1962 ... to Yon (‘The Way’) magazine to be published as a way of warning to ‘left-wing groups’ to rethink. He pointed out that all Kurds who were studying were viewed by the state as communists!” —See Anter, Hatiralarım, p. 217 (As translated into English by Iskender Ozden).

36. Lozanskii (1975) ‘The Way’ magazine to be published as a way of warning to ‘left-wing groups’ to rethink. He pointed out that all Kurds who were studying were viewed by the state as communists!” —See Anter, Hatiralarım, p. 217 (As translated into English by Iskender Ozden).


47. As quoted in Poulton, Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic, p. 153.


52. Anter notes, for instance, that “the leader of MIT, General Ziya Selisik, sent a letter ... in 1962 ... to Yon (‘The Way’) magazine to be published as a way of warning to ‘left-wing groups’ to rethink. He pointed out that all Kurds who were studying were viewed by the state as communists!” —See Anter, Hatiralarım, p. 217 (As translated into English by Iskender Ozden).


59. It should be noted here, however, that doubts have been expressed in some quarters concerning the accuracy of Eic’s claims. For a detailed discussion of this affair, refer to Anter, Hatiralarım, p. 210-216 (As translated into English by Iskender Ozden).


61. Who was CIA director between 1953 and 1961.

75. See Celik, Olum Makinasi: Turk Kontr-Gerillasi, p. 77 (As translated into English by Iskender Ozden).
78. As cited in Fernandes, Beyond the Paradox of Infinite Colours: Turkish State Terror, Tourism and the Kurdish Question, p. 69.
85. As cited in Fernandes, Beyond the Paradox of Infinite Colours: Turkish State Terror, Tourism and the Kurdish Question, p. 69.
86. As cited in Fernandes, Beyond the Paradox of Infinite Colours: Turkish State Terror, Tourism and the Kurdish Question, p. 69.
87. As cited in Fernandes, Beyond the Paradox of Infinite Colours: Turkish State Terror, Tourism and the Kurdish Question, p. 69.
92. See Fernandes, Beyond the Paradox of Infinite Colours: Turkish State Terror, Tourism and the Kurdish Question, p. 69.
93. As cited in Fernandes, Beyond the Paradox of Infinite Colours: Turkish State Terror, Tourism and the Kurdish Question, p. 69.
94. As cited in Fernandes, Beyond the Paradox of Infinite Colours: Turkish State Terror, Tourism and the Kurdish Question, p. 71.
96. A term used by Celik in Olum Makinasi: Turk Kontr-Gerillasi, p. 87 (As translated into English by Iskender Ozden).
100. See Herman and Brodhead, The Rise and Fall of the Bulgarian Connection, p. 62; Berberoglu, Turkey in Crisis, p. 126 and Berdabsis, S. (1979) ‘Right Wing Groups Behind Political Violence in Turkey’, MEIRI Reports, Number 57, May 1977, p. 17.
101. Berberoglu, Turkey in Crisis, p. 126.
103. Harris (1996), as quoted in Fernandes, Beyond the Paradox of Infinite Colours: Turkish State Terror, Tourism and the Kurdish Question, p. 69.
104. Berberoglu, Turkey in Crisis, p. 125.
105. Taken from a Harris (1990) quote, excerpted from Fernandes, Beyond the Paradox of Infinite Colours: Turkish State Terror, Tourism and the Kurdish Question, p. 69.
Identity and Interpretation in Literary Practice

Jim Ferguson

People involved in the practice of literary art are often asked about their sense of identity, their sense of place; do others interpret their work correctly? what is it about their background etc? What makes them want to be writers? These questions are sometimes shot through with marketing spin. Nevertheless, there is no denying that they are important. Whether the answers to the questions are of any use is debatable, but the process of trying to answer, of thinking about them, is certainly useful. What follows is a collage concerning these issues.

From Robert Burns to W. S. Graham: Beyonds, Roundabouts & Backwards

Whilst making some biographical notes on the Paisley poet Robert Tannahill (1774-1810) around 1995 I put the following in brackets—

It is time to forget about the unhelpful categorising of some writers as local, minor talents and others as wonderful exponents of universal truth.

This was around the time Tom Leonard’s Reports from the Present was published by Jonathan Cape. Leonard, in a superb series of 3 essays titled “Art as Encounter”, tackles issues relevant to the above head on.

There is an e.e. cummings poem which says—since feeling is first who pays attention to the yard again things will never wholly kiss you

What this meant to cummings himself I have no idea, nor can I remember which poem it comes from or in which book it appears. But to me it is saying: make the poem, and the poem will settle all the arguments put by Leonard. That is, if of course, if one first of all dispenses with a literalist interpretation based on classical Cartesian dualism. There is a political dimension to these lines, just as there is in Leonard’s essays; so, let me say something political:

Control of political institutions means control over language.

Control over language means control of political institutions.

In light of this, W. S. Graham’s question “What is the language we use for?” takes on an extra dimension, additional to being an exploration of the possibilities of communication.

I say this silence or, better, construct this space one is not at all sure of. Not all writing is comprehended on an ordinary human scale. This can help folk find their own sense of identity and give them the confidence to move further into the world beyond their locale, assured of the intrinsic value they have as human beings. As folk who can act to make the world the better (or worse) the way they want to.

In a certain sense, all the particular localities are different and the same simultaneously. Flannery O’Connor, Robert Burns, Robert Tannahill, all of us really, are quite honest about ourselves (or most ourselves?) when engaged closely with our immediate social surroundings.

In light of the note in bold at the start of this section, the Edinburgh-based writer Dillys Rose suggested I look at the work of the American writer Eudora Welty. This is what Welty said about the use of the local as a limiting term to pigeon-hole writers:

“Regional I think, is a careless term, as well as a condescending one, because what it does is fail to differentiate between the localized raw material of life and its outcome as art...”

It has no meaning for the insider who is doing the writing, because as far as he knows it is simply writing about life.

What is the matter with Franz Kafka?

I wonder if there is anything the matter precisely that is what is the matter if there is nothing the matter I wonder why, yet if there is something genuinely making me ill I am puzzled as to what to do. Always what ails me is my mind, I am mentally ill, the illness in my lungs is merely a manifestation of that affliction. It is immaterial that I am ill.

The gulf between those two worlds, the world of the dreaming mind where my imagination might release me from the physically dishevelled actual world, is sometimes preferable. To occupy the gulf itself is a pleasure; though this pleasure does not last as it impossible to maintain a long time at that place. The place I have titled the gulf. Only there am I released from the purgatory of the physical.

Who the fuck cares? Mad and obscure auld bastard that I am. Wondering where sides fall in and out. What does that mean? What does that?

How am I to know this for sure? There was, I assure you, a time when I wished that Louis would kill me. The strength of this feeling was not, however, always constant. Sometimes it vanished completely. Then I was forced to consider the reliability of my own thought processes. This, I imagine, is what mortals, live human beings all suffer from; and it is easy to understand how such is related to the general propensity of people to exercise free will. The indulgence of which may be seen as a certain source of satisfaction. Imbuing one with a feeling of wellbeing.

Again, as I musing on some problem, the case of another, another afflicted with lung disease and wishing to claim, quite correctly, their entitlement from my colleagues, The Insurance Institute, I wondered what was the matter with me.

I have never been afraid of asbestosis. I have failed myself and others in various different ways which in reality amount to nothing but a dark street, empty and lifeless. Of course I have spent time studying and I took a slight interest in the Gaelic language. It has surrounded me. I know it in a certain sense though it is not mine. I think it is not really to be possessed at all. I think not. Again and again I wondered what was wrong with me. What was the matter? Possibly cancer. Maybe weakness. General weakness of the spirit. Magnified debility. The inability to overcome.

Yet not so. Such was not in my public demeanour. Not in any obvious way. Yet if what is the matter is that there is nothing the matter then evidently there is something the matter. A sentence can take on its momentum. Go in a certain way you are not at all sure of. Not all writing is deliberate. Nor is every word put down with conscious intent. The fact is that a very many people know this and yet do not appear to be aware of it at the same time, if such is the case then fact it is not.

What is the fact of a thought?

Where did the small group of students go? They too studied law. Were vaguely acquainted with myself if the night was wet it might be that they simply had gone indoors. Entered into it. It cannot be possible to mistrust so greatly, that both the mental and physical realities of life are cast into doubt. Yet all language is unreliable; English, Gaelic, French, Czech, German, Yiddish, Hopi. All of it. Or perhaps none. And how to translate between all and none, or from one person to another, without a loss somehow of clarity. Is it true about my thought processes?

The fact that Kafka did not come from Germany but an émigré community in Prague possibly contributed to the originality of his voice. He was in a marginal community, and marginalised still more within that community because he was Jewish. Prague German was not an identical language to the standard German of the time.

Place, Peers & Tradition

Where does one place oneself? I don’t know; in a certain sense, that of geographical location, being in a country or a city is irrelevant but at the same time it is one of the most important facts in the life if it is called identity, personhood or sense of self. This contradiction arises for the following reasons—

While I love Glasgow and
Scotland I am always disappointed with where I live and happen to have been born. Whether this is a personal failing I do not know but it is associated with feeling a lack of freedom. There is an awful lot of creative energy, for all sorts of reasons, but mostly I think to do with social class, religion and negative attitudes towards others connected with sexism and race snobbery. This is misleading and judgmental attitudes towards stereotyping; poets are gay, writers are mad or eccentric, if you're not making much money why do you do it? Just a complete lack of understanding of what it is to be a literary artist. (Or any other practising artist.)

I used to think I was a poet, now I only think I occasionally, where tradition might offer comfort and a sense of fitting in for some people. I have never really felt this greatly. The only thing I know is that I love the sounds of peoples' voices. If there is any kind of "tradition" I feel an affinity for it is the idea of using language in a way that recognises words as sounds, as noises. Even from the page I want to feel the breath of a writer. Their cadences, the song of themselves, to paraphrase Whitman. My peers are interesting, as written, and the song of themselves, to paraphrase Whitman. My peers are interesting, as written by me, my peers are interesting, as written by me and others.

