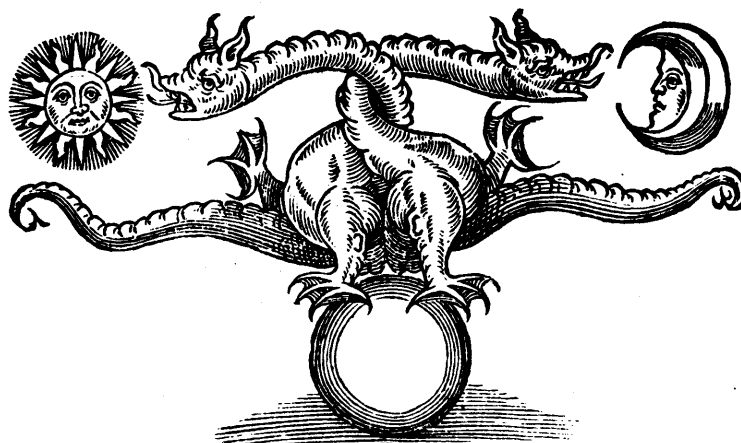


Cultural Correspondence

NO.9 \$2.00

Sex Roles & Humor





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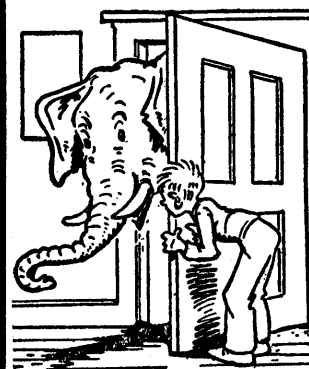


CULTURAL CORRESPONDENCE No. 9 - Spring 1979

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Editorial Associates: Danny Czitrom (New York City), George Lipsitz (St. Louis), Edith Hoshino Altbach (Buffalo), Dave Wagner (Madison).

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S/HE WHO LAUGHS LEFT...

Why humor? Langston Hughes says, "Humor is laughing at what you haven't got when you ought to have it...what you wish in your secret heart were not funny, but it is, and you must laugh."

Let's back up. If you're moved by humor, but skeptical about it at the same time, you may wonder why a journal that covers the emerging revolutionary promise of popular culture puts the laugh at the center of its concerns.

Those who still maintain a dogged faith in History should be delighted that an old friend of ours, Hegel, considered humor to be the epitome of subjectivity, the point where the artist breaks free from the constriction of form and content and transforms both. *Oedipus* upheld God and the Fates, but in *The Clouds* Aristophanes, with his dialectic, brought the gods down to Earth by making fun of them. For those still bitter at our all-to-prehistoric state, Reason's nemesis, Freud, offers an alternative theory. Noting that it is far easier to laugh than to suppress laughter, he argued that the joke transports us back to childhood, to a time when we did not need the release from tension humor gives us. If the good doctor had pried himself off the edge of his mental couch, he might have seen the reconciliation of philosophical and psychological views -- Humor is revenge against our so-called civilized state of mind. A good laugh underlines that "so-called" quality for us and helps us bear it that we may change it. Humor is both in and above the battle, throwing us down weapons and polishing the ones we have. As we watch the great powers once again preparing to divide the world between them, we may resign ourselves to tragedy,

or prepare for farce. Should barbarism overtake us, the last phrase before the lights go out will be a joke; if capitalism has a revolutionary gravedigger, we can be sure that it, like Hamlet's, will give us all the comic relief we need.

Humor is a serious (though not a solemn) thing. The box office receipts of *Animal House* prove that Americans are dying for a good laugh, and are willing to settle for a good deal less. What alternatives to the toga do we see? Many creative and radicalizing possibilities have appeared in recent years. The advancement of more flesh-and-blood ordinary folks to key spots in the private and public media Kleig lights, displacing businessmen like Johnny Carson, Bob Hope and Joey Bishop, is something Saturday Night Live has already shown conceivable. Films like *Girl Friends* demonstrate that even in the tightening cinema production market a humane and humorous approach is possible for writers, technicians and players. Local humor a little like the old vaudeville circuit can be heard on some listener-sponsored radio stations. The women's humor in this issue is another good sample of the jokesters around and about. Why shouldn't these people laugh Left?

"Philosophy must become proletarian," wrote an old crank with a particularly savage sense of humor, back in the nineteenth century. Today we add that humor, the philosophy and consolation of our daily lives, must become the common property of each and every being. Those other Marxes (the ones who asked, "What makes a wage-slave?" and answered, "Wages!") offered one formula for providing each according to their need:

"What the world needs now is a seven-cent nickel. A man could go down to the newsstand, but a paper, and get two cents back. One nickel, carefully used, would last a family a lifetime!"

A good gag is like the seven cent nickel: its power is great, but you've got to pass it on to make it good; and it leaves you better off than you were.

We hope the Left will never have a shaggy dog history to look back on. But there is no *Lenin on the Humor Question*. If we should not bow to spontaneity, we must embrace it. The Red Laugh is, after all, irrepressible. It's not a question of line, but of punchline.

For those unfamiliar with CC, some of the other contents deserve mention.

The Cultural Archives of the Left have yet to be collected, but in passing we can preserve some of the most fascinating and important items, recall some unjustly forgotten individuals. Oscar Ameringer's humor, the poems and experiences of Martin Birnbaum and Thomas McGrath, the painting and poetry of Maurice Kish, and the many clips from oldtime Left humor magazines throughout the issue, bring us all back to our roots.

The Television section is our regular commentary on the state of the tube.

The Children's Section, our first, will hopefully elicit kids' responses on other subjects of popular culture. Any would-be kid editors out there?

The Humor section is intended especially for free-lance contributions. Payment (as of now): a free subscription.

PB

LAUGHTER, HOW MUCH DO YOU LOVE YOUR MISERY?



AMAZON, BERLIN

Back in 1973, Naomi Weisstein defined the new guidelines for women's humor. It was not the nervous giggle of the self-doubting woman on her way from one humiliation to another. It was not the oppressive jibes used to hold down women, gays, Blacks and others by punishing them for being what they were and (even more) for being any different from what they were supposed to be. Above all, it did not legitimize the pain of women's lives but fought back instead. Here are some prophetic phrases:

"There have been extraordinary obstacles to the development of a women's fighting humor. We must therefore experiment with the public presentation of such a humor. We must try out forms which throw off the shackles of self-ridicule, self-abnegation; we must tap that capacity for outrage, that knowledge of our shared oppression.

"We must construct a women's culture with its own character, its fighting humor, its defiant celebration of our worth. We must reclaim our history, our rights to self-expression and collective enjoyment. We must create our own humor. The propitiating laughter, the fixed and charming smiles are over. This time, when we laugh, things are going to be funny."*

Readers of this CC issue will judge for themselves the clips from women's underground comics, the short humor pieces which dot our pages. For our part, we feel confident in asserting that the movement toward a rich, full women's humor has taken giant steps in the last half-dozen years. There is no money for a corps of professional, revolutionary-minded women humor writers and artists. The political climate is also less than encouraging. The traps of potential corruption and taming remain as ever, luring the culture-worker who wants to put dinner on the table and get a little recognition. Yet the rebellious spirit moves, active imagination of a giant still slumbering fitfully, ignorant of the power at its potential command.

The historical background for this nascent women's humor remains little understood. As Ann Gordon suggests below, only the genteel, upper-crust wittiness has so far been recognized and reprinted from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The men (and upper-class women) who controlled the premier presses and magazines, then as now, had a narrow and stifling conception of what women's humor could and should be.** Authors like Samantha Allen with pens sharpened to cut through manners and deliver serious jabs may not have been all that rare in the pulpy magazines and newspapers, but desperately need rediscovery for our time.

We need to drop all the way down to the 1920s to find an acerbic, uncensored women's humor granted some measure of public acceptance. Little is known about women's role in the rise of pulp humor magazines to their peak in the 1920s/40s. But one name stands out in the high class press: Dorothy Parker. Through her, the contradictions of modern women's humor can be traced.

A comfortably situated, half-Jewish girl, Parker found her way upward in the early 'twenties through the same mills that turned out Robert Benchley and other famous wits of the day -- the "smart" magazines directed at the self-styled sophisticates of New York City, middle class and jaded. The ink for her poison was taken from disillusionment in the 'twenties America she perceived, run by stupid men for stupid purposes, rotten especially for women, soul-destroying to those with any sensitivity.

Nevertheless, because of the ground cleared by the moral revolution of those sophisticates, along with the salesgirl/clerical flappers and their boy-friends, Parker could do things no other women humor writers had done before: write about sex casually, as a game or sport rather than a vaunted ideal; attack family life in general by sneering at the part of America outside New York fashionableness; and offer an immanent critique of human viciousness, seen almost entirely through the negative image of woman's perceptions. To attain the perfect mind-set, Parker had to jump

through hoops held up in front of potential radical female humorists since. She had to abandon illusions of nineteenth century femininity and women's autonomous culture; and find something perceptive to say about women (or male-female relations) in their place. She chose, like a number of other women humorists of her time, to describe female characters which she mostly despised as empty, pointless people.

Parker paid a heavy price. Despising the people you think about is not a healthy form of concentration. Parker really hit the mark in assailing the rich and comfortable. She talked again and again over the years about how she hated to be in their presence, how they made her upset and nervous. But she could not cease being fascinated by them. And as the *New Yorker* became (like the crusty Communists used to say) the ultimate "snob" magazine, Parker for all her anti-rich sentiments could not escape being a snob herself -- too witty for any but exclusive company (and expensive liquor). She tried to break loose. At the dawn of her career she bitterly resented her working conditions, practiced various forms of comic sabotage, and finally wrote herself out of an important job. But the *New Yorker* was too comfortable, the lure of big pay and big reputation too ensnaring, the alternatives she perceived as non-existent.

In the 1930s, Parker and many of her intimates attached themselves to the Left's causes. Alexander Woolcott led a demonstration in support of striking hotel waiters. Dorothy Parker's closest ally for years, Donald Ogden Stewart, became the leading progressive in Hollywood. She herself went all out for Republican Spain. Examine the writings and you will find only the thinnest trace of direct impact on her work. No red humor, but a grim determination to give up humor if necessary to fight against Fascism and for the common people's needs. Parker could not escape her environment, which stultified and finally killed her.

Over the War years, past Parker's (and the *New Yorker's*) prime, the opportunities for women's humor were rife. Women in uniform,

women in the factories, women shooting rivets appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* wearing the family's pants, reversing roles in an hilarious twist on the unfolding world holocaust. Sad to say, the era was too brief for women writers and artists to make personal advances from this temporarily favorable situation. The resurgent misogyny of the postwar years stole even the possibility. Woman as housewife, preferably in the suburbs, became virtually the only acceptable image for the mainstream magazines. Here curiously, perhaps because so many men had moved from blue to white-collar jobs, the role reversal continued, women now the competent people in the *Post* and on television, repairing cars, fixing roofs, generally managing the entire brood and roost while hapless hubby watched in admiration or awe. But this was, be reminded, humor about women. Jean Kerr, later Irma Bombeck, epitomized the feminine adaptation -- women had a right to feel insecure about all this power and responsibility. And aren't those suburban kids funny! The truth is, they almost evoke the chaos of the Bowery Boys and the slums left so very far behind. In a strange sort of way, this domestic humor had pushed just as far as it could go, setting the stage for later things both by its pervasive nature and by its limits.

The emergence of the women's movement, and following on its heels the wan and faded life of the 'seventies, generalized a symptom Dorothy Parker had introduced so brilliantly to women's humor -- *desperation*. Women alone, unembarrassed to talk about that as a condition of the working girl's existence. Women sexually aggressive but lacking acceptable companions. Women watching themselves grow older in a society that screamed Youth, Youth. Women being told to imitate male career models, but placed so far out of the running to make the situation ludicrous. And women expressive nevertheless, from the college training and graduate work that got finished in this generation, the single situation, the postponed babies, the sheer determination to make their mark on something.

Fran Lebowitz, "the new Dorothy Parker," personifies the peril of the situation for the new-generation woman humorist. Parker hated individuals, especially the haughty, boring, stupid, nouveau bourgeois. Lebowitz hates groups really, with a similar disdain. Zeroing in on the posh "liberated" (but expensive!) lifestyle of many New Yorkers, Lebowitz ridicules EST, conceptual art, people with black sheets and exotic cigarettes, racquet ballers, and everyone who can afford the luxuries of self-improvement. Parker killed herself to be clever with the play on words, the biting sarcasm. Lebowitz is willing to settle for a little less, to be amused and amusing. Sometimes her patter sound dangerously like the reverse side of the college fashions in *Mademoiselle* -- the readers snigger while they contemplate in their fantasies a more *tasteful* upper class life ahead; sometimes like the accompaniment to the very objects of her satires, Andy Warhol's *Interview* archetypes, enjoying a little limelight at their own expense.

It's too bad, because Lebowitz has her moments. She articulates feminist perceptions and puts them into an unexpected, humorous context. "Being a woman is a special interest only to aspiring male transsexuals. To real women, it is simply a good excuse not to play football." She hits the spot with the acid pessimism of Ambrose Bierce, "Sleep is death without the responsibility." She has some fine old fashioned misan-

thropic instincts toward the family, pets and plants. But she's trapped. Perhaps by her market. Perhaps by her own notion of Making It. Above all by the formula that leads her down the road toward overdependence on cute turns of phrase, stiff humor of (ill)logical deduction, a vernacular that is paltry compared to Twain's Western drawl and Reed's black jive. She says CB radio-language is limited because "even the most perfect epigrams suffer when interpreted in a language that refers to a bed as a 'snore shelf.'" Wrong, Fran, crucially wrong.

Lebowitz has only begun, and her humor so much bears the mark of her time and place that she is more symptom than perpetrator of a certain less-than-hopeful strain of women's humor. She has snared herself by backing away from the essential strengths of laughter, its universal qualities and constant accessibility to the elements of daily life that mock elite standards. More Spike Jones and less prep school Creative Writing -- that is the road forward.

The women underground comic artists interviewed in this CC issue personify the alternative. Not because they are all feminists, or socialists, or



otherwise have adopted some particular political-personal analysis of the world. Not because they have placed themselves beyond the purview of commercial stylization and punky decadence. But because they have made the most of the insight derived from their lives and their developing craft, returning the woman (not merely the artiste, the hungry journalist, etc.) to the subjective center of the narrative. They tell us about their lives and hopes with less guile and self-deception than any other humorists that come to mind these days. And their revelations are painfully funny, outrageously accurate. If they can overcome the very considerable obstacles before them, they will make a permanent mark on American humor and American civilization.

We might have anticipated their appearance, and not only on the grounds of woman's necessity that Naomi Weisstein suggested. The rebellious/creative 'sixties produced at least two im-

portant humor movements in the printed media, helping to pave the way for women's later activities. Mostly male underground comics artists brought together a supremely modest form with a daffy read-out of the decade's events and impressions. These artists went an amazing distance -- much farther than yet appreciated -- toward a new humor before the eclipse of 'sixties markets and moods slowed them down, deprived some of a dynamic subject, drove others to plain despair. In the same years, the Black humor pioneered by Langston Hughes gained new life in Ishmael Reed (though a number of others, notably Charles Wright could be mentioned), took over the accent humor that nineteenth century rural writers and early twentieth century white immigrant writers left behind, bore down with astonishing verve and savage honesty. Taken together, these jokesters offered rich alternatives to the already-tired suburban humor, the once-avant-garde "sick" humor which practiced outrage for its own sake and quickly fell into repetition. The psychic deflation of the 'seventies, the unchallenged hegemony of the *National Lampoon's* "Screw You" gags on the one hand, the Wall Street chuckle of the *New Yorker* on the other hand, revaluated for humor Rosa Luxemburg's familiar axiom that only the *last revolution* really succeeds. Yet important steps had been taken.

The precise forms of the new women's humor are still in the process of creation. The artists and writers come from a multitude of backgrounds, with astonishingly different experiences to draw upon. They have invented many of their own methods as they went along. They have had every reason to be so bitter that they would not speak to a mixed audience of females and males. And every reason to be so disappointed at the lack of financial support that they could give up the ghost before the serious work had scarcely begun. That they have persisted, that their work is loose and self-satirizing in an overwhelming positive way, that they have created such a pool of talent in a very short time -- these are signs of an internal strength only now beginning to show its real potential. The artists will remain individuals -- but they are also a movement. Their activity holds out promises for the laugh-makers and laughers of all kinds, to help set the tone for a revived and reconstructed revolutionary humor of the 'eighties.

The interviews below were conducted by mail, the questions devised by Marcia Blair and Paul Buhle. Lee Marrs' interview was transcribed and slightly edited from tape by Paul Buhle.

The eds.

**Ms Magazine*, November, 1973.

**The very first women's humor anthology in the US, *The Wit of Women* (1895) edited by popular author Kate Sanborn, had the same genteel character:

"The highest lady in the land...distinguished for culture and good sense, as well as wit /replies to a friend who/ said to her as she was leaving Buffalo for Washington: 'I hope you will hail from Buffalo.'

"'Oh, I see you expect me to hail from Buffalo and reign in Washington.'"

ME AND MY FEMINIST HUMOR

ALL ALONE AND FEELING BLUE

ME: Listen, you wanna hear a good joke.

MY: Is it sexist?

ME: I don't know. Anyway, there was this nun, see, and she...

MY: Listen, it sounds sexist so let's just drop it.

ME: You have no sense of humor.

MY: Yes, I do. I have a perfectly good sense of humor, I just don't choose to laugh at the degradation of women and furthermore...

ME: Furthermore, you have no sense of humor. You got a great sense of irony, but no jokes.

MY: Irony is frequently the weapon of powerless people facing impossible odds.

ME: Smiling through the footprints on your face.

MY: Jokes are the staple of feeble-minded businessmen who have no T.V. sports show to watch.

ME: Jokes are fine, you just have no sense of humor.

MY: Listen, listen, you just gotta get it out of your head that women aren't funny.

ME: No, men are just as easy to laugh at as women.

MY: I don't want to laugh at anybody, I want to laugh *with* them.

ME: But you've got to *make* them laugh first. Humor is assaultive -- "poking fun at," "pulling someone's leg,"

"leave 'em rolling in the aisles," "knock 'em dead."

MY: Sounds more like Little Big Horn than a comedy routine. Humor is what you make of it and some things just aren't funny.

ME: Like the moron who bought barbed wire to take to his fencing class.

MY: No, that's pretty funny, but isn't that a Polish joke?

ME: No, it's a joke, and it doesn't matter who tells it about whom. Like the new resort in Guyana -- Club Dead.

MY: Now, wait a minute, that's disgusting.

ME: Perversity is just a heartbeat away from a joke. You must astonish, disarm, and if necessary, sicken with surprise.

MY: That's just plain nauseating.

ME: If you'd only develop a sense of humor maybe the women's movement would get more of a following.

MY: Like feminist comics booked into Vegas in front of showgirls? Like asking Gloria Steinem to "drop trou" at a press conference on abortion?

ME: It's better than singing the "Coat-hanger Blues."

MY: I won't put up with any more of this hideous misogynist...

ME: Listen, women have the power to develop their own humor. We've created our own culture but we're too timid to exploit our resources and too smart not to recognize our own talent.

MY: But what are our resources if we continue to mock and ridicule ourselves?

ME: Humor can be defensive as well. Better I should make fun of myself than some pig. Besides, we should go after men, not other women.

MY: Too much of our time is spent concentrating on men.

ME: And too much of their time is spent thinking about us, but let's just begin at the beginning, haul ass and launch a campaign to do men in at their own racket. Forget the ERA, stat an Equal Wrongs Amendment!

MY: Bring back bound feet! We'll have a whalebone of a time...

ME: But I can see where men provide as much of a butt for jokes as women--

MY: *But* the butt is who's the ewe and who's the ram and who's doing the butting. Women have to develop their own comedy, their own targets.

ME: I for one, am sick of these too flip hipsters who rumble up to me and say: "Baby, you're fascinated by me." Whereupon I reply, "Drop dead." To which he responds: "Now I *know* you're crazy about me." By the time you've called the cops they're still convinced of their irresistibility all on account of you haven't stabbed them with your nail file, a technique they've no doubt learned to interpret as, "I'm into S & M."