There is a sense of narrative distance—the narrator as God—the voice of the narrator being very detached from the story and the characters; the matter of fact style. One might say bears some relation to a Presbyterian theological outlook. There is also the possibility of a non-Christian fatalism; that the fate of the characters cannot be avoided, whether or not there is a God. It's just that the people in this story, especially the grandmother, happen to believe that there is. For the grandmother God might offer her a kind of redemption in this life by letting her live. But he does not. God is not always merciful. As The M Id said, "It's no real pleasure in life." But then The MIdt is clearly not a good man. He is a serial killer with a Mississippian complex.

This is the story of the brutal murder of six members of the one family; the grandmother, the mother and father and three children. The fact that they appear to end up dead through the actions of the grandmother and her cat may or not be significant. There may be some kind of symbolism involving the cat and the grandmother. If the grandmother had never taken the cat in the car then they would all still be alive. If the grandmother had had her own way in the first place they would have gone elsewhere and still be alive. However, the story unfolds with a relentless logic of its own, a kind of predetermined logic whereby the only thing that can happen is that this family ends up dead.

No doubt there are many possible interpretations of this story and its meaning etc. but I agree with Susan Sontag that by reducing a work of art to its contents and then interpreting that, one tames the work of art. Interpretation makes art manageable, comfortable. However, there is a different kind of interpretation—perhaps many—whereby one is moved into something of greater consequence and significance than the mere content of the work. It is that leap into the almost intangible space where art has a particular impact on individuals and changes them. Where a work moves one to a new place, a different place to that which existed before the encounter.

Another possible interpretation of A Good Man is Hard to Find is that the obnoxious children as their grandmother's nosy, yet harks back to a more innocent age. Eventually, the grandmother's naivete (goodness) is uncovered as a mere pretence for her own lack of faith. The choice of destination is sad for the grandmother due to the fond memories she has of Tennessee and Georgia, which she would like the spoiled children to have the chance to experience. Instead, they head off as a family for the promised land of Florida which they have visited before. En route, she remembers a house, just a few miles from the road they are driving down, she visits as a young woman. In order to persuade the family to indulge in her nostalgia and do the necessary detox she tells the children of a hidden panel where the family who lived there hid all their silver. Immediately the children insist on visiting the house. Driving down the dirt track towards the house the grandmother remembers that they aren't on the right road at all; this journey has taken a wrong turn.

It's completely wild that from this point until the end of the story, which is only a few pages each member of the family is murdered. It is here that Ms O'Connor reveals the fatalism of the journey, which is symbolic of the dichotomy between materialism and the kind of Christian Fundamentalism found in the American south. One is innocent.

Notes
3. ibid., p.29.
4. In this context there is the ever present problem of translation from one language to another, but I think this problem can be solved to some extent by reading different translators. Though it is always better if one can read an author in the original language.
5. There is also the contradiction between genetic inheritance and learned behaviour. Perhaps, in essence, another form of the argument about free will and predestination.
8. Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation.
Metaphysical pathos

William Clark

Care, Diligence and Skill
A handbook for the governing bodies of arts organisations
The Scottish Arts Council £5.00

Imagine a book which finally explains how to organise things in the arts, and that this has been compiled over a period of twenty years by the people at the very top of the Arts Council, with the assistance of legal and financial experts. Well its been around for some time: the fifth edition of Care, Diligence and Skill (CD&S) is to be reprinted and updated some time this year; although it is a surprise it was funded, given the present criteria. It is aimed at a tiny audience, which by its own reckoning will be only 18 hours each year. Although almost completely useless, the publication's history, the people behind it, how and why it came about—its underlying assumptions—reveals a very negative approach.

The 1986 version attacked 'non-incorporated organisations' inciting that these vital and diverse forms be discouraged, disenfranchised and branded as inherently useless: "It's short, the unincorporated association is not appropriate for any organisation proposing to undertake ventures of any significance, to handle large sums of money, to own or lease property or to assume legal commitments." This has been retained in all four editions and is one of the few points the book makes. No explanation or evidence is offered for the hypothesis. I would assume it is because individual cannot escape being held responsible for the consequences of their own actions.

Any serious revision should re-evaluate this generalisation in the light of the enduring success of artist-run projects (mostly unincorporated associations) and the spectacular collapse (and expensive bail-out and quasi-legal swindling of creditors) of numerous thoroughly incorporated organisations throughout the UK during the '80s and '90s.

In the arts things have to start somewhere, and they tend to start small. This book imagines that artwork comes from nowhere. To offer a self-fulfilling prophecy where all artist-run projects are deemed to be poor purely through their evidence is poor leadership. Historically this dogma inhibited or prevented the funding of artist-run projects at a crucial point in their development. Suspicions of ignorance or worse are aroused when what is presented as a positive guide for arts organisations, seems better described as a negative document prescribing what is allowed. In this review I will show that its real aims are to limit and exclude and that they are ideologically flawed.

**Bored of Directors**

So who should be running arts organisations? The answer given in CD&S is an illiberal, tortuous, encochamento of dogma:

"First and foremost a board needs one or more members with professional knowledge of the relevant art form. Of equal importance is having a person with a knowledge of finance, banking, accounts and law. A business executive...may be valuable." [emphasis added]

They may also run off the money. But not all people with business acumen are untrustworthy. Similarly, the SAC failed to realise that not all unincorporated organisation are "not appropriate," simply because they are unyielding to appropriation. People do not believe that promises of commercial exploitation will lead to the Big Rock Candy Mountain. Artist-run projects have the right not to act as a wholesale proprietor for certain standards of conformity and ownership as dictated by finance, banking and business executives. No one holds these kinds of jobs up as paragons of virtue anymore anyway. The many ways artists have organised themselves (at no great expense to the tax payer) is written out of this handbook because they haven't got a clue about what actually took place.

CD&S' advice on professionalism is amateurish. It comes from a period when arts funding (by that I mean actually funding art) was unbalanced and conditioned by obsessive propaganda that the social value of art should be weighed to contractual versions of the 'values of the marketplace'. A very politicised period which pretended not to be.

The proud chairman of the SAC when CD&S first emerged was the economist Sir Alan Peacock, and at the time a trustee of the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA); eventually joining its advisory council in '91, when questions were asked in the House of Commons concerning its status and activities. These aimed to establish that it was covertly a political organisation, and thus unworthy of its charitable status. An allegation often levelled at small misunderstood organisations.

The economics or 'standards' propounded by the IEA, which were openly taken up by the Tory government in '82, were, amongst others: "...more denationalisation of industry; an extension of private medicine; higher education vouchers...; and more anti-union legislation."1 The formal political manifestation of the "nominally independent" IEA was the Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph led, Centre for Policy Studies (CPS):

- "Both were in the propaganda business. Both have offices in relatively unassuming private houses in SW1."2
- The CPS concentrated on the Universities, the IEA on Fleet Street and the Sir Alan was appointed by the government, to concentrate on the SAC.

Founded in the '50s by Lord Ralph Harris, the IEA was the first organisation in the UK to publish Milton Friedman's monetarist economics. It gets weirder. Investigative journalists say it later took an active part in the cabals which covertly drove the conservative party rightwards in the 70s, Arthur Seldon, deputy for Lord Harris, wrote a book with the notoriouls M16 operative, Brian Crozer. Lord Harris himself shared a platform with Crozer and John Gouriet of the Freedom Studies (CPS):

- "Both were in the propaganda business. Both have offices in relatively unassuming private houses in SW1."2
- The CPS concentrated on the Universities, the IEA on Fleet Street and the Sir Alan was appointed by the government, to concentrate on the SAC.

"Into its uses are packed a number of deeply felt assumptions about the relationship between Art and power. 'Excellence' reverberates with that bourgeois illusion of impartiality while striking at the heart at how the arts are (and can be) funded and organised. Arts as public policy of the period tried to develop forms of privatisation. The Arts Council was perceived as a body, stemming from the post-war creation of the 'welfare state,' which came under such assault (through privatisation) by the Tory party; itself guided by the IEA."

These drives encouraged the assumption that business is somehow apolitical. For instance: if we adopt the outline given in CD&S, it follows that an exhibition sponsored by Shell and ran by an organisation which contains executives from Shell, is the best suited to promote the work of radical Nigerian writers whose work's political activities of Shell in Nigeria.8 One can view the tendencies inherent in independent or indigenous or artist-run projects as running counter to these notions because they lack faith in what provisions they make for cultural freedom.

**Going down under**

CD&S asserts itself that it was based on an Australian book written by Timothy Pascoe in 1979. His time with the Australian Arts Council is viewed as a reactionary response to media attacks on spending on the arts, which began as a minor aspect of the campaign which saw the Whitlam Labor Government peremptorily dismissed in '75. In politics a soft targets get easy answers. The new government took up its (highly publicised attitude of) "financial accountability" towards the arts, came at a time of newspaper headlines inveighing against "subsidised scribblers" similar to the orchestrated outcry over the Tate's 'piles of bricks' in the UK. When the 1983 Labor Government re-took office (under Bob Hawke) it did not replace Whitlam's largest; keeping to the reactionary "financial accountability" position on the arts, similarly similar to the arts paranoia being run now by the UK Labour party. The Australian experience is a useful mirror of our own because it ran ahead during the ugly crisis of UK Conservative control. "By now the business men and women were moving in and meeting government on its own terms. The Australian Ballet went on strike over relations with management. In 1982 Timothy Pascoe, arts business adviser and former director of the Liberal Party, became executive chairman and set about 'restructuring the Council'."

In 1983, Pascoe's "Excellence isn't Always", pre-tentiously outlined the 'negative effects' of the past government's arts doctrine, as a preamble to justify cuts and the positive effects of adherence to the new doctrine (potential funding). Tim Rowe, a writer on Australian arts, in his book *Arguing the Arts* puts forward Pascoe's case: "He proposed that the Council formulate a clearer definition of excellence, that it include innovation more prominently in its criteria of the excellent and that it limit the number and value of subsidies and programs relating to excellence."9

The function of Pascoe's writing was not as a statement of Council policy. It was to insinuate a new persistent rhetoric to limit and exclude what arts organisations could do if they expected their bread to be buttered. Some social Darwinism has just popped into existence. According to Rowe: "Into its uses are packed a number of deeply felt assumptions about the relationship between Art and power. 'Excellence' reverberates with that bourgeois utopianism in which money and political power are politely separated from and subordinated to the higher
things of life, such as Art. Excellence makes another implicit and equally utopian appeal to its users; it implies the user has an authority to make distinctions of quality and intelligence and to have those distinctions accepted as authoritative throughout the nation. It implies a kind of sovereignty of good taste. Excellence is a language of the powerful, which effaces the social basis of that power."