MY: At least they're refreshingly blunt. The late sixties provided us with a new and even more terrible specimen: male feminist on the make. Women's movements get cluttered with sensitive guys

all dying to get laid. They tell you of the oppression of being an oppressor, work themselves up into a good cry, fry you some vegetables in their wok, recite a few Sylvia Plath poems and they expect to slide you onto their water-bed. There ought to be a law if not a penalty kick.

ME: What if you fall for a line. Maybe you're *not* falling, you know you're leaping and you wake up next to some fatuous zombie who wants to know what attracted you to him.

MY: Tell him "Nothing, I was just desperate."

ME: But isn't that playing men's rules?

MY: As rules go, they're the only rules. Anyway you're just practicing up your honesty instead of feminine wiles.

ME: Truth with a ring around the collar.

MY: You're still hung up on what these bastards think about you. It's like drinking drano, you've got to stop it. Reassess, Reevaluate, Revolt.

ME: I was never much good at volting...

MY: Don't worry about waking up next to a chauvinist, as much as watching one get more pay for less work and an endless supply of smugness.

ME: Maybe women need to start a reclamation program for ego and arrogance.

MY: Hang on to your id and let the arrogance goosestep by.

ME: You seem to have worked out all the answers.

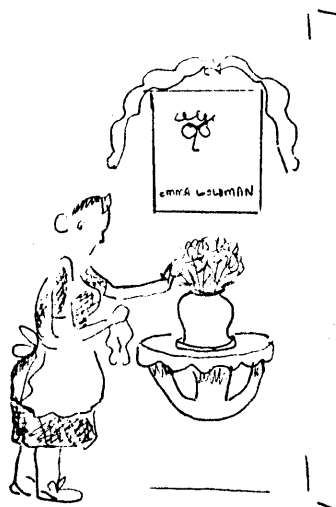
MY: No, just the problems.

ME: Like husbands who don't want their wives to work but to spend their days cleaning, cooking, scrubbing, vacuuming, lugging groceries, picking up dry cleaning, and other unpaid jobs.

MY: Like husbands who *want* their wives to work and spend their nights and weekends cleaning, cooking...

ME: Like men who don't want their wives having abortions because they want equal say in the reproductive process. Next thing they'll deny their wives anesthetics so their sons can enjoy a totally natural childbirth.

MY: What's worse are the men who happily allow wives and lovers to ingest tons of cancerous, blood clotting pills so they can have child-free love-making.



Lillian Dudkiewicz

"PROFESSOR SMITH, MAY I PRESENT PROFESSOR ROGERS WHO'LL BE TEACHING 'WOMEN IN AMERICAN LABOR HISTORY'".

ME: Cancer-free lovemaking involves women taking the risks, responsibilities and rap as well. What about rape?

MY: You mean every woman's fantasy of sexual violence. Please, let's not even go into that can of spermatic delusions.

ME: Well, this has been a laugh a minute.

MY: Ghetto humor has never been more than a real scream.

ME: Do you really think women are still in a ghetto in 1979?

MY: Just five years from 1984, and look around. Check out a secretarial pool, visit a suburban supermarket, just about anything to do with children: sexual segregation will slap you up one side of your face and down the other.

ME: But is segregation necessarily bad?

MY: Was slavery all that terrible? Especially if you have to live with the enemy.

ME: But men aren't our enemies.

MY: They're enemies until proven allies.

ME: Isn't that the opposite of our system of justice?

MY: Justice is "just-us-men."

ME: Hey, that's pretty funny.

MY: Right, this is supposed to be a comedy dialogue.

ME: But you wouldn't even let me tell my joke.

MY: On that note, I think I'll just finish up with a feminist joke.

ME: Like the three great lies: The check is in the mail, one size fits all and I won't come in your mouth.

MY: Too old-fashioned. This is hot off the pages of the *Village Voice*. Did you hear the story of the two morons who saved up all their pay to spend on a big weekend in New York City? So they showed up at Port Authority with their life savings, and before they could get outside to the street, they'd been swindled out of all their money. Pimps, con-games and rip-off artists. So one guys says to the other, "What are we going to do? We're here in New York with only a dollar thirty-eight to our names. How can we have a good time?" So the other moron takes the money and goes into a store and comes out with a little brown paper bag. And the guy says, "What's that?" So the other guy says, "Don't worry, I've saved the day. We're going to have a great weekend." Then he pulls a box of Tampax out of the bag. So the first guys says, "Are you kidding, what can we do with that?" And the moron replies, "We can do anything we want. We can go swimming, sailing, horseback riding..."

ME&MY: Th-th-that's all, folks...

Catherine Clinton

INTERVIEWS with WOMEN COMIC ARTISTS



Trina Robbins: cover, 1970

TRINA ROBBINS

Q. It's been eight years since the appearance of It Ain't Me Babe Comics. I can look at that issue and still feel the stir of excitement, a new thing, as exciting as the development of Women's History (for one example), and as promising. Since then, there have been better and worse days for the women's movement proper, and economic as well as political and personal influences on people's work. What about the whole development of women's underground comics to now; are you disappointed or encouraged? What have been the worst problems, and have you overcome them? As the most prolific editor, writer, etc., have you found yourself in a kind of leadership role and how have you dealt with that?

A. Well, of course I'm encouraged. Before I.A.M.B. there were no women's u.g. comics, and now there are. Our worst problems are pretty much the same as they have always been -- lack of acceptance from either side. The Women's Comics Collective started because the men in u.g.s had their own support system, which had no room in it for women, except in the role of "old lady". WAAC (Women artists and cartoonists) gave us the support we needed. However, we got little or no support from the male cartoonists, as previously mentioned, or, surprisingly, from the Feminists! *MS* magazine, after promising great things to me and Lee Marrs, not only never came through, but doesn't seem to want anything to do with us. The women's bookstores refused to carry our comics on grounds of "heterosexism"! I have been criticized by feminists on the grounds that the women I draw are beautiful and therefore "sex objects" (to which I always reply that, to me, women are beautiful.)

Today things are improving. There is a whole new bunch of male cartoonists who *do* accept us. At comic conventions I have found that it is the *Aboveground* cartoonists who are happy to see women drawing comics and who are interested in relating to me as a professional and an equal.

As for the women's bookstores, I think *Mama! Dramas* may be the great icebreaker. Stores that wouldn't carry *Wimmen's* are carrying *Mama!*

Leadership. I don't want to lead anyone but myself. Taking responsibility for oneself is a fulltime job. Everytime I finish editing another book, I'm disappointed with the results, and obviously the only way to get a book exactly as I envision it is to do it all myself. Which doesn't mean I'm likely to stop editing comics. The other women cartoonists are used to hearing me swear up and down that I'll never edit another book, but then I get another Grand Concept and I'm off again...My latest editorial effort is a 100 page British anthology, *The Best of Wimmen's Comix and Other Comics by Women* due out in December.

Q. The striking thing about It Ain't Me Babe is the sense of collectivity, greater than in the mostly-male-written u.g. comics. That collectivity has been a missing element in much of the recent women's history, women's art, etc., even while artists as individuals often maintain their commitments -- they get older and more eager to work on their own. Has that happened to you and other women drawing comics?

A. Hate to tell you this, but YES. We are definitely eager to work on our own. The collective was necessary when we were new and insecure, but many of us have outgrown it.

Q. Looking back on your work since the Blimp days, your main characters -- Panthea, most recently Rosie, and many lesser ones -- seem to move between Eros (women's historically suppressed Eros) on the one hand, and Action (women's unrealized capacity for control over a situation) on the other. I wonder when I read them whether you are placing women in the traditional protagonist roles of the comics we read as kids, or whether they are simply stories of woman's unshackling that you've put into pictures. That is, I'm trying to sense the relation of your work to your reading of comic-book styles. Thematically, the most fascinating thing for me is that the Trina strips about Trina (especially Trina of the future) are by comparison downbeat, hilarious rather than adventuresome (except as life is really an adventure, as in Mama! Dramas)...

A. Well, I grew up on a voracious diet of comics, heavy on the female protagonists -- *Wonder Woman*, *Mary Marvel*, *Sheena*, *Queen of the Jungle* -- and I used to pretend I swung from the vines and lived in a tree house or could fly in my childhood fantasies. I still have the same fantasies, only now I put them on paper. The stories about myself are projections; all the others are just grownup Let's Pretend games.

Q. Wet Satin and other erotic comics threw me off the trail of you as a feminist, for years. I could't dig the mixture of sex and violence, the single-mindedness of the sexuality. And my feminist friends found it difficult to grasp whether the artists were satirizing male fantasies or concocting their own. Can you explore this whole area a little?

A. Hey, to me Feminism means Survival -- don't kick me around, share the shitwork, share the childcare, give me equal opportunities in my field of work, treat me like an equal human being. It doesn't mean I can't be just as fascinated by sex as any man. (Me and the 8 other women who've contributed to *Wet Satin*.) These are definitely our own fantasies. If some are frighteningly violent, that's because women can sometimes be as violent as men. We're not trying to say that women are saints, that women are better than men, or that a world ruled by women would have no war. I think that's bullshit. Sometimes being equal to any man includes being as fucked up as any man, and we have the right to express that.

You know there's a printer in the Midwest who didn't believe we *should* have that right. This guy has printed comics as gross as *Bizarre Sex* (check it out and you'll see what I mean) but the difference was that those comics were all done by men. When *Wet Satin* came to him to print he wouldn't touch it. Called it pornographic. Draw your own conclusions.

By the way, I can't answer for the other stories in that book. Each fantasy is the property of that particular author/artist. As for mine, I've been accused of drawing rape fantasies. I have to say that I think women *DO* have

THE WOMAN WHO COULDN'T

By Trina Robbins



POST SCRIPT: SUZANNE VALADON DIED IN 1938, THE YEAR I WAS BORN. I SOMETIMES FEEL THAT IN MY BODY SHE HAS BEEN GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE, AND THIS TIME WE WON'T BLOW IT! TRINA ROBBINS, MAY '76 ©

Trina Robbins

rape fantasies, and to paraphrase a woman who wrote in *MS* that our fantasies do not consist of getting your teeth knocked out -- they consist of Robert Redford not being able to take no for an answer. Anyway, when I look back over my *Wet Satin* stories, I see that what they're really about is POWER!

Q. To me, some of your most exciting work has been outright feminist on the one hand, historical on the other. Mama! Dramas is as amazing, in its own way, as It Ain't Me Babe, in posing up front the situation mothers find themselves in, finding a comic but perspective and political way of seeing life today. I noticed years back a statement that you felt constricted by the feminist hostility against "dressing up," but I never knew what conclusions to draw from that. Is it that you refuse to separate feminism from a kind of unalienated femininity? How has that worked out in your mind and in your work?

Second, you do some truly remarkable things with images of women in American history, most especially with *Rosie the Riveter*. Do you see that developing a kind of history of women in American popular culture? How would you deal with the bitter end to Rosie's factory career, c. 1945-46, her probably raising children from a blue-collar marriage and returning to the workforce as a clerical ten or so years later?

A. Earlier, I told you what feminism means to me. It does not mean I can't wear lip gloss and wedgies, dress up in a 1930s pink satin nightgown, or be terribly attracted to men. I don't think dressing up is cultural -- the first primitive people decorated themselves with makeup, as did the Egyptians, male and female. I think that if you love something, you keep it clean and dress it up, and this applies to your room, your home, your child and yourself. I live in a gay neighborhood, and my gay brothers are gorgeous. They beautify the block with their presence and provide me with welcome eyefood.

My fascination with the 40s is indeed a vivid memory from my own early childhood. Rosie is a perfect character

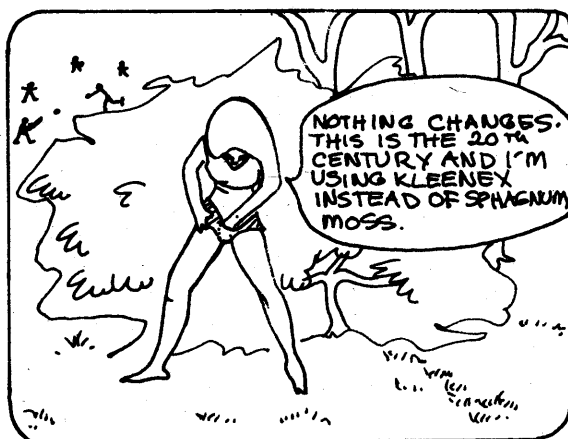
to express a time when things seemed more clear-cut; it was easy to tell the bad guys from the good guys and the image of women was great! I don't think I want to deal with Rosie eventually going home to wear aprons and raise babies -- in my comics it's perpetually 1943. (Although it would be nice to do a daughter of Rosie the Riveter, who goes back to her mother's old job!)

Q. There have been some underground re-entries into the mainstream but, it seems to me, on rather poor terms, e.g., adaptation to a dominant male (in this case, sick) humor. On the other hand, underground comics are a pretty rough deal, with little money, poor distribution, etc. Would you surface in a DC comic if you could, or a daily comic strip or syndicate, your work toned down to fit? Do you see that happening in any positive but muted form, now?

Also, talk a little about the evolution of your own work generally, and where you see it going from here...

*A. As you yourself stated, the underground station is rotten. Working for \$25 a page becomes, at best, an expensive hobby. I went to New York last July and visited the major magazines. The results? Viva wouldn't even see me, *MS* was so grudging ("I'm very busy, can't you make it next week?") that I didn't even bother pursuing it, and *New Dawn's* editor, Gay Bryant, a very nice woman, loved my comic but was afraid to print it, although she promised to review *Mama! Dramas*. On the other hand, I sold 8 color pages to *Heavy Metal*, have done 3 pages of illos for *Lampoon*, am starting a series for a new mag called *High Life*, and sold a half page comic to *Playboy*. Yes, *Playboy*! If my sisters treat me like shit, I'll go where I'm accepted as an equal human being.*

I'd do a story for *D.C.* or *Marvel* tomorrow if they wanted me, but I'm afraid I don't draw in their accepted style. As for a syndicated strip, I'd also love to do one of those. I'm currently producing a continuing daily -- sized strip for our local weekly tabloid, the *Bay Guardian*, and am pleased as punch whenever someone tells me they read it and like it.



Chin Lyvely (Nanny Goat Productions)

CHIN LYVELY

Q. The strength of your themes and directness of your approach knocked us over. Can you say something about the decision to work that way rather than the satiric subtleties of, say, the New Yorker? In what ways (if any) were you influenced by the comics reading in your own pasts?

A. The decision to be vulgar rather than high class arose out of sheer ignorance. Neither of us was much of a comics fan, but at the time we started I owned a bookstore, sold u.g.s, and was impressed by their honesty but loathed their macho depiction of sex. Our work originally, was a reaction to a glut of testosterone in comics. Since we had no experience, and doing comics looked easy, we gaily jumped in with both tits, and started to work.

Q. There's no escaping the fact that "vaginal politics" is an overriding theme in your work. You tackle culturally taboo themes with a graphic quality that would make our mothers shriek, "Gross!" My own response was a resounding "Right On." What kind of feedback have you received?

A. With the exception of about four letters objecting to our health-education book, *Abortion Eve*, we have gotten nothing but excellent feedback. I think the reason for this is that anyone nerdy enough to read an underground comic in the first place, expects and demands to be shocked. Being shocked and entertained at the same time is, or can be a highly politicizing process. It pulls the myths out of your brain and makes room for more dynamic and humanizing thought processes to take place. As most of us know, sex is a very political business. All we want to do is equalize that by telling our side.

Q. Menstruation is a theme that crops up again and again (or perhaps it seems so because it's dealt with so rarely elsewhere). Why you more than other women drawing comics?

A. Our original commitment was to concentrate on female sexuality, and our titles indicate that. Menstruation occupies a lot of time in a woman's sexual life, it was a theme which had not been dealt with, and since there is so much mythology surrounding it we felt that it should be given fair time. Most people don't even realize that menstruation is a part of a woman's sex life, but it is, even though it's hidden.

Q. T'n C started out as Joyce and Lynn, but #3 is a more collective effort. In between your work crops up in Wimmen's Comix, Wet Satin, etc. Can you say something about the experience of doing your own Nanny Goat work versus (or related to) contributing to other women's comics. And about the degree of collectivity within Nanny Goat.

A. We have more control doing Nanny Goat work, but

since almost all the women involved in comix are friends, the going is fairly easy. Most of us are also quasi-anarchists and semi-independents which does not make for peace and harmony in collective situations. Joyce and I are quite complimentary, so we get along relatively well and try to divide the work evenly. I think a collective of two is a lot easier to manage than a larger one, but *Wimmen's Comix* did it.

Q. Have you experienced the problems of other u.g. comics in distributing "erotic" materials?

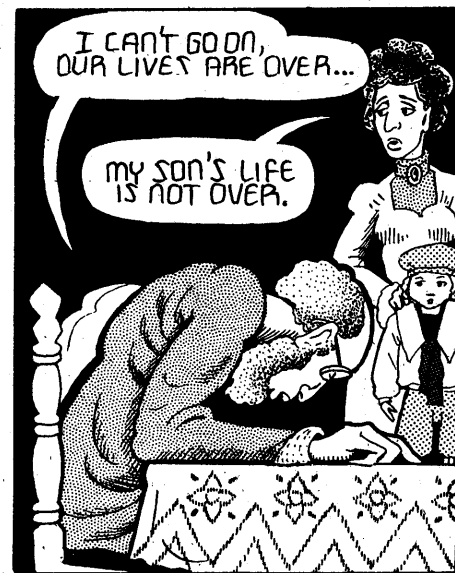
A. Have we had problems? Lemme tell ya! Yes, but it's a long story and not worth going into. My firmly held conviction is that all busts are politically motivated, whether it's Larry Flynt or us. That is to say that the type of material being busted is of minor importance. The real issue is power and money. There are ways you can protect yourself though, and even if it's no perfect guarantee, we do everything we can to lessen the chance of getting busted.

Q. Tell the story of Nanny Goat as production -- how do you do it? Where do you see going with it? Does it have a special role within women's u.g. comics generally?

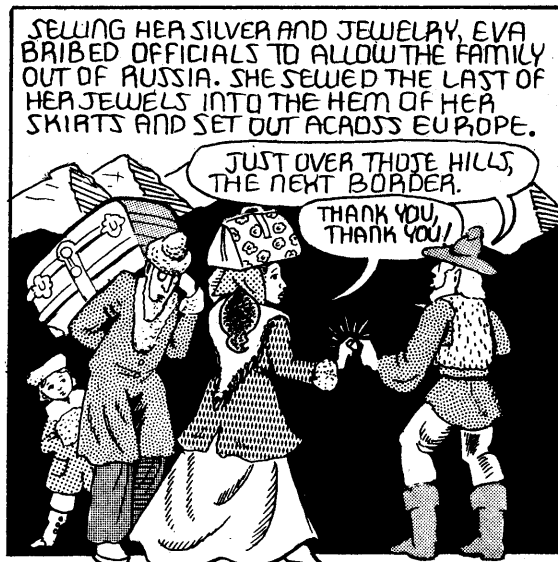
A. First question too complicated. It's no secret, but it would take too long. I'll tell you in person when you come out here for a visit. I don't know where it will go, but I do know that we started with one bok, we now have done six of our own, and we distribute over thirty titles, which makes us hot-shots in the world of feminist distribution. I guess just staying in business for six years is some kind of track record too. Right now our survival is important for women's u.g.s because *Wimmen's Comix* is defunct. And now that we are doing athologies we provide a little more space for women to get published. I think both of us would like to experiment with publishing things other than undergrounds, and that may happen. We have plenty of dreams.

Q. Coming back to the first question, we get the feeling that you are in the process of inventing comics all over, from drawing styles to your own forms of humor to your own production, etc. Amazing! How do you explain it?