Katharine Brisbane’s “The Arts and the Pre-emptive Buckle” provides further inside assessment of Pascoe’s worth. An original member of the Australian Council, writing in 1989, she speaks critically about the Faustian bargain whereby the larger organisations had become the captives of their sponsors and subscribers, more “monocultural” and regressive than they were in the ’50s and ’60s.

She identifies Pascoe’s pursuit of bureaucratically contrived forms of ‘excellence’ in others, as a root problem. The authors of CD&S viewed his work uncritically as the basis for a solution. Brisbane categorised the practical out-working of Pascoe’s policies as a period where the growth and career of the artist was left out of the equation, with their working conditions suggesting that they were seen as no more than “pabulum for production values”. She criticises those who have acquired to the climate of dependence, bound by guidelines which set at a premium the young, the new and the correct while discounting everyone else in the name of ‘indulgence’.

“The ABC’s John Cleary has coined a phrase to describe this condition. He calls it The Pre-emptive Buckle. The occasion was a discussion with the Times in London about the rise of gambling addiction in Victoria and his perception that the charities now dealing with the problem had earlier failed to oppose government supported gambling for fear of losing their subsidies. It was, said Cleary, a pre-emptive buckle. I believe that 30 years of subsidy has brought about a similar perception that the charities now dealing with the rise of gambling addiction in Victoria and his mission.”

Cleary was, said Pascoe, a “pre-emptive buckle. I believe that 30 years of subsidy has brought about a similar perception that the charities now dealing with the rise of gambling addiction in Victoria and his mission.”

In Scotland, back in ’86, the then chairman of the SAC, little Timothy Mason (who had worked for the Australian Arts Council from 77 to 80) and his acquaintance Paul Pia, who worked next door to the SAC’s Charlotte Square offices, took Pascoe’s other work “Strengthening the Covenant of arts organisations” and used it as the basis for CD&S.14

Paul Pia puts pay to the Biblical warning that “no man can have many masters”. His interest in the SAC stems from his belief that it is actually able to take the advice of its legal advisor? ‘The reality of the “bitter inheritance” identified by Harbottle is —yes, the situation whereby the same people (DEmos being the worst and himself included) advise, administrate and run arts organisations for their own financial gain—but also it is the effect it has on the lives of those who choose to be artists. The criminal waste of lost opportunities. With his previous chairmanship of the ICA, Harbottle is as guilty as anyone here.”

How can experience be brought to bear on an organisation which does not want to hear it? Harbottle’s ‘new structures’ will not emerge from feeble publications such as CD&S, which he endorses, but which deliberately exclude and ignore. The meagre legal advice given in CD&S is that you should ‘seek advice’. One also wonders why in the light of his criticism the firm have let their company name endorse bathetic statements like this:

“Lobbying for public grants and donation. A board that falls to lobby vigourously for grants and donations from public bodies is leaving its organisation at a competitive disadvantage relative to other arts organisations and other community projects. It is inappropriate to explore here the intricacies of lobbying. However, any board that is unaware of how to go about it should quickly seek a board member who does.”

No one expects the Spanish Inquisition

And this is the problem with criticising this book—it may be the product of the best minds we have had running things in Scotland: but it is almost impossible to take seriously. The frightening thing is that CD&S (unchanged for decades) is also touted in a SAC Report on financial monitoring as one of the three things ‘offered to assist the four Scottish national companies who have merged their administration—from future (further) collapse:

“To assist boards, SAC funds a development programme, produces a publication to assist new board members and trustees to understand their responsibilities and duties, and encourages those with an interest in the arts to become board members. Advice on the range of skills represented on a board which an arts organisation is likely to find beneficial in managing its affairs is also provided.”

Of course sound business sense these days can mean sucking most of your employees and getting things done cheaper, preferably in places where you can get away with murder. But even the consultants for the above report observed an anarchy which undermines the impractical nature of CD&S’s ‘long-term advocacy of simulating an idealised business structure predicated on the profit motive’.

“Companies supported by SAC are encouraged to accumulate reserves and provisions, (General Conditions of Grant), because of the lack of any initial capital sum it is extremely difficult for any arts organisation, which is effectively prohibited from generating profit to use any of its charitable aims, to create sufficient contingency against future losses or to make further investment.”

Fundamental criticisms of the Arts Council also point to the organisational secrecy and unaccountability. Although personal envy motivated the
exchange, this surfaced in the Scottish Executive’s questioning of the present chair of the SAC at Select Committee on 16/12/97. Here the chairman is honest enough to state that a genuine appeals procedure rather than the present sham would get in the way of how the SAC does things and the government’s immutable plans for the arts:

“[Mr McAllion] What kind of appeals procedure is it that does not even allow the appellant to be present when a decision about them is being taken? This appeals procedure which you operate is honestly unparalleled throughout the whole of government in this country. It would not be tolerated in any other area of government. (Mr Linklater) If you do not mind me saying so, I think you are overstating it. [Mr McAllion] Except the police. Maybe the police would be a parallel but nobody else. (Mr Linklater) I would like to make this central point which I think goes to the heart of what you were saying. If every time The Arts Council either withdrew a grant, withheld a grant, or decided that a revenue funded grant should not be renewed, if every time we took that decision—and we take that kind of decision the whole time, it is part of our duty and our job—then an organisation disagreed with that (and of course they disagree, they all disagree with it, I know of no arts organisation that has willingly said, “Thank you for taking away our grant, we are delighted you took that decision” they all oppose it naturally) and you then said that each of those decisions should be a matter for appeal and that an outside independent body should then rule on it, we might as well give up our strategy altogether.”

That refers to the old strategy, not the present one, or the new one. Later exchanges reveal that the ideas behind the present restructuring of the SAC were pre-emptive of whatever restructuring the new Scottish Executive would desire.

Care Diligence & Fascism

The Arts Council struggles with the difficult pre-encounter of implementing a government arts policy which the government themselves stated should be judged on their performance directly running the New Millennium Experience Company. I doubt very much that Timothy Mason, the director of the Museums and Galleries Commission—which advises rich people on tax avoidance—who left when it was ‘restructured’ in 2000 (to be run by Lloyd Grossman), will be passing out copies of his CD&S to help Museum directors with their present difficulties. According to an article in the Evening Standard 30/12/00 the folly of government ‘control’ will continue on grander scale. They had been leaked a confidential working paper which said that:

“...the Prime Minister should appoint the chairman [sic] of such institutions as the National Gallery, the British Museum, the Science and Natural History Museums and the National Portrait Gallery. Under the proposals, the Culture Secretary would appoint their trustees rather than allowing them to be elected by their own boards. The proposals would have represented a huge concentration of political patronage—the director of one major institution described the original circular as “an absolutely straightforward attempt by central government to control what have until now been independent bodies, and are successful and flourishing because they have always been independent...As fascists have always done, this government is using tidiness as the argument. It is a very totalitarian notion of having power in the centre. It is extremely sinister that they are putting this forward as primary legislation with which they could then do what they wish, and that they are not allowing this consultation document to be available publicly. The conference of National Museum Directors has unanimously voted for it to be made public. The department has refused.”

After promising to abandon the ideas and lying to the Directors to shut them up, the Culture Secretary started up the plan again. A Guardian report (23/12/00) states that Chris Smith will:

“take away the power of their trustees to elect their own chairperson without consulting the government...”

The latest twist has Smith lying to them again and the process being done through the back door. The good old system of government appointees, political patronage is not discussed in CD&S.

Pluralism and relations of production

Ultimately government interference, all the criteria and control, makes people reluctant to be honestly creative. It is impersonal. It kills real art, real freedom of expression of the reality of our lives; it makes people frightened to be creative.

CD&S perpetuates hierarchical structures in the arts. It is predicated on the assumption that a form of pluralism exists in the arts at best the book is beraeus and anarcho-racist. Pluralism holds that power is distributed between labour, management and capital (and sometimes customers and clients) and that there is no coercion. A handy illusion which ignores social relations and the exercise of authority.

In art organisations pluralism is rhetorical, while groups and interests dominate agendas behind the scenes. The display of art is thought to advocate liberalism in itself, while the organisational structure (at times secretly) reflects more authoritarian principles the higher one looks. Looking at the arts generally, pluralism is used to impute impartially upon a hierarchically co-ordinated social organisation which is far from impartial. It is not that pluralism is suppressed, pluralism is itself an illusion.

In CD&S all arts policy and practice is supposed to find expression in one inaccurately defined, idealised form of organisation. It is silent on the effect of this, silent on its roots and silent on what forces impinged upon it. It censors and censures awareness of different forms of co-operative or collective structures, democratic structures, which are discussed in detail in the government’s immutable plans for the arts. SAC were pre-emptive of whatever restructuring the new Scottish Executive would desire.

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a set of dominant values which stigmatisate and are of uncertain value. It puts forwards an imaginary total institution which can be defined as a number of like-situated individuals cut off from wider society leading the reader towards a closed administered existence. How many arts organisation in the UK never mind Scotland have both paid ”legal advisers” and ”company secretaries.” Chief executives (which the book states should not be someone with any knowledge of the arts) should be people with ”outstanding political and administrative skill.” Then the book notes that ”many” (in fact it is most) organisations cannot offer enough money to ”attract adequate talent—particularly for administration.” What does that imply? Is that not something of an insult to practically every arts organisation?

It is only recently that paintings and sculptures became more than commissioned tableaus of government ideology and military conquest. Today, types of government sanction and subsidy, how these are administered and with what bias, have encouraged a gallery system highly ramified in approach and running parallel to (and becoming little more than) private dealerships—an organisational form which itself has remained largely unchanged for the last 100 years.

A hierarchy of (in descending order): Museum, Modern museum, Contemporary Exhibition Space and then Independent Exhibition Space has evolved to represent a traditional cycle of: hostility, familiarisation, acceptance and absorption. The lower end of this circulation is in many general respects becoming disciplined to reflect and confirm the cultural agenda proscribed by interpretations of aspects of government, private sector interest groups and the cultural ”gatekeepers” of the day. Unfortunately they are all bickering amongst themselves. Yes, they lack a handbook.