A. We aren't inventing anything. All our early work was done with the help of a few lovely men. Not the creative part, but the mechanical aspect of publishing. I don't think we ever would have started the whole business if we had had any idea what it involved, but it's been a wonderful process of finding our strengths and weaknesses. We have made some mistakes, but that only means that we are willing to take the risks which a lot of people are frightened of. You have to take risks if you are going to go beyond the traditional boundaries set in life. I think women especially are prone to take the safe way. That is our training, but we don't have to accept it.



© SHARON KAHN RUDAHIL 75



Sharon Kahn Rudahl: from "The Bubbeh"

SHARON KAHN RUDAHIL

I enjoy having my work praised and analyzed much as a mother does her child. I'd always felt more than prepared to give historical and philosophical pedigrees for anything I produced -- but I must admit your questions challenged me. Perhaps it's a mark of growing professionalism or just diminishing intellect but at first I felt inclined to answer: "Gee, who knows? I get a deadline and I draw something that's been cluttering up my mind". But here goes an attempt to answer you in a more appropriate spirit.

Q. I vividly recall a strip of your I haven't been able to relocate, on being an artist/illustrator for a Madison, Wisconsin, underground newspaper (Madison Kaleidoscope? Takeover?), circa. 1970, and experiencing some rather disillusioning incidents in what the woman artist went through in the New Left. Do you have any

further retrospect now, on that as a kind of early artistic-political event that helped shape our attitudes and work since? Have you mulled over that late '60s-early '70s era and the underground press as a tremendously vital but also incredibly flawed one. Like so many other folks around their mid-'30s, my mind keeps going back to the opportunities there and lost. Do you have that sentiment, too?

A. The strip about the Madison underground paper 'TakeOver' was printed in *Snarf* by Denis Kitchen, two issues back. I drew it while living in Yugoslavia, when my memories of American radicalism were particularly vivid to me. I have by no means become less concerned with social and political alterations -- but age and experience (tritely enough) have convinced me change must operate in terms of complex and human reality. We Madison anarcho-dadaists attempted to fob off an attractive fantasy as

political philosophy. At the same time, we did genuine propaganda work, endured genuine risk, and I believe, must have opened a mind or two to useful possibilities.

There is no question that working with the underground press in several cities taught me the craft I needed to move from self-indulgent renderings of faces, animals, and dancers to the more precise technique required by my concept of comics. Whatever I think, whatever I choose to share, my graphics must be capable of communicating with the widest audience. The concept of technique in the service of ideas and beliefs is something I owe entirely to my experiences in the political press, as well as the personal discipline necessary to pursue it.

Q. The painfully hilarious strip in Titters, "The Two Timer," relates still another disillusionment -- with the problems of the Women's Group as you experienced them. Is this a metaphor about your disillusionment with the formalities of political feminism? How do you relate your work to the collective history of feminism in the past decade, its difficulties and remaining vitality?

A. As with left politics in general, so with women's groups: I owe a great deal to my experience with them, and yet I was never blind to the contradictions, absurdities, and entertaining aspects. "The Two Timer" is almost entirely taken from life, and it presented itself as a story too good to refuse.

Q. I'm fascinated by the "The Bubbeh," your story of your own grandmother, published in Wimmen's Comix #5, because it poses a way out of some of the confusions of the 1960s through a self-conscious search for personal heritage ("Roots") in a collective tradition. Within that tremendous Jewish Shtetl-to-America story, with its suffering and creation of a tremendous radical core, you

have another story -- the Jewish woman. My own work leads me to suggesting a kind of unique situation: held down as a group, individual Jewish women managed to rise through determination, education, etc., but also cut most of these women off (until recently, anyway) from a feminist sensibility.

How do you understand the meaning of the story for your own creative life? Can you compare it with the wider history of women that you've drawn (e.g., the prostitute "Kathy Cruel" in Wimmen's Comix #6)?

Is the glint of cynicism in "Noblesse Oblige" (Wet Satin #2) a clue to your moving beyond any optimistic expectations? Or just a mood?

A. The character in "Oie Bubbeh," the character in "Kathy Cruel," the character in "Noblesse Oblige" are all various aspects of my self as Jew, woman and artist. In the first stories mentioned, I applaud certain strengths of love and endurance in the face of persecution; in the last I present myself with a moral warning against luxury and success. Luckily or unluckily, my fans need not worry that I will succumb to the blandishments of Central Buro for sometime to come!

Perhaps because I grew up with stories of Pogroms and concentration camps, I have always been aware of myself as both potential victim and potential persecutor. The necessity of avoiding becoming "a good German" was the major force behind my early involvement in civil rights and anti-Vietnam activity. As former colleagues struggle to be the first to draw racist, sexist, humanly demeaning comics in order to buy into the good life, as it becomes less and less acceptable to judge one's work by political or moral standards, I continue to question and torment myself, seeking a perilous balance. Like everyone else, I find good excuses for my own compromises. But I think it is essential to the progress of my work that I continue to wrestle with these questions.

ALINE KOMINSKY

Q. An amazing collaboration you have with R. Crumb. Did it lead to more recongition among u.g. women's comics folks? What has it meant to you otherwise? Why aren't there more collaborations like that?

A. First of all, the "women's cartoonist movement" and I have been disenchanted with each other for about five years. I was involved in the first Wimmen's Comix, very crude, but it had potential I thought...But I was later rejected from various comics because of various reasons: (1) One editor said I hadn't significantly raised my level of consciousness from the previous story to the story submitted -- slightly presumptuous and annoying, but a little power can go to one's head; (2) Also I was heavily criticized for doing "just another fat Jewish girl story," I guess it wasn't politically acceptable to uglify oneself and make fun of oneself!! (3) Also, about the time I started getting involved with Crumb, personally, animosity towards me from certain women cartoonists became intense. Crumb was considered the "enemy," I was con-

sorting with the enemy, being an "Uncle Tom." I was actually called a "Camp Follower" in a Berkeley Barb article. So much for that. I could go on endlessly...

As far as reaction to Dirty Laundry, I assume they hated it. Robert and I decided to ask other cartoonist people in relationships to do stories for DL 2. I asked Trina and she said No, she thought DL was disgusting, unenlightened, ugly, etc. Also asked Terre and Ted Richards, Bill Griffith, Diane Noomin, Bob Armstrong, Mary Boettcher, Jay and Jane Lynch, but even though some of them really liked the idea, they couldn't sit down and do it. For each couple the reasons are different, ego problems, competitiveness, fear of being revealed somehow. I dunno really. It was interesting, though, that nobody came up with even a page! Robert and I started DL #1 to kill time when I fell and broke my leg (in my platform shoes) one rainy winter up in Potter Valley, Ca. We didn't think of publishing it till later when I think it was Keith Green offered to print it. So we finished it. Personally I think #2 is better. I think I'm more assertive artistically and in my relationship to Robert in #2. Also I don't like the made-up stuff in #1, so #2 sticks to reality

KOMINSKY & CRUMB

in

"LET'S HAVE A LITTLE TALK"

by

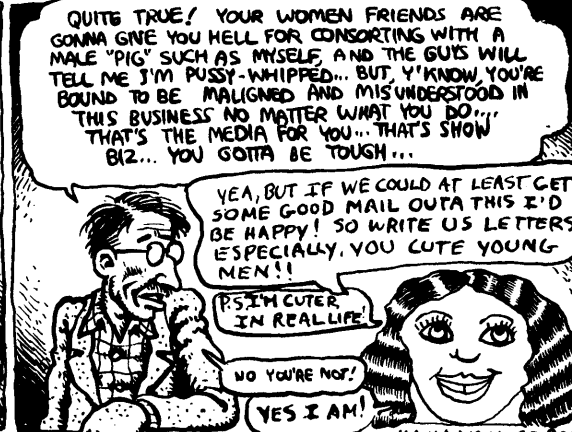
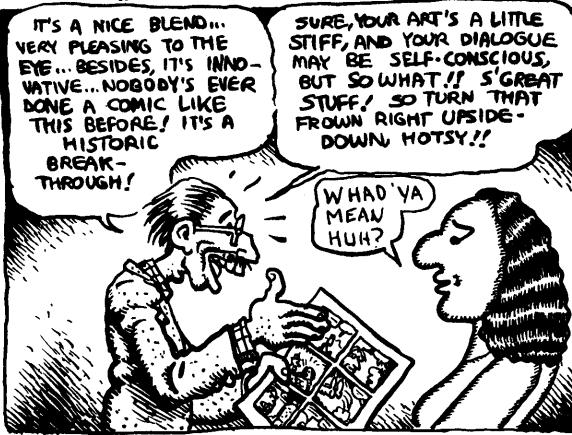
R. CRUMB AND A. KOMINSKY

©1979

ALINE, YOU SAY YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE WILL THINK... JUST WHAT IS IT THAT WORRIES YOU, CUTIE-PIE??

WELL FOR ONE THING I'M AFRAID MY DRAWING LOOKS TOO CRUDE AND UGLY NEXT TO YOURS.

PEOPLE WILL MAKE FUN OF ME



pretty much, and it has a lot of local color in it, like Fukumoto's Farm Equipment 'n' Stuff. In a way I wish I hadn't put so much gross and explicitly sex stuff in it, 'cause that limits drastically who I can show it to around here, and I know people who would like it but couldn't handle me squirting water out of my cunt. In a way I view this gross exhibitionism as an immature need for approval of myself, my bodily functions, everything yucky! About myself. Robert says my mother probably hated changing my diapers and gave me a complex...

Q. Why are you proud of being gross anyhow?

A. Well, on a universal cosmic level I think all women (I dunno about men) fear that men will be repulsed by their bodily functions, juices, odors, pimples, "cellulite." I always thought, when I was a teen, that I'd have to sneak out of bed looking gawgeous and smelling sweet and he'd never find out how really ugly and smelly I was. Well, this all seems obvious, and like the women's movement and sex revolution are supposed to have made everybody un-uptight. But I think women still feel uptight about disgustingness, cuteness and loveliness -- do not go well with grossness and a rowdy self-deprecating humor!! I feel that by demystifying my female self, point to its imperfections, with a sense of humor and absurdity that other women see this and feel better themselves. I have gotten lots of mail proving this point. The heroic, perfect, skinny, politically correct female image is too intimidating and also not funny. I also feel compelled to break through a certain overly refined upper class attitude towards women, that I've encountered in men, I want to make them squirm. Recently R & I did a *Dirty Laundry* style piece for the *Co-Evolution Quarterly*, but Stuart Brand rejected it because of my artwork being too crude. I think it was a good story and I think I just criticized too pointedly, an' I think this was not acceptable from a woman!!

Q. Your work seems to be frankly autobiographical, down to using your own name. Besides Sharon Kahn Rudahl, you're about the only one who makes a point of being Jewish over and above being female. And your characters are concerned about being fat. Do you see these as more personal than political issues?

A. I must go on to fat and Jewishness (some of my favorite topics). If I didn't feel that my struggles with my fat, generally my physical appearance and my middle class 3rd generation Jewish upbringing were somehow, at least a little bit universal, then I could not really justify my work to myself at all. Fat is so obviously the striving woman's obsessive disease, perhaps it peeks out in Jewish culture, "Eat, Eat, Eat but don't gain any weight!" Keep that salable product, that body, gawgeous! I was pressured to have a nose job (I didn't), skin job (face sanding), plastic surgery on a scar on my lip, hair straightening, diet pills, everything! This programming to look good, was the heaviest thing for a middle class Jewish girl. How can anyone become more conscious and evolved socially without deeply questioning and shedding the negative aspects of this conditioning. When I make fun or am horrified at my fat, blatantly flaunt my obnoxious Jewishness, this is a great cathartic release. It is also a strong statement of psychologi-

cal evolvement to have transcended this bullshit and to make fun of the aspects of it still left in myself. I don't separate raising one's consciousness psychologically, from social and political awareness. These are merely progressive steps in becoming a politically responsible person. But self-awareness and a good sense of one's absurdity are my foremost concerns in my work & life...(this sounds so self-righteous!!).

Q. How does the collaboration with Crumb work technically. Do you argue out every frame and the story line? Any sexual politics involved?

A. (Later). Now I've been drawing, since I wrote the above rationalization for my work, an' I reread this and while it's true I must admit that I work really unconsciously, I meant that I don't think of a point I specifically want to make, or some important revelation I want to pass on -- it's more like I think of incidents or fragments of incidents that I fixate on as being good comic materials, I dunno why exactly, I write down these ideas usually, but I also forget where I wrote them, but as I work on a story, beginning, not knowing what will happen, the story reveals itself to me. It's interesting, sometimes I have revelations that come in a story, deeply repressed incidents from the past that I write and then I remember more clearly. One time at an early *Wimmen's Comix* meeting, I think Trina was in charge, editing or something an' she and all the women made a rule them for criticism and then ink it. I tried to do that but then I realized that once the story is all blurted out the intrigue is gone for me and it becomes a mechanical chore to ink it. I can't work like that. I like to have the blank space right ahead of me at all times. Bob and I work on *Dirty Laundry* pretty much like that. Let's say I have an idea for a bit, well I'll pencil myself and my words on one page in however many panels and then Bob'll pencil his response and then maybe he'll go on for a few panels and then I'll respond. When two pages are penciled then we each ink in our part and switch. There's no planning really on who does what and it all works out pretty evenly. Neither of us feels dominated by the other artistically. People may find it hard to believe that I'm not intimidated by Bob's drawing ability, but his whole schtick is so different from mine that I don't even compare myself to him. Also Bob is a great fan of my work and a secure artist himself, therefore he can openly encourage me without feeling threatened. I can only draw flat bodies, cubistic faces, furniture that doesn't look like it's on the ground, while Bob draws in perfect perspective and round sensual forms. The two together are really fascinating to me visually. My drawing looks like someone from another planet drew it, sometimes. Also, at times when I look at my part in *DL*, I think it's more intense than Bob's because I'm less casual about drawing comics or more desperate or something. So it works out all in all for us.

Q. The Letters section to Dirty Laundry seem to make the whole thing a kind of extended autobiographical journey, from your confession to the readers' and back again. Perhaps DL is a kind of cultural-political document, a way to work backwards out of all the disappointment and mush of the 'seventies, to that vision of the late 'sixties, but now with a closer proximity to reality?

A. If *DL* is a cultural-political document, a way to sort out the chaos of the past ten years, it's only unconsciously that, and Bob and I are like sponges, soaking it all in and then wringing ourselves out. We're not sure what we've said until it's done and we look at it awhile later. But, later it does take on a social significance, in the way these two "crazy kids" fumble through life.

Q. Can you say something about yourself as an artist? Where would you like to be going?

A. I can't help the way I draw. I had years of art school, a degree in art, everything. But none of it sunk in. Somehow my mind and hand don't connect directly and my scribbling remains forever at the 8-year-old level. I don't really think of myself as an artist most of the time. I'm really your classic Jewish dilettante. I'm musician (violin-playing) Bunch, housewife Bunch, jock-dancing-Bunch, 55 year old Jewish man comedian Bunch and once in a while artist Bunch. I have no idea where artist-girl Bunch is going. It doesn't really matter!!!



Melinda Gebbie

MELINDA GEBBIE

Q. Your work seems the most garish and brutal in the u.g. comics since S. Clay Wilson. Perhaps you give a hint at a general explanation in the first strip ("In Debasement") of Frescazizis, when you say with partial irony, "This is not a pretty story. It is a story of ugliness, cruelty and humiliation, female rage is evident everywhere, and as usual it is the men who suffer most." This is a topsy-turvy way of talking about our own world today, I think. But the distance between what you see and any traditional vision of feminists, anarchists, etc., is so great that your work is disturbing and a little frightening. Can you talk about that distance a little?

A. In modern history (since the Fall of the Goddesses) literary projections have been tied to the male, consciously and subconsciously. "In Debasement" depicts a tale of human bondage as if history was herstory -- as if woman had been the dominating force in society for a long enough period of time that victimized and intellectually aware males were now beginning to write protest fantasies in their own underground comics.

The dreamlike quality is simply a rich soup in which I can float personal subconscious imagery -- a challenge for my conscious mind which is then required to shut off its political self and allow neither material thought -- information which is tied to the Primal State. I purposely avoid logic with these stories. I reach, instead, for the Witches and Shaman within and focus on perceptions of Myth and Magic, Devil and Angel.

Humanity seems to be in the process of losing its sense of ecstasy and personal metaphysical process. Witness the use of machinery to achieve all ends -- cars, guns, television, movies, computers, etc., as opposed, in former times, to the mind-quieting bondage of heavy labor and the myths, ideas and rituals (religion) of Man as a being answerable to the gods of his society, a ritual which kept the social systems aware of personal morality and also fed the vital need for a sense of personal magic.

We now push buttons instead of praying; we now have nothing colorful and powerful -- cosmic parent -- to protect us from the fear we have of one another. We are stripped naked -- we have no choice. We are all existentialists in Western society. And, dangerously enough, without a scientific reason to back feelings of love, we are becoming stripped of our humanity.

The last vestige of fantasy -- Man's belief that Woman is his organic link to the cosmos because she gives birth; and Woman's cowering towards Male prowess in the world beyond her cooking and cradle-rocking -- is being shattered; the roles we once played to comfort and appease each other are gone. Suddenly we are all simply bodies. The reality of the Machine makes us temporary, inferior substitutes for "the real thing" -- Logic, unhindered by human morality. If the computer brain is programmed for power structure it can even realize the potential for enslaving its own makers.

Q. In Anarchy comics you end with "In her Home or in a Jail, you can't help a dame who thinks like Tail." Is this a

rage at the presence of so little direct action, political or personal, while women are being treated as they are? How do you relate to Anarchy comics or to Anarchism?

A. The answer is "yes" on the first point. "Dames who think like tail" refers to the women of our or any society who treat themselves like human kleenex -- obediently hearkening to the chore of keeping the Men's Room clean when they have plenty of business waiting to be cleaned up in the Women's Room.

Second part - Anarchism: I don't like being pulled along in a system that is paternalistically decadent. My art, as long as it is infuriating to the present social structure, is almost always, in one way or another, anarchistic in bent. I am not, however, actively engaged in anarchistic combat except in personal resistance to governmental pull on a subliminal level of chaos.

Anarchy Comix was fun to work on. I had to talk to Jay Kinney at length about what the flavor of the thing was to be -- told him I needed leeway for absurdity and later realized I got very seriously involved with my characters and their terrorist project.

I consider my story in *Anarchy* to be concerned with *Nechayevism* -- the active destruction of existing norms, as opposed to passive acceptance of same.

Q. Your French Revolution glimpses seem to suggest de Sade, and sometimes I think I see a glimpse of Surrealism turned in your own fashion to social horror. Do you have a sense of a particular artistic tradition you draw upon? Where and how did you acquire a style so very unique in u.g. comics?

A. As you mentioned "French Revolution" I assume you're referring to my "Cockpit" story in *Wet Satin* #1 (no relation to Kosinsky's Cockpit).

There's a definite "Sadistic" theme throughout, but my heroine, Clara ("clear" in Italian) plays the role of Jean-Paul Marat -- thwarted, crazed moralist, this time a woman, who ends up choking on the very disease she tried to disinfect. A woman attacking the male hierarchy unsuccessfully, because her own emotional confusion gets in the way.

It's as much a statement about vaginocratic and phallogocratic mindlessness as it is a horror story.

The tradition I draw from, in my art - hmm - well, its gotta be a fish-head stew of styles -- never having had the financial backing to be fed complete doctrines from any school -- Surrealist, Cubist, Fauvist, Crapist, Necco-Deco -- I'm an Abrams pocket-version Romanticist-turned Expressionist-turned Dadaist-turned Welfarist depending on which master my digits found to thumb through. What you see is what ain't been corrected by the schools.

Q. The most hopeful aspect of your work, speaking at least in political terms, is the dissolution of life into dreams, women's potentiality to rise out of present acceptance of the world into what you say, "to act on impulse abandon

restrictions on behavior." This sounds, again, like the will to have the barriers between the dreaming and waking state melt down and disappear. But the world you picture is so grotesque. Is this a prescience of what we all must pass through to reach something better? Or perhaps the artist isn't responsible for Utopia, only Dystopian visions at a most dystopian stage of civilized decay?