Bureaucracies can embody vicious circles of decreasing efficiency, groups of colleagues often attempt to maximise their freedom of action by paying lip-service to the rules but in reality bending them when they can. That has been how we have all got by. Sociologists say limited information is available to decision-makers regarding alternatives and consequences. This includes subordinates withholding or distorting information so that senior managers do not know exactly what is going on. Senior managers know this so they create more rules to regulate what goes on below them. Hi ho.

But what is needed are chances for those of us who choose to inhabit these institutions and who are only interested in the money to adapt and modify formal systems of bureaucratic surveillance. The tactics of bypassing and altering the forces, the modes, the relations of production won’t be found in a handbook. The subject of CD&S’ helpful hints will be utterly unpersuasive if it says it is about the arts but it offers no assistance to artists and then excludes and ignores the fact that together artists have organised better exhibition and funded organisations packed with administrators and arts council appointees.

Many artistic ’movements’ seem to start as groups of friends (and end as groups of enemies), some never grow beyond that. The majority of 20th century artistic groups conform to this. So would Zurich Dada have benefited if it had become Dada Ltd? Should Apollinaire have went to Lady Dada? Should Zurich Dada have benefited if it had Auguste Rodin as a leader? Should the Dada enterprise have redefined itself?

Notes
2. Ibid. Private Eye 1017 states that the CPS were the architects of the privatisation of pensions and the swindling of millions by those companies which supported and financed the CPS.

3. For an overview of the complexities of the period see Smeal by Stephen Dorril & Robin Ramsay, 4th Estate, 1991, page 224 - 228. For the reference to Lord Harris see Free Agent by Brian Crozier, Harper Collins, 1993, page 122. Peacock himself has connections with the intelligence services through his tenure as an executive director of the Economist Intelligence Unit from ’77 to ’84, which according to Crozier and other authors had an extremely intimate relationship with MI6.

4. Sunday Times 19/2/95.
5. Financial Times 9/1/95.
6. Financial Times 9/1/95. Hopefully it can be seen from this that the IEA have a wide area of interest. Peacock himself has written on ”The Composer in the Market place” (1975), “Public expenditure and government growth” (1985) and “Corporate take-overs and the public interest” (1991).

8. CD&S was initially sponsored by IBM UK Holdings PLC, the board of which reads like a who’s who of the British State: including, Sir Edwin Nixon (Nat West Bank), Sir Robert Balf (Legal & General), Sir Adrian Cadbury (Bank of England), Lord Chalfont (VSEL), Lord Hunt of Tannworth (BNP, Prudential Corporation), Sir John Kingman (SmithKline Beecham) and Sir Evelyn de Rothschild (N.M. Rothschilds & Sons). Ironically enough IBM threw out their old management practices of vertical integration, when the company lost millions in the early nineties. No business sponsorship has been found for the latest reprint.

11. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. http://www.earthwatch.org/australiaa/nmwth.html. Pascoe—believe—is now a supporter of the Australian Earthwatch Institute; Earthwatch’s ”unique role in educating the public” and ”mak[ing] a significant contribution to the debate on sustainable development in Australia” is in partnership with Rio Tinto Zinc and models deceptive propagandistic co-operation between the corporate sector and the NGO sector. In 1999, this formed into a partnership with Rio Tinto globally. It also engages in partnerships between the Shell Foundation and DuPont amongst many other corporate funders. Cynics (and the relatives of those who died) will wonder why global land rapists and polluters on the scale of RTZ and Shell indulge organisation like the Earthwatch Institute. Is it to put a PR puff on things such as RTZ’s and the Oil companies infamous involvement in Indonesia during probably the worst totalitarian regime the region has seen?

19. Ibid.
Ian Brotherhood
Tales of The Great Unwashed

Starts out with a wee trail of what looks like torn paper and glass shards at the bay window. It's only seven in the morning but I'm up, as usual, to get Mary roused and ready for school. This is Mary's away three months past, moved in with that lad Peety. He's a trainee draughtsman, his parents are both lecturers in the college. He seems like a nice lad right enough, Bastard.

So at first you would think this is like the trail of a snail or a slug, a sort of shiny thick line, with a wee roundish patch where the thing has turned about to go home. But the living-room is one-up, and the pointing got done year before last, so how they fellas is getting in here I don't know. I bend down and look, no, it's not really a snail-trail, but a scatter of broken glass, tiny pieces flattened into the carpet. The carpet is damp right enough, and if I'm not mistaken there's a smell too, a smell like fungus.

I don't drink upstairs. Never have. She didn't like it, so I never did. No-one else uses this room. Mary bawdy used it with having her own belly and that, so I can't figure it at all, and it bothers me the whole day.

That night is Christmas Eve, and The Great Unwashed will be closed tomorrow, so it's a late one with some of the lads. It wasn't the busiest of nights, but turned over a few good bob right enough, so no harm treating Doghead, Halfpint and Elbow to a few on the house. Elbow is maudlin and girny, whining about missed chances and lost loves. Halfpint tries to throw in the occasional note of optimism, listing off his existing and imminent grandchild and great-grandchildren with impressive detail. Only Doghead remains silent, content to savour the free drink in certain knowledge that it will not come from my direction for at least another year. So I ask you anyway? Jack? says Halfpint, having exhausted all known statistics relating to his family and desperate not to allow Elbow another shot on the time remaining.

I shrug, swallow the pale remnants of the carpet, then turn to pour another. My head is filled with the fusty drink. The carpet is damp right enough, and if I'm not mistaken there's a smell too, a smell like fungus.

An hour passes. The Great Unwashed, when quiet and dark, creeps and moans, as if recovering from the demands made of it by regular custom. The floorboards and furniture stretch and breathe—with the heating off, they get some peace. But I don't dally in the bar. All is clean, all shutters shut, all taps turned off. I need a snifter to calm the shakes, but prefer to take it upstairs, in that room. A spell of sorts has been broken.

Drunk was taken there last night, and no-one to voice objection, so I'll drink there again. Now. Elbow looks to be asleep. Behind me, the combined noises coming from Halfpint and Doghead form a sound somewhere between a snore and a death rattle. It seems I am alone. The little man hears. I have to crane forward to see his face.

There's nothing left for me now, nothing at all, and even if my numbers come up, what would I do now but give Elbow, Doghead, Mary, split a stick with the lads, and even then, what's to do with whatever's left? No. It's all over. I would have had the imagination when young, maybe, if I would have had the gall, maybe. But no. It's been alright. Nothing more than that. It's been alright, and now it's time to start making my way for the exit.

They stay silent. Halfpint nods. Elbow's chin is vibrating, eyes moist. Doghead stares at his glass, oblivious to it all. I've made them even more depressed. I turn, pour another for myself only, then to set the stick on the carpet up the living room, how I can't figure it. It's meant to be a joke, a lightener, but Elbow sparks up, soberish and keen, and asks for more detail. His questions confuse and irk, so I grab a bottle of Black Bush from the garret and beckon them follow me upstairs.

I'm tailing you Jack, says Elbow as he gets back up from the carpet at the window, it's the wee folk.

The bottle is empty. Doghead has collapsed into the sofa, but his pint remains lodged between his knees, the whisky tumbler settled neatly at the bottom of the larger glass. Halfpint stares out the window, focusing on the distant spot through the flutestick. It is so high, so fine, that it is a slow, deliberate shift which wants but he does not hear or does not want to, and then, as he slumps and lowers the stick to hang limp between his legs, his face becomes so empty that I almost want to pick him up and comfort him. But before I can even unbrine my fingers he has gone back behind the curtain, and when I next open my eyes it is with darkest blue sky, almost seven in the morning, and I get up, as always, to ready Mary for school.

Mary can't come to the phone, but yes, he'll call me. I close my own eyes, for what seems an instant, and they'll be staying, even for the Bells.

Halfpint won't take my call—Jaeje says he got back awful late and made some noises, then she found him pissing in the wardrobe and he's been in bed ever since. Then she hangs up on me. Doghead is likewise unavailable, not having reported home at all—Sippy Pat is just about to leave to search for him. And when I call Elbow it is his daughter who answers—yes, he's in, no, he can't come to the phone, but yes, he'll call me right back.

An hour passes. The Great Unwashed, when quiet and dark, creeps and moans, as if recovering from the demands made of it by regular custom. The floorboards and furniture stretch and breathe—with the heating off, they get some peace. But I don't dally in the bar. All is clean, all shutters shut, all taps turned off. I need a snifter to calm the shakes, but prefer to take it upstairs, in that room. A spell of sorts has been broken. Drink was taken there last night, and no-one to voice objection, so I'll drink there again. Now. Mary called early to say Happy Christmas, and she'll be up to see me as soon as they get back from London. Her friends down there who'll put them up, and they'll be staying, even for the Bells. She knows I'm disgusted and knows I know she knows it, but they're not the steal exchange adult nickles and I hold my tongue. Fair do's.

But sitting in this chilly room now is defiance. I defy the dark-skinned ghost to appear again!
defy the disappearance of friends who were so happy to join my company only hours ago, when the stick, was free of charge and no bells would ring them off the premises. I defy the losses I have suffered in this life. I’m still here, in my pub, drinking good whisky honestly earned, at a time of year when others of my age are running hither and yon at the command of upstart youngsters. This is a free shop. Mine is a free life. I owe no-one. I will continue. I will...

When I snap awake, he is standing between my knees, his face mangled with anger.

You are Jack! he shouts, and I feel the sudden shock of liquid on my thigh as my tumbler slips, but I cannot move my eyes from his.

Mister Doohihan, I will do this job, a very big job for you. I will go when I do it, and you will be thanking Danda when he is gone. If there is any-one who does not know what my job is, and why I do it, let him drink two pints of bad palm wine and smoke a scrawny white spider, three figures no bigger than my thumb face me. They are dressed in grey, and then accepts a dram. I replenish mine. All is well. Bobby stares at me as if I have lost it, but then he knows now what to do about it all. He'll be with me before midnight. I get back in the armchair, stare at the spot where the trio had been performing, and knot my fingers to stop them reaching for the Bushmills. Bobby is good to his word, and I’ve a generous measure down my neck between his ringing the bell and me opening the door to him. He raises a stern and open palm when I lift the steel lid from the pot.