A. If artists were responsible for Utopia, the dream state would be against the law. A friend once confided to me, with the resonance of a judge, that I had no right to expose my horrific visions to the public. "Art is supposed to elevate, enhance."

Elevation, enhancement and the selling of products are all a necessary part of advertising art and the Popular Mechanix of Being Well-Hung in the Right Place, at the Right Time for the Right Price.

Visionary art requires fearlessness from its observer -- most of us use art for an escape, however, and don't want to look upon cycloptic slobber and mule-guts while we drink our drinks and dance our dances.

This ingredient we shy away from -- fear -- tells us what we are about as much as our love of beauty pleases us. Fear

is intimate, undeniable and very personal. We love the beautiful and shy away from the grotesque. How much of that is learned? How much of it is influenced by Western religion -- hatred of snakes, for example?

If there were no such value judgements as Good and Evil how could Beauty and Ugliness exist as separate entities?

East-Indian culture has allocated a god to cover each manifestation of Nature. One each for Birth, Death, and Destruction as well as for the pleasant beneficent gods. All are honored and well-integrated into the realm of the human personality.

Integrating and accepting the grotesque and the fearsome, along with the beautiful and benevolent is to accept the totality of one's drives -- to realize that creativity and destruction belong in Nature together.

My work is concerned to a great extent with the processes of perception in a pre-objective state. That is, the state of maximized input, minimized comprehension

The infant in a world which hurls itself upon him/her and which has no name. Pre-political, overwhelmed, it is trapped within a state which cannot name itself -- aware, without having developed the capacity to express its fears or ecstasies. The self struggling with the dream state, the death void, the primal sea.



Terre Richards

TERRE RICHARDS

I can speak only for myself in this business of getting published. I first came in contact with other women who were trying to break into underground comics while working for Last Gasp, a publisher of underground comics. I was working as a production assistant, shipping clerk, and general go-fer. My academic background had been film and literature, and like many others I was looking for a "more creative outlet", one that would incorporate a growing interest in writing and animation. As a child I spent a lot of time drawing and writing -- plays, poems, short-stories, singing and acting, the class artist and actress, but a tenacious streak of laziness and lack of self-confidence prevented me from pursuing these interests in college and later after dropping out and coming to San Francisco. I held a bizarre assortment of jobs, from mail carrier to store detective, and a short-lived career as a topless sales-clerk (I lasted 48 hours). Then I drifted around Europe for a year, mostly in Ibiza (Spain) and Morocco. I include all this seemingly irrelevant information because I consider it important in the making of a cartoonist.

As a result of the Women's Movement there was a growing awareness of women in all areas of the arts as well as a newly developing market for women's work in publishing, so the time was right for an all-woman's comic, and when I heard from my boss, Ron Turner at Last Gasp, that Pat Moodian was editing a women's comic and they were looking for contributors, I jumped at the chance. We met at Pat's house and decided that night that we would produce an on-going title of comics by women and that we would function as a "collective," a term used rather loosely in those days to mean there would be no "leader" or editor, but instead a rotating editorship, with everyone contributing their energy to the paper-work and general supportiveness of the group. Thus *Wimmen's Comix* was born.

Q. Maybe you could talk a little about being a part-time artist, as you seem to suggest in your bio for Mama! Dramas: "I am currently living and working in San Francisco, dividing my time between television, Punk rock and child-raising. My advice to aspiring cartoonists -- try plumbing." How does comic drawing working into that life, how do you make sense of it in terms of your other work?

A. My remarks in *Mama's Dramas* were made facetiously -- at the time I wrote them I working a 40 hour week as a graphic artist and dividing my "free time" drawing cartoons, child raising and those other activities. My condition could best be described as Hyper-active, and the only logic that I can connect between comic drawing and my other work is that I thrive on adversity. I am not one of those mythic "superwomen" who manage child raising, high-powered careers and an active social life, and usually something suffers (like my health and mental stability). Practically, I have to make a living, like to be comfortable do not like the bourgeois image of the poet-artist starving for Art's sake (no masochistic tendencies here,

although they do crop up in other ways) so I work for money. I think that women artists are generally more practical than men because they have to be, given all their other responsibilities (like housework and child raising). Salvador Dali says that an artist must develop a taste for champagne and caviar. True, as well as be able to live without them. I also have an extremely supportive mate who shares the domestic responsibilities. Men must learn this if women are to continue pursuing careers outside the home.

Lately I have decided to take a few risks (in a very risky business) and devote my time exclusively to free-lancing (in addition to raising my three-year old angel Miranda, now in nursery school -- another must for a working mom -- quality child-care, a crime that we don't have it in a country as wealthy as ours. Any woman with a child is by necessity a part-time artist in a working day of 18 hours! To me it is not really a matter of choice -- I am a driven woman.

Q. Some of the styles of punk-rockers recurrently turn up in your work, as in your strip in Titters. Do you have any sense of punk in historical relation to u.g. comic strips? Doesn't it seem more screwed-up with commercial glitter and drugs than the u.g. scene? Or is this a difference in historical development, the periods when each took off?

A. Another "punk" strip of mine appeared in the October issue of *High Times* magazine. Punk began as a reaction to the oppressiveness of the "big business" music industry -- the promotion of uniformity, elaborately stylized multi-track production, "image" promotion, the "product" superseding artistic considerations, little room for experimentation and virtually no chance for up and coming musicians trying to break into the industry. In addition, it was time for the music of the sixties which still dominated to move over and make room for the music of the 80s. The underground comics of the sixties had a lot of this same spirit of hostility and vitality. The undergrounds were a reaction to the shackles of the Eastern Establishment (the "industry of Marvel, D.C. and Warren Publications), and the daily syndicates, both of which promoted politically irrelevant, boring, "assembly line" comics and strips that were not addressing themselves to the social, sexual and political revolution taking place.

It is possible that the irreverance of the undergrounds had some influence on punk since the new-wave kids were spawned on the media -- T.V., movies, and the comics; but make no mistake -- the new wave is a reaction also to the political idealism, utopian fantasies, bizarre cults and crack-pot mystics of many of their older brothers and sisters in the "counter-culture." In the comics, it's time for the dope and sex "hippie" comics of the sixties to move over and make room for the new styles of the new wave, or any other wave.

I don't think that punk is any more screwed-up with commercial glitter and drugs than the u.g. scene which had its share of people into drugs or booze, and the theme of

many undergrounds supported the hedonism of a drug-sex centered culture, and a political view that was both naive and extremely romanticized.

It is difficult to talk about a historical development when you are in the middle of it. I personally identify with the revolutionary spirit and styles of the "new wave" so I can't be purely objective -- I am always interested in new ideas and don't feel the need for self-preservation by holding on to the past, as do many of those artists associated with underground comics (and I don't consider myself an underground cartoonist, although I acknowledge that these are my roots). I think that the underground has already become the victim of its own inability to address itself to the changing times, and has become self-indulgent and cult-centered, following the same path of uniformity in style that it originally rebelled against.

Each generation finds its own means of self-expression -- after punk, who knows? Maybe a Fascist takeover or a return to old-fashioned Christian morality. It's hard to predict.

Q. Maybe I'm wrong, but I seem to see a hint now and then in your work of Ted Richards, whose GI comics were easily among the most politically important, and also among the most delightful of the early 70s. Are there some subtle forms of collaboration or idea-trading that go on between women and men comic artists living together?

A. It is impossible to live with someone and not be influenced by their ideas. With Ted and I, there is a mutual trade-off of ideas. My academic background in film and literature has aided Ted in his intellectual pursuits opening up a new world of ideas for him. And Ted's self-taught approach has taught me to trust my own opinions and consider the authority of my own voice. His strong narrative quality and comic timing as well as his ability to create strong, identifiable characters have benefited my development as a cartoonist. Any my cinematic approach to comics is visible in both of our comics. This past year Ted and I have collaborated for the first time on a comic strip together, "The String Gatherer" (see *Bizarre Sex* #2;

Krupp Publishing). I write it and do the pencilling and Ted does the inking. You can see my cinematic eye at work, and Ted's characteristic active line. I have recently completed a script for *Mellow Cat*, a four page full-color comic appearing monthly in *Skateboarder Magazine* by Ted. We often proof-read and copy-edit each other's strips and trade technical information.

I'd like to add that the only way to learn cartooning is by studying comics from the past as well as new strips, and, most important, to learn from other cartoonists. There is a loose apprenticeship that takes place. Ted has learned from Walt Kelly (*Pogo*), Bud Fisher (*Mutt and Jeff*), Dan O'Neill Gilbert Shelton. Besides Ted, my connection with the artists in *Wimmen's Comix* has been beneficial and supportive for me (since women artists weren't getting much knowledge or access to information from men artists). The styles of French women cartoonists Claire Bretecher and Nicole Claveloux (*Heavy Metal*) have been a strong influence on my style. Since I consider comics to also be a literary art form, I am also influenced by writers such as Virginia Woolf, the Count de Lautréamont, Anais Nin, Collette, and Flannery O'Connor. It is no accident that the majority of these writers are women. I look for myself and my experience in works of literature. I consider it important to reflect a woman's sensibility in the comics (god knows nobody else is) -- this is my experience and my voice.

There is no doubt a trade-off between men and women cartoonists living together, but this is only part of what shapes one's vision. There is an advantage to an open dialogue between artists, much in the way that writers influence each other through their contacts with each other and often the arguments that result. I welcome argument as a challenge to my ideas. Unfortunately, the majority of men cartoonists behave as though they were an endangered species, still clinging to good ol' boy cronyism. There are exceptions, however. I share studio space with three other working cartoonists (Michael Leonard, Ted, and Larry Ginick) and all have been supportive. Larry works with me as inker and letterer on "Effluvium", which appeared in *Bizarre Sex* and will be premiering in the future in *High Times*. So things are changing. And we all stand to benefit through this arrangement.

LEE MARRS

Q. Your style seems amazingly rich in details -- how do you compare it with other women underground artists more into the schematic? The details themselves, as in the very early Mad comics, seem the key to the humor. Why this rather than the more upfront political statements of, say, Mama! Dramas?