Elbow is apologetic and enthusiastic in equal measure. He double-checked with his Aunt, and yes, she agrees that it’s likely the wee people. Yes, he’ll check out Danda in the books, and yes, he knows now what to do about it all. I’ll be back before then, but since you’ve been here they’ve been building up. You could have all sorts in the stonework, in the cellar, in the attic. There’s nowhere they can’t call home, so we’d best be about it and get the decks cleared.

Where did he come from? I ask then, and Elbow shakes his head, grim faced but loving it. Someone put him in here, but it’s you wants him out. That’s why he’s asking you. I can’t see him, so he’s asking you to help him get out.

Me? I pour another one and very much want to cry. I tell Elbow about the Bee Gees being behind the skirting, at the base of an old Calor gas heater, anywhere there’s a wee bit extra heat. They like the warmth.

Sometimes they go under the sink if there’s hot water on the go a lot, but they can make a right mess of the pipework with them teeth. Aye, you’re best rid of them right enough.

And then it all happens. Danda appears, arms flailing, from behind Elbow’s chair. I steady myself, Bobby notices my face, follows my stare, but registers nothing.

He’s back, I say, and Elbow drags the heavy steel lid from the pot.

Danda runs for the door, and I follow, Bobby close behind with the pot swinging from one arm, the lid from the other. Danda halts on the landing, checks back to see how close we are, then starts banging with open palms on the door of the Glory Hole, a long thin room crammed with all manner of shite accumulated these past two decades.

Elbow yells in here now! shouts Danda, so I haul the door open, and in we go.

Suitcases crammed with old photo albums and dictionaries, boxes of Mary’s schoolbooks and jotters, three sets of golf clubs Doghead turned up with one night, a primitive television set, the top half of a standard lamp that used to have pride of place in the Snug, all are thrown out onto the landing before Danda screams and points his flutestick—right there at the base of an old Calor gas heater, arms wide in panic, his feet flitting with fear, there is the middle of the brothers, forget his name...

That one, I assure him, and lower the creature into the giant pot. Elbow slides the lid back over as I strain to see where Danda has now gone. Half an hour later, we have them. The oldest one, with the sandy hair, he made a decent fist of it and tried to bite as I lifted him, but the other one came quietly enough, no doubt pining
for his siblings. But Danda isn’t done—he climbs on, over the stacked boxes, to a recess of the hole which has not been visited for many years. These are Mary’s baby clothes and toys, carefully newspapered, preserved for her adulthood, for her own children. I’m tugging, too, and I try to get roughly in the search. My back is glowing with pain, sweat running like tears as I haul the boxes aside, following the angle of Danda’s flute. A crone of her Mum’s records and a plug of my own lined end as well, but once that’s out the road you can see a small shape shivering, the wee head buried into its belly, and when I lift it up it moans low and mean, like a scared cat. It is no bigger than a newborn kitten as well, and I don’t much like the feel of it, cold and grimy as it is, but when I put it into the pot and it slides down the cusp of the steel base to settle against the curved forms of the unprotesting Bee Gees, it uncurls itself and leaps up towards the rim of the pot with a despairing howl, eyes wide, teeth bared. Even it is familiar. Danda comes running over the stacked boxes, to a recess of the hole, happy to partake of the Festive Broth. It’s a simple and tried-and-true outfit, Johnny and the Self Abusers, frilly Prince with a despairing howl, eyes wide, teeth bared. Even it is familiar. Danda comes running over the stacked boxes, to a recess of the hole, happy to partake of the Festive Broth. It’s a simple and tried-and-true outfit, Johnny and the Self Abusers, frilly Prince—this creature is much bigger than all the others, and when I make out who it is I know I shouldn’t be surprised. It’s a substantial Rod Stewart, perhaps sizes with Danda, but mean and drunk and still traces of acne about him. It’s a young one, fit and ready to scrap. Elbow looks at me, unknowing, but trusting still. I don’t fancy tackling the thing. But Danda has the stick to his lips, and then, as soft and high as human ear can hear, the strains of Sailing flow about the lounge. It was ever a favourite of Mary as well as her Mum. Danda even crouches as he plays, intent on the tune as the shaking Rod calms, then lends his world-weary voice to the tune. Danda nods in approval. Even Sharif’s protests are quieted as the second verse ends, and by the time the final lament is mid-way, even I can see that Stewart is spent, chest heaving, tears streaming, and he is hoisted into the pot with no great protest to join the swaying chorus of little people. It is as happy an ending as could be hoped for. When we open again for Boxing Day, all are happy to partake of the Festive Broth. It’s a simple and tried and true outfit, with a French bread roll on the side and a wee red napkin, it’s a nice present to all the regulars and newcomers alike. It’s all done by tea-time, and I make a point of washing the pot myself.

It wasn’t pleasant filling the thing with the water, and even less pleasant having to hold the vastardling lid down as they made their final protests. But as Elbow’s Aunt told him, it’s the only way to be sure. Only Danda was happy to climb in with the others.

If any man does not like his life, let him try the life of another and see how he likes it! Now I can taste real palm wine again! We put another smaller pot of water on top to seal it, then waited, and it was another half bottle was done by the time the steam pulsed the end and we could go to the lounge to watch the box and try to start to forget it all. Some folk leave their dreams behind them, despite them, traces that won’t be killed when events swamp. Mary must have done that, in her young way, as her mother did in hers. And mine were there too, as well as those of the many folk who lived and died here before us.

I suppose I cheated. Before Danda had finished the vodka he claimed to remind him of his beloved palm wine, and before Elbow had got back from the bog, I got on the oven glove, slid the lid over, and drew out the young Tina. She kicked, I let her go. She scrambled across the worktop and behind the microwave before I even had the lid back in place. Sometimes now, when the place is quiet, when rain isn’t lashing and wind isn’t battering and seagulls aren’t screaming their get-up calls, on nights when I’m wondering about Mary and her Mum and all the what-ifs and the maybes and the what-to-nows, sometimes I catch a snatch of Nutbush from somewhere next door, in that front room, and I allow my uncovered Rottenbows to tap along.
The public (including artists) are not allowed to interject at the Scottish Arts Council's public meetings. They are not allowed to say anything at all. It is an Athenian Democracy but everyone must be gagged. Clearly, going through the motions for the media and Scottish Executives is not an embrace of public scrutiny. Despite harassing everyone else for ever larger audience figures, the SAC has failed to motivate any public attendance for these muted shows. Yet, in spite of their stiltedness, insights into the SAC's shadowing of Cultural Policy and indications of subsequent fads can be gathered there, for those who attend. The question still has to be asked, is this the state of affairs everyone wants?

In contrast, recent artist-run events in Scotland have encouraged debate on a wide range of issues affecting artists. Events such as the series of panel discussions accompanying PLAN XIV (an artist-curated event of Portuguese contemporary art and music at venues across Glasgow) and I Love Alternative Spaces (organised by the artist-led Collective Gallery in Edinburgh). To their benefit, these events avoided the trite parading of supposed progressive artist-run projects. Instead the participants took up the task of exploring the socio-economic conditions in which artists live and work far from ‘moaning and whining’. These events had an air of urgency about them.

Drawing from these events and a bin-full of Cultural Policy material, this article is an attempt to position current influences on artists and artist-run projects to question the authenticity of artists’ alleged ‘indepen-
dent’ status, and to speculate on the wider implications by the ‘artist-led’ Collective Gallery in Edinburgh). To their benefit, these events avoided the trite parading of sup-
posedly progressive artist-run projects. Instead the par-
ticipants took up the task of exploring the socio-economic conditions in which artists live and work far from ‘moaning and whining’. These events had an air of urgency about them. The free Market is compulsory

**Domestication**

The received wisdom amongst artists is of the vitality and independence of the Contemporary Visual Arts in Scotland, that they are “self-sustain-
ing.” In contradiction to this asserted potency, another all too common assertion (often in the same breath) is that contemporary artists’ net-
works in Scotland are lacking “a market.”

While certain aspects of the visual arts’ infra-
structure in Scotland has been publicly funded by the Scottish Arts Council’s Visual Arts Department—which is not to claim a democracy of allocation—there is no domestic private dealer-
system which ultimately supports this type of work. Yet the public funding mechanisms have functioned in absence of this dealership, support-
ing a concept of work that is fundamentally premised on its circulation as a unique commodity and, in tandem with the art schools, abetted in that it either challenges or supports the dominant myths a culture calls ‘truths’, it participates in that it either challenges or supports the domi-

**Malignant benevolence**

But public funding is not only to legislate as a research-and-development instrument for the ben-
efit of an allegedly remote market, The Visual Arts Department at the SAC also have the task of coercing artists and arts organisations to conjure both a domestic and international market for the purpose of gradually superseding aspects of the SAC’s own role. A surrogate commercial sphere will be created, therefore marketisation is neces-
sary and will be instilled through a managerial discourse imposed on the public sector.

The Visual Arts Department needs no help in condemning its own existence, and more broadly that of the SACs—in campaigning for the market explo-
ation of culture it (mis)aligns freedom of expression with the ‘free’ market. It contrasts the private sector as a disinterested unrestricted space where ‘anything goes’, against public money’s rationed resources and creatively prohibi-
tive criteria. Sadly, private finance does not work that way. It is conservatively speculative. Seeking to appeal to the largest common denominator: it reinforces orthodoxy. Far from being innovative it is self-replicating in mimicking tried-and-tested formulae for success. If the Visual Arts Department look to commercial qualities as prin-
ciple indicators of worth, they will cease to fund ‘cultural activity’ that is distinguishable from a broader marketisation and circulation of products already in existence.

The public funding system has helped sustain (if not wholly understood) the social world of the economy of the contemporary visual arts—other than supporting an infrastructure which tackles deficiencies in the relations of production and enables access to the means of production and dis-
tribution. Such systems of exchange/private capital (in the form of taxes) to offset disproportionate distri-
bution of opportunity and representation. But the system has been given over to enhancing concen-
trations of wealth and their influence.

Commercial sponsorship often seeks to associ-
ate with the ‘social world’ aspect of conspicuous consumption, which is taken to be as equally important as any capacity for production—the cliché: “you don’t sell a product, you sell a life-
style.” Central to this is a quasi-version of a con-
cept of art that the indi
dy art world has resisted, the idea of the self-motivating and self-creating artist who embodies a heightened and highly val-
ued subjectivity.

Within the artist-lead sector the social-scene—
the circulation of fashion in clothing, music, etc.—
has become increasingly foregrounded to the point of stylistic association and accumulation not just acting to reinforce the social structure but becoming the very work. Accompanying this turn in practice has been a return to a notion of the modernist autonomous art object—not that any-
thing is simpler. What is locked in is that walled cell seemingly arrested from any external distraction or stimulus, its ambiguousness is miti-
gated by a belief in the power of the work to express itself, of its power to gratify the private sector. This ‘return’ can be understood in part as a reac-
tion to increasingly exclusionary public funding criteria, the seemingly economic impoverishment of the public sector, the reinsertion of an agenda of macho self-reliance and a fantasy of freedom from social constraint. ‘Independent’ and ‘alternative’ is bandied around as if artistic and cultural scenes relate less, if at all, to the ideological basis of the work but more to the economic impover-
ishment of the practitioners.

The breakers’ yard

Having asserted the key role that the public fund-

**The Free Market is compulsory**

‘Culture’ is seen as constituting a particular field
Leigh French

of government, on which there is heightened emphasis with new labour. Its vague yet real promotion of a ‘Culture Industry’ can be understood as a PR distraction, the surrogate for an economy based on manufacturing. New Labour poses state intervention in a new guise as seeking to influence the public perception on which it hazzards this phantasmagoric ‘new’ economy to be contingent. With the constitutionally limited remit of the Scottish Executive this is even more exposed.

Within an ideology of ‘governing by influencing cultures of behaviour’ Culture is treated as one instrument of social influence. Government’s means of enriching and investing market values through the public sphere—its Third Way melange. In what is a standardising of its subject audience within a delimited culture of ‘Common Purpose’, Culture is to be re-organised on custodial grounds of ‘moral supervision’, intimately related to perverted versions of self-reliance and free enterprise. It is to be in confirming rather than contesting ‘free’ market authority. The spin is: the ‘socialisation’ of those as seen as outside of the labour market via the reinforcement of an image of self-esteem through a work-ethic—an expansion of ‘training programmes’ targeting the unemployed, single-parents, and now pivotally children and young people. As a means to exert influence over ‘cultures of behaviour’ on target sections of the population, Culture has become the polite and less alarming synonym for Society.

Under the guise of inclusiveness, there is a tension between a commitment to free access to public museums and galleries with their new task of improving the social fabric of society in the form of an accumulated individual responsibility, and market principles that require the generation of private income as a leisure attraction. Pressure is on arts organisations to become magically self-sustaining by creating and increasing their private proportion of income whilst demonstrating a cathartic educational function. (The fact is that this has been going on long enough for everyone to conclude that this is not going to happen.) As a result the programming of these venues is required to appeal to a construct of the widest possible audience (yet paradoxically specifically for the young) and for it to be repositioned in terms of a consumer base contained within a pseudo-populist rhetoric of moral renewal.

Oiling the wheels of the new moral machinery

In ratifying ‘marketisation’, artists are also being demoted to a client group (fodder) for an ascending private training/administrative/ commissioning sector. This is a consequence of outsourcing from the public to the private sector and the naturalisation (or at least tacit acceptance) of a perception of a necessity for art to be complicit with state propaganda amongst this professional managerial class. With new Labour skewering a ménage à trois between government, the voluntary and private sectors, public funding is ceded in the form of a financial exchange, with virtual set briefs of their ‘priorities’ appearing as projects up for tender.

Under the guise of public funds being publicly accountable, there is a bovine bureaucratic migration towards the view that arts are in need of administering, guiding, training, mentoring, advising, re-skilling so as to be equipped to pay lip service to other fields of government policy. Helpfully this will also provide the subject mass for the expanding private managerial trade itself, with a vague objective of artists becoming trainers, advisors, re-skillers of the jobless themselves in a kind of cycle of abuse in job creation jobs.

This is a coercive attempt at a redesignation of the locus of aesthetic practice, announced as an attempt to make art ‘useful’, and superimpose a correlative ‘publicly accountable’ end product. Culture itself is to be the aggressive conditioning influence on the ‘wayward’ segments of society—there is to be no room for discontent within culture, for a critique of power relations which implies a struggle with hegemonic powers. For this would bring to light the ideas which underlie and represent the vested interests of retarding independent progression and freedoms.

Dispensing with distance

Much of what now constitutes the domain of the contemporary visual arts is an effect of other kinds of forces and relations of power, of a ruinous and opportunistic alignment of arts funding to other areas of government policy by government—to the extent of the Scottish Executive commanding direct jurisdiction over projects such as the highly suspect programme of ‘Cultural Coordinators in Schools’, announced as part of the National Cultural Strategy. Concern raised within the SAC is that the programme looks set to avoid its influence altogether, more importantly this would totally evade the vestigial political disclaimer of the Arts Council’s “arms length” adage. The concerted force of influence is made explicit with the recent clarification from the Department of Culture Media & Sport in England that where the Scottish Executive ordains SAC involvement in delivering the priorities of the National Cultural Strategy, SAC can now explicitly solicit organisations. Moreover, in the event of those prioritised activities not being undertaken by any existing organisation, SAC can now concord one with the explicit function of condoning the National Cultural Strategy—the erroneous assumption being it is in the interests of its own survival to do so. (These revised solicitation processes were announced and then agreed by Council in November 2000.)

With the SAC being reeled-in to become more of a direct apparatus of government—another threat of a “bonfire of the Quangos” hanging over them, the increasing “integration of Lottery and voted funds work”, and Lottery still centrally defined from London—it’s function is not to encourage but explicitly intervene and impose what is espoused as legitimate cultural activity. The implications for policing and censorship are obvious. There will be very little resistance: in effect the funding system of reinforcement and reward has already been sufficiently internalised, and on the rare occasion when broached, too readily dismissed as nothing more than a survival tactic for artists and organisations alike. Intellectual honesty is not required.

Far from their pro-active independent image, many arts organisations are re-inventing themselves in a subservient supply and demand relationship to public funding criteria. With revenue funding for smaller organisations in question (especially within the Visual Arts) and private capital a fragment of someone’s sick imagination, ‘educational workshops’ for which funding is available are considered a justifiable survival tool for the rest of the artistic programme. It may just be out of such false realism that artists and organisations are participating (if colluding is too strong) in the integration of their more overt regulation.

“Their spiritual make-up has become elastic enough to make the constant demand about their own pursuits part of their quest for survival. They know what they do, but they do it because, in the short run, the objective situation and the instinct for self-preservation speak the same language and tell them it must be so. Others would do it anyway, perhaps worse”

Peter Sloderek, Cynicism—The Twilight of False Consciousness
"Innovative" or "marginal" cultural practices are being lost sight of in the interpretations and implementations by public funding agencies of overarching cultural policy directives—directives once claimed to emerge from "consultation" with "The Sector" itself. Consistently, what pass as alleged consultative and policy informing events are little more than additional avenues for funding, and too many now even question the extent of its overtly prescriptive character. The atomising of funding— the advent of deterministic funding streams for specified areas of activity; and one-off project funding—has peculiarly been allowed to act as the means of greater influence and closer regulation over those gaining receipt. A kind of animus, or self-denial, has set in as organisations continuously re-invent and re-align themselves to annual, schizophrenic alluding to 'prioritisations'. The focus of personal responsibility of cultural capital to attract cultural capital, sustained by unquestioned notions of individualism. It has become a conventional and convenient facade that tends to obscure the relations of power while suggesting that everyone may simply choose to participate once equipped with the correct inclinations.

"[Focusing on individual agency and responsibility, such economic common sense plays an important ideological function in diverting attention away from structural conditions and differential power relations. Instead it blames bad economic conditions on the (professional) failure] of individuals. The language of personal responsibility thereby reinforces a de-politicised notion of the economy—locating the solution to economic and social problems in the reform of individuals' character and in government or community efforts to alter structural conditions or relations." Jacinda Swanson; Self help: Clinton, Blair and the politics of personal responsibility, Radical Philosophy

Structural unemployment
Public funding is increasingly cut according to unproven government theories whilst simultaneously shifting the attention of solving structural problems away from government and onto individuals without the resources. Social and economic problems are re-conceived as problems of the individual, including their causes and solutions. The visual arts in Scotland are not an autonomous entity of their own devising but comprise of sites of interconnection and contestation between various bodies: local/regional/central government funding mechanisms (with all the shifting 'prioritisations' and 'issues of purpose' they carry with them); the corporate/private sector; the Scottish Art Schools; workshop providers; individual artists; and artists' networks. We must then view that which manifests as a government 'strategy' or government decision in relation to the social and political economy that exerts influence over its production and dissemination.

One outcome of the demands placed on artists' spaces through the public funding mechanisms to "professionalise" their 'casual' labour structures has been their recent embracement of New Deal work experience placements. Surrounding such "training opportunities" is the illusion of successful trainees gaining a toe-hold in the labour market. Needless to say such work experience programmes do not actually create any jobs. Rather, in re-articulating a surplus of subsidised labour they—ironically—act to arrest any such occasion, providing the foundation for a high turn over of labour generally within the field, exacerbating competitiveness for existing jobs. So, while New Deal is opportunistically seen by arts organisations as another funding stream their actions are complicit in adding to the broader illusion of progression in the labour market. The same thing will happen on a wider scale to organisations.

 Arrested Development
It has been argued that artists' self-determination and individual agency was in part a critical project in its own right—exposing and circumventing unequal power relations; questioning assumptions of disablimating models of what constitutes the 'centre' and the 'periphery'; challenging the values associated to legitimate modes and courses of dissemination; entering into and propelling alternate discourses... Much of what passes as artist-run is being made to fixate on success and value as adjudicating via a pseudo-economic relation of profit making ability. This is defined by a weak and experimental formulation of market integration: in reality government deception towards individualising political problems. Increasingly self-censorship in adherence to these funding priorities, has resulted in an arresting of the imagination of what can constitute the politics of independent practice. This generalised submission to government/market jurisdiction (where perhaps there was a self-consciousness; an idealism of alterity; or at least a more self-aware, critical relationship before) has been a recuperation of a model of independent artist-led activity (personal responsibility) into a government propaganda model that exulates flexible yet weak and insecure conceptions of employer and government responsibility.

It is hard to believe that historically this alignment was the aim of artist-run spaces, that subservience and not independence was the goal. There is need to position this debate within the context of the larger neo-conservative political agenda, but there is also need to investigate the social and ideological positions taken up by artists and arts administrators so as not to absolve them.—of responsibility for the situations we find ourselves in.
Mr Tayto & Mr Tayto

CITY CENTRE

Vivre sa merde, Transmission.
Centrally situated in city, on main bus route, towards the end of winter. Simply the best in high quality blends of stylish intelligent French design and value for money, in an expansive demi-monde. The dream of total theatre, is still a dream.

Lesureland, Tramway.
Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyge have proceeded like men of experience in this business, and taken the natural road to undermine most with their big videos, very shiny shoes and long expansions of boredom.

Sticky Carpet, Project Room.
This whole matter of bozo underfoot gives the rank conception, or migrating sensation of a potato-faced man clad in a toga of servile retribution. The Devil! Poo!

Anomalous Phenomena, Free Gallery.
We started cracking open the champagne, fell into a bottle and stayed there. We were absolutely smashed. There was an eeriness, a strange panic and dashed desperation, evident on the faces of the devoted before we woke up the next morning with our first hangovers since 1994. But we couldn't believe our bleary eyes when stunned Suzi snubbed our advances.

Mandelson of Rio, Gallery Carisma.
Describing the horrendous anthropocentrism of the '50s interests us enormously, but not as much as the old habits of rabid and bigoted partisanship.

The Tuckshop, Intermedia.
You use a glass mirror to see your face; we use fresh and vivid beauty to see our soles.

High tech sex and fifth intertwining doctrine and method from the air guitarist of horny divet sets and hospital corners. Put this one on your wedding list for a few jejun points.

The Schaffhausen Videonale 2000, Kunsthalle Germany.
The curators of this years Videonale somehow seem to have settled for nothing less than a celebration of polynomy. Single channel conceptualisation. Billy Chapel is one of many up and coming video nasties (by far the best). His installation 'The Wurst is yet to come' involves a video projection of a sausage on a plate being eaten. This seems a little of fashioned and some might say (Oasis) outdated, but Chapel’s uniqueness has yet not been revealed and the fact he audaciously made the video projector sit inside a 6ft long (2ft diameter) block displays potential. Personally I didn’t need to see the small sign saying ‘do not eat the sausage’.

Supernatural Behaviour for the Festive Season, Fly Gallery.
A shark adventure to really get your teeth into, the ultimate rat-on-the-wall! will they won’t they? rockumentary for Madame of the moderne.

‘it is not the society that seems ridiculous to me, it is mankind’, Sebastian Goe Gallery, Southpotton.
Five times this year, shows have existed. Sebastian shows himself to have emotive language, providing philistinism that confronts middle class cinnamon protocol.

CAPITAL CITY

The Umpire Strikes Back, Collective Gallery.
Smooth blend of undetermined cricket, baroque music and pro Found big backlit hair.

Astroturf Castles, Protayto Academy.
Witness my death to vanity. Less ornamental ‘action’, more talk depending on a further auxiliary language. Wacc 2: the comeback.

Too Close for Comfort, Fruitmarket Gallery.
Two heads are better than one. Art as a partisan of agrarian reform, a bear-leader friskily celebrating the appellation of the bird of paradise.

Nicotine Patch, Inveleith House.
The table in the middle of the floor was as big as a house and the chairs around it were as high as trees.

Archibald Campbell and Harley WS Photography Prize, Stills.
There’s nothing quite so horrific as man’s inhumanity to man, and whenever an unusual historical tale comes to light, Archibald Campbell and his intrepid assistant Harley WS will be there to investigate.

Difficile est saturnum non scribere, Sleeper Gallery.
It’s difficult not to write satire.

REGIONAL

Maybe it was me, Lomine Ball, Aberdeenshire.
‘Crazy’ artist Toni Davies has researched the history of the gallery building, finding out that his own father used to torture dwarves and freaks on site with croquet mallets etc. Vsualated. These works shamefully pander to the society of the spectacle, but never-the-less we loved looking at his sordid documentation.

Live and Let Die, Cornerhouse, Manchester.
A farcical stinking mass of stones and lime and dung scab and hunger.

Ethnic Rug Thug, Terrance Donovan Gallery, Jersey.
Terrance never seen scene like this. Terrance illustrates the sixth seal of Koresh. Koresh for all his bad pressorth is actually correct. Terrance made Tayto smile with what he did, excluding his own vanity and tendency to make love sex gestures at Tayto wife.

Masters of the Universe, Delfina Project Space, Croydon.
What is it with you about rock music, every time a ‘fun’ concerning Iron Maiden, MOR and what-have-you crops up, you seem to slag them off. An example here is the Satan project. We don’t know what makes you think that rock bands write about the Devil all the time, ‘cos none of the records we listen to do anything of the sort. And if you think Iron Maiden are a ‘crappy heavy metal group’, then perhaps you’d like to explain why No Prayer For The Dying has gone straight in at Number Two?

Best Before, Matthew Higgs’ Fridge, London.
As Hollywood gave us stability, Jerry Deller and Jim Carey got busy in the icebox.

Bring back working practice is an exhibition held at Clive Sinclair’s first studio in sixteen years, based in a scheme (non-context specific) metal grill fronted 7Up outlet just east of brick Lane (pool table and soft drinks with posters on ceiling only) and the (Phoenix Specific) Phoenix pub in Broughton St, Edinburgh. The work seems to benefit from a hands-on application which derives from being tried out in the studio first. Conceptually it seems to deal with issues such as Hitchcock, and modern urban life, including sport (which takes place inside the touch lines only).

One Liner Designer, Institute of Myopic Research, Dundee.
Lucas van Valkenborch provides interest but fuck us up by concentrating largely on the glamour of institutionalised peripatetic activity through a critique of the suggested relationship between science and washing powder (Radio).
Maclovio Rojas was a very special young man of strong convictions and faith. He died as he walked in the confluence of power. I had a photograph of him, well, I thought it was, and I wanted to “rescue his image.” I had never heard of an Indian from Oaxaca, other than two of our presidents, Juárez and Díaz, to have a community named after him. I spoke to the other members of the Border Arts Workshop (BAW) and we decided to visit the community and talk to the recounts about painting a mural of Maclovio’s image in their community center.

Jaimie Cota is a labor right’s organizer in Tijuana and member of the Frente Zapataista de Liberación Nacional (FZLN) the civilian support group of the EZLN. Members and sympathizers of the EZLN were the people who had built the original structure of the Aguascalientes in the Poblado Maclovio Rojas. The small structure and makeshift stage built out of garage doors and recyled wood, stood in the middle of the community. We approached Jaimie Cota about doing the mural of Maclovio and he then took us to the Poblado and introduced us to Hortensia Hernández and Artemio Osuna.

The relationship began as Hortensia Hernández, leader and president of the base committee, was looking at the tiny 35 mm slide trying to figure out the person in the image. She liked the image and agreed with me that it looked like Maclovio Rojas. She was not sure, but she was sure that the person standing next to him was his brother. He had a long conversation about Maclovio Rojas and about the legal problems they were facing in the community. As she spoke, she painted behind her at row upon row of stacked cargo containers, built by Hyundai Precision Co. and explained that the Korean maquiladora was encroaching on them and threatening to take the rest of their land. Three years before, Hyundai had relocated one of their manufacturing plants to Tijuana, as part of a Korean-México negotiation agreement, that ex-President Salinas de Gortari had signed to attract Asian investment into the border areas.

In 1993, Hyundai appropriated for free 100 hectares for storage and parking of their cargo containers establishment the second largest cargo container manufacturing plant in the world. The real estate surrounding this industrial park, once located on the outskirts and marginal areas of Tijuana was transmuted and transformed into the border areas. California State-sponsored development of the industrial-commercial infrastructure of the adjacent area to the Poblado Maclovio Rojas, and became highly coveted by land speculators. An officially stamped invoice dated in 1991, issued by the federal Agrarian Reform Department is pasted on the wall of the Poblado’s assembly hall. The document states that the Unión de Poseedores del Poblado Maclovio Rojas Márquez, A.C., paid the government for the disputed 197 hectares. The Poblado has been steadily growing as additional families move in to the community and parcels are sub-divided into single-family 336 sq. ft. lots. The majority of the houses are built with discarded garage doors and wood pallets, many houses, however, are now being built out of cinder block and mortar. The development of the commercial area next to the Hyundai storage area and the main highway now includes 2 PEMEX gas stations, mini-market and truck stop, a new furniture assembly maquiladora plant, and the former municipal slaughterhouse has now been turned into the Tijuana Police Academy. No joke.

The receipt shows that Baja the pobladores of Maclovio Rojas paid $1,892.78 dollars, the value the federal agency had appraised at the time. Currently, the state officials have appraised the real estate at $10.00 a square meter, making the 197 hectares polygon, currently occupied by the Maclovianos, worth 197 million dollars.

The image on the slide, although great in composition, had a dark shadow around the eyes caused by the rim of the hat. Unable to clear it electronically, we needed another photograph to get a better definition of his eyes. We came across Maclovio’s brother, Lucio Rojas, during presidential candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas presentation at Cal State University at San Marcos. The organizers of the event presented Lucio as one of the main catalysts of the organization of Mixteco-Zapotecs migrant farmworkers in San Diego’s North County. When we approached him, he told us that his family was still living in San Quintín, and that he was going to travel there during the following Fourth of July holiday. We decided to visit and interview the Rojas family members to get an insight on Maclovio life and to secure a better photograph.

Traveling on the transpeninsular highway the 200 miles from the border south to San Quintín valley along the scenic Baja California coast, is both beautiful and treacherous. The valley began developing high yielding agriculture for export in 1980. As the Southern California suburb then urban land rush was displacing farmland to the south, the fertile San Quintín valley became the yearlong supplier of vegetables to the north. This agricultural expansion required cheap farm labor.

Mixteca Indians being expelled by poverty from their homelands in the state of Oaxaca, quickly met this demand. In 1985 almost 80,000 farmworkers were working in these tomato maquiladoras, while living in labor camps inside the grower’s property. Maclovio’s family had immigrated here in 1980, he joined them in 1984. By 1986, he had become a leader and president of the CIOAC, a national organization that was organizing a campaign to unionize the farmworkers. As many leaders before him, he was faced with an enormous task, there has never been an independent union of farmworkers in México. Maclovio gave his life while living in labor camps inside the grower’s property. Maclovio’s family had immigrated here in 1980, he joined them in 1984. By 1986, he had become a leader and president of the CIOAC, a national organization that was organizing a campaign to unionize the farmworkers. As many leaders before him, he was faced with an enormous task, there has never been an independent union of farmworkers in México. Maclovio gave his life as he walked in the confluence of power.

The movement had been squashed by police in Baja California State, and the arrests of the community’s leaders would be resolved in Tijuana, thus avoiding the need to travel to the State’s capital in Mexicali 120 miles away to deal with their freedom. The local representatives of the governor of Baja California failed to resolve the issue, the leadership then resolved to march to Mexicali on September 4, 1996 to demand the freedom of the three compañeros.

La Marcha por la Libertad

Wednesday morning, September 4, 1996. The main plaza of the Poblado Maclovio Rojas was full of people. Women and children milling around, painting banners and signs, preparing their bodies and souls for the road ahead, packing food, water, and hydrolyzed serum donated by supporters. Their resolve was strong; they would march to meet face to face with the governor of Baja California. Highway 2 will take the marchers through the 5,950 feet Sierra Juárez pass, down the Rurumosa grade to the Laguna Salada 110 feet below sea level, where temperatures can climb to 115 degrees at midday. Over 300 people began the march, the corridor of power waited for no one, not even freedom marchers. The madness grew intense, impatient horns blasted through the morning sun; a massive traffic jam backed up for miles. Dirt and smoke filtered the colors flying in the sky.

One marcher, Rubén Hernández died while crossing the desert. The Maclovianos pledged to return a year later to the place where he died, and erected a monument in his honor and for Freedom.

These events—the arrests of the leadership and the protest march, transformed the collaborative process from the networking phase of exchanging information, to a coordinating phase in which our interactive activities were coordinated. BAW participated in the march, providing direct support to the marchers and by video documenting the event. BAW contacted support groups and several NGOs in San Diego, primarily the American
Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and their local US-México Border Program, who then contacted others through the Network of Communities, Social Justice and Solidarity Groups in the region.

A marcher died of dehydration in the sweltering heat of the Mesical desert; Hertesia Hernández, 49, was one of the many women who have opposed NAFTA. The SWCM has, for many years solicited resources to maintain full time organizers in Tijuana, financial resources were provided to the compañeros in Maclovio Rojas to support their legal defense fund. The SWCM kept providing direct support by organizing fundraising NAFTA tours in the Poblado. Bushido of activists from the Southern Californian region visited Maclovio for lunch and to find activities to detect the effects of NAFTA in the border region. Currently, the SWCM continues to have close ties with the AFL-CIO and other US labor organizations that have opposed NAFTA.

An article by Julio Laboy published in the front page of the Wall Street Journal (California section) in 2/28/97, detailed the “Friends within the belly of the monster” that have supported the struggle in Maclovio Rojas. The image of Hertesia Hernández also appeared on the front page, with a caption referring to her as Sub-Commandante Hertesia. This reference to the EZLN made Hyundai corporate officers and Susan Golding San Diego’s Republican mayor quite nervous. The local representatives of Hyundai have continued to have concerns about doing business in a hostile environment and the possibility of relocating the plant that produces $50 million dollars a year. The article, although important for getting the attention of the corporate investors by pointing out the strong support from within the US, misleads the reader by making a reference to Hernández as being part of the political arm of the EZLN.

Out of Line and Beyond Borders

The Support Committee of Maquiladora Workers (SCMW) a non-profit NGO based in San Diego began seeking support from the national network via letters and a letter writing campaign to demand from the Baja California and México City governments the freedom of the compañero. The SCMW, which has, for many years solicited resources to maintain full time organizers in Tijuana, financial resources were provided to the compañeros in Maclovio Rojas to support their legal defense fund. The SCMW kept providing direct support by organizing fundraising NAFTA tours in the Poblado. Bushido of activists from the Southern Californian region visited Maclovio for lunch and to find activities to detect the effects of NAFTA in the border region. Currently, the SCMW continues to have close ties with the AFL-CIO and other US labor organizations that have opposed NAFTA.

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During this time, BAW was constructing its annual “Border Realities XI” installation at the Centro Cultural de la Raza, in San Diego. This depicted the resistance and struggle of Maclovio Rojas. Members of the base committee of the Poblado of Maclovio visited the center and spoke at the event, the following week we were invited by Artemio Osuna to meet and begin discussions concerning our community engagement project in Maclovio.

BAW was invited to participate in inSist’s ‘97 triennial transborder public art festival. By securing funding, first from a grant from Installation Gallery, we were able to transform the collaborative relationship into a cooperation phase and commit to a long-term project. The inSist triennial festivals are funded by several institutional governmental sources that are funnelled through Installation Gallery. The festivals are organized with the participation of many of the regional NGOs: including educational, social, and political, also the regional galleries and museums. BAW then obtained a grant from the US/México Fund for Culture that enabled us to extend the terms of our project and jumpstart the initial phase that was funded for the inSist ‘97 Festival.

BAW began negotiations with the community’s leadership as to the nature and context of our participation in the community, which asked for more frequent visits. We requested an area in the community to build a building of our own in order to keep materials and equipment. A decision was made to provide a space in the area of the Aguaescalientes. Artemio Osuna explained that the Aguaescalientes area of the community was also to be used by local organizations so that they could establish their outreach offices. BAW presented a design of a two-story building made of discarded wood, garage doors. The base committee decided to build with cinder block, to insulate longevity and security. The wooden garage doors originally acquired to build the center were used to line the perimeter of the area and were painted with murals depicting the community’s struggle and history. Included in the murals was our original intent to paint the image of Maclovio Rojas as at the top of the stage area. It was decided to make the Workshop exactly one year from the time of the initial negotiations with the base committee to finish the construction of the center. The Aguascalientes was inaugurated on July 4, 1998, to commemorate the 113th anniversary of Maclovio Rojas’ death.

The Art as a Vehicle for Community Action

The Aguascalientes in the Poblado Maclovio Rojas was built in the spirit of the EZLN’s Aguaescalientes. Currently, there are five Aguaescalientes in Chiaspas. The insurgent army built the Aguaescalientes with the mission to serve as a place to develop a culture of resistance, and to serve as the actual links to the outside civil society. La sociedad civil: Indigenous peoples, students, workers, community associations, gays and lesbians, environmentalists, autonomous indigenous groups and industrial entrepreneurs that got hit by the Peso financial crisis, old leftists and new age rock stars, housing and scholars, linking a global consciousness to a local and national democratic movement.

The Aguaescalientes in Oventic, one of the Zapata’s autonomous municipalities in Chiaspas, is being built through a collaborative project between the Oventic community and San Diego for Peace with Dignity in México, Pedro Brown, one of the organizers of this group, a long time border activist and former teacher who was deported last year by Mexican immigration officials for violating sovereignty laws. He continues to organize caravans of delegations from San Diego to Chiaspas.

The EZLN conducted a National Consultation campaign during March 1999, 5000 indigenous representatives mobilized and participated from the Chiaspas communities throughout the entire scope of the Mexican country seeking feedback from the civil society. The EZLN militants surveyed the population on questions of indigenous rights and their opinion concerning the implementation of the San Andrés Larrainzar Accords. The militants also asked for support to end the war of extermination being waged by the government against their people. The government has refused to comply to their agreement with the EZLN. Such Accords call for the Regional Autonomy and the Self-Governance of the Indigenous peoples throughout México. During the campaign a delegation of EZLN militants met with the Maclovio Rojas community in the Aguascalientes and established mutual concerns in their particular struggles.

A delegation of 19 members visited the Tijuana-Tecate Border region and a highly significant event and piece of border art happened during the visit to the region. The EZLN organized the campaign by sending an equal number of men and women and in Tijuana 9 couples and one child, visited and met with a wide array of groups. Events were organized by a transborder coordinating committee that brought together organizations and constituencies that usually don’t work together. The delegation listened to speakers dealing with regional issues and received solidarity declarations from organizations throughout Southern California.

For obvious security reasons, the delegation could not obtain a visit to the border. So a demonstration event was organized along the 12 foot fence, in an area where the transborder NAFTA train has a crossing gate. Scaffolding was used to install a platform high enough so that supporters on the other side of the fence could see and hear the EZLN speakers.

The role of the artist

BAW’s role in this community, as artists and cultural workers, continues to be redefined. The initial role was to link the community’s struggle to the outside by documenting and producing work to create a public consciousness and to prevent a violent removal of the pobladores by government forces. The last government attempt to forcefully evict them happened on February 28, 1998.

Through BAW’s network in Southern California we are able to create alerts and mobilize support. The leadership of the Poblado wants to develop formal transborder alliances, that would include community activists from the Orange County Friends of Maclovio Rojas, the Green Party, CISPES in Los Angeles, and other activists and grassroots organizations, and BAW acting in the role of transborder facilitator.

BAW facilitates solidarity and working delegations to the Poblado. The Orange County Friends of Maclovio Rojas through fundraising purchased a towing trailer to transport general building materials. The American Friends Service Committee sends annual delegations from their youth program for a week-long stay for community work projects. Global Exchange also brings a youth program. Recently, two French scholars spent a 6 week long residency in the center producing a documentary for a French TV. An Australian graduate student is working on a performance-based research project; and a Brazilian artist is developing a summer-long residency and community event planned for this year, for the inSist 2000 Festival.

Long Term Commitment

Through the 12 years the Maclovio Rojas have kept alive their movement and struggle for the land and the development of their community, they have increased their potential and capacity for self-governance having taken up their own plans for their families and neighbors.

In spite of it all—jails, attacks, threats and divisive actions taken by the government against their organization—the Maclaviones realize that it’s up to them to develop the infrastructure of the Poblado.

A longer version of this article together with a web project documenting the BAW project can be found at: http://www.geocities.com/zapilotl.geo/img001.html