A. Over the years I've done a lot of different comics. I only do the more cluttered stuff in particular things, like the *Compleat Fart*, and in the *Wet Satin* stories. Because I work as a commercial artist, all the other things I have to do are super-simplified, animated films in particular, so I

naturally like a lot of clutter when I'm doing a "movie." (I've always thought of the comic stories as movies.) In *Wimmen's Comix* where we allowed only a few pages apiece in order to get a lot of people's work exposed, instead of the 32 or 48 pages in some of the later *Pudges*, I would try to cram as much of the scene in as possible, which meant there would be a lot of detail. I think, too, particularly at first, when I started out in comics, I discovered people didn't *read* them, just looked at the pictures. You quite literally had to pull people into the story through the main action, get them hooked, then they would start looking at other things. But if you had a complicated story line....

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The books you mention cover about ten years of work. Things are more sophisticated now, and you can cover more and have people follow, but back in the old days, this was not true. And even now, there are a lot of people who can't follow, because it's so complicated. They didn't want a novel, they wanted Daffy Duck. So it's like I paint what I see. Some movies have a lot of detail in them, but other times when all I see is straightforward, they're more simple. I really enjoy, aesthetically, not what I can do the easiest -- like Shelby's real design-like break-up of panels. It probably works better for the comic book style. But since personal freedom is the only reason to do underground comics -- there's no money and no distribution -- I end up doing what I feel fits the particular project.

Q. You're clearly into feminist issues and yet the women's movement is not spared from your satirical jibes. Likewise, we imagine lots of women might not see the humor in Pudge's rape fantasies. What kind of feedback have you received about that? Do you have any qualms about using the theme?

A. First of all is how the women's movement has reacted to all our work. I'll just answer for me. A lot of women not only didn't see any humor in Pudge's rape fantasies, most of the women's movement, when we first got started, didn't see the humor in anything we were doing. As a matter of fact one reason the women's comic collective did not hold together in a commercial sense, to be able to do more books than just the *Wimmen's Comix* that some of us could hack together, and that we didn't get better distribution, was that the women's movement in the beginning didn't have any sense of humor in itself, which is sad, but typical. In the Black movement, the Civil Rights movement where I was active in the 1960s, you just didn't make certain kinds of jokes...It took awhile, then, when some sense of security was reached, some sense of balance, people started getting their sense of humor back. Of course, some people have none no matter where they are in life. But we got totally rejected by the women's movement, for the most part. (There were a few exceptions.) Not just that *Ms* magazine wouldn't run us, but bookstores across the country wouldn't carry us, because we did not have a heavy, traditional, feminist political line. The fact that in *Wimmen's Comix* we have a variety of outlooks, that we poked fun at all kinds of people and places, really freaked them out. We got irate letters, we got threats, people just didn't like us at all. Also we were fighting against a general prejudice against comic books per se. A lot of women's movement people were intelligensia types. Comic books were trash so whatever there was, was trash...

Ms Magazine's advertising department thought we were men masquerading as women in order to make money off the women's movement! What they wanted then was a Wonderwoman, someone totally perfect, who would fly around and save people's lives, or break down their door and save them from their husbands. In a very weird way that goes totally against liberation; what we kept hearing back from all these various bookstores, particularly feminist and lesbian bookstores, was against showing women coping with the weaknesses and confusions that were part of our daily lives. In other words, we weren't

allowed to work through in our cartooning just what all of them were working through in their encounter groups, their consciousness-raising groups, in their own lives....So that left us, as far as distribution was concerned, only in headshops that mistakenly thought we were selling sex-books...It all made for a real blow, year in and year out, and it's only in the last two years, finally, that the Women's movement has been around long enough that they can see the humor in some of these things. And then, too, some of them are taking our work now because, "Jesus Christ, these people are still around..."

As far as *Pudge* in particular, the heaviest negative reaction -- it's been about 80 percent positive, and all the negative based on people not reading it -- have come from people who thought I was ridiculing fat people. Particularly a "fat group" in Los Angeles, that told me if they ever got me in LA, they would shoot me on the street. They assumed that by drawing a fat person I was ridiculing them. But to me, since so much response has been in the other direction, I think I did get across the points that are important. I've heard from so many people, different strata, etc., so I know I did communicate what I thought was important.

The rape story was done back in 1972 and at the time I was working from a lot of stereotypes, like in all my stories a way to keep in contact with a totally unknown audience, and also just to go through what we flash on *Pudge*, I'm sure, considering her level of competence and intelligence in regard to all other subject matter, I'm sure had no idea of what rape really entails. She would not be having the same fantasy in *Pudge* #4. She's grown up. That's the point of the book. I don't feel badly about having the rape fantasy in....

Q. Does being a 'Bama Girl have any conscious effect on your work? You seem to be among the few who consistently include Black characters.

A. Yes, being a 'Bama Girl has probably more effect on my work than most anything else. Growing up in Alabama in the '50s was like growing up anywhere else in the 1920s. I often times feel I've gone the whole process of coming through the 1920s to 1978, a long way to travel. Not only that we were all supposed to put on girdles when we grew up, but the kinds of attitudes about what you could do with your life....it's given my work an entirely different perspective. I probably have more respect for traditional people and their attitudes than other artists.

That there are a lot of Black characters in my work, a lot of Chinese and others, has a lot to do with my being raised where 80 percent of the people around me were Black, but I also live in the Bay Area, most racially integrated and mixed in all different strata than anywhere else in the country.

Q. Besides your own comics you've done lots of collaboration with other women. Compared to your own work, what has the collective experience been like? How much was (far as you can perceive) motivated by feminist ideals and how effectively were those ideals met? Which kind of work do you prefer now and why?

A. In the comic book field, collaboration means doing a story with another person...I've only actually collaborated on a couple of stories with women. One set of stories I did for *DC Comics*, a humor comic, they sent me strips and I was just supposed to do the drawing. Quite a few of the strips were done by Mark Skrenes, who was selling these things under a guise name, because the editors at the time were worried about women doing work...I had no idea it was a woman whose stories I was drawing. But her stories were the best ones I was working on. I have written a couple of stories Joyce Farmer worked on. That was okay, but it was long distance. With very complicated things, I can do a better job setting up the punch line to make something funny off my own writing, whereas somebody else who does a more simple style, as does Joyce, has trouble fitting in all the various elements...I felt it was a C+B- effort. I have collaborated more with guys, and it varies almost exactly to my relation with them...The hardest time I ever had was doing a series called *Earth Probe* with the guy I was living with, a science fiction writer. His vision was very specific, different than mine, so they didn't coincide.

It's easier *not* to collaborate. If you come up with ideas easily and write fast, like I do, the whole thing is organic, fast. The people I know who love to collaborate most are people who have great difficulty with some aspect of the stories. They can come up with great ideas, but can't come up with a climax; there are other people who break the story into panels quite well but can't write dialog; there are people who can ink well but can't draw well. That kind of thing is done quite commonly among the men; women don't do the volume of work where that is necessary. Collaborating is a little more fun. But as far as being able to go through and get it done, I prefer working by myself.

I found working with other women editorially, to be terribly disappointing. I'm only speaking of the comics collective in the Bay Area. The fact that we were a collective, doubled by the fact that there were only a couple of us who had any professional experience, made the whole thing a mess. As a learning experience for most of the people involved, it was extremely valuable. It gave lots of women a chance to take responsibility to organize, to set up a schedule, deal with the printing necessities, all the details of putting out a comic book. But it was terribly inefficient, frustrating, and over a long period of time, very depressing. You have to remember we stayed in about the same place year in and year out. We could not get distribution, we could not get backing, we were getting back reject notices from the women's movement, small bookstores wouldn't carry us--and we had to learn all these things. We felt like we were on a treadmill. We had a lot of ideals. They were not always exclusively feminist. Some of them were professional ideals. For instance, there's no way a beginning artist could break in, no place for it. All the underground comics consisted of friends printing friends. They were all buddies, they didn't even let us in, that's why we were printing our own comics. We saw that something was going to happen with us. So we tried to keep half the comic, sometimes more than half, to people sending us stuff in from around the country. People sent us their work, then we would get into a heavy correspondence with them, sending them advice, and they would send us back scripts,

and we would send them back...All that was very good, but a great deal of work. Those of us who were into a teacher's mentality felt good. The best thing was that brainstorm, the feedback, especially for people who were beginning. All of us felt this was going to be a springboard for bigger things. We thought we would be able to work out some kind of national distribution. We thought we would be able to do lots of series of books. We thought we could make this into careers for ourselves. In that sense we became thoroughly disillusioned, and we realized it was not going to happen...It really did burn me out, as far as collective things were concerned. I realized if I was ever going to get beyond a certain level of professional skill, if I was ever going to make a living from it, I was really going to have to focus in on my own personal career.

Q. In Pudge you seem to be chronicling the whole late 60s SF hippie/commune/free clinic/vegetarian/dope scene. Is this partly your own story?

A. I came to San Francisco in 1969, already a commercial artist. It is partly my own story in the sense that I've done some of the things Pudge does. But Pudge is a collection of all the things that happened to my friends, happening to one person...Originally Pudge was going to be my story. When I used to work on the East Coast I worked on comic strips, *Prince Valiant*, *Little Orphan Annie* and the *Heart of Juliet Jones* -- I did rocks and things like that as a background person -- I realized unless you came up with a character who is very close to yourself and your life, you get stuck after about a year. I also realized a continuing character seemed to catch people's interest. Since I was a fat girl when I was growing up, and since I was from the South, I thought that's what I would do, a story on a fat little intellectual-reject kid who thought she was so alien she must be a martian, moving to Washington, D.C., New York, San Francisco. And the most dramatic thing would be having her come to San Francisco during the Hippie Days, and with flashbacks. But Pudge, as a character, didn't want to be anything more than what she was. So many people have felt identification with her that I can see it was some subconscious part of me. Even now I get letters, like from a 12 year old boy who identifies with her, from college professors who identify with her struggle for this and that, for her determination. It's been fascinating to see that what I intended is not what I ended up with, but what I ended up with seems to be much more valuable than my original idea.

Q. Could you say something about your evolution as an artist? Is comics drawing the final destination or a way station along the route?

A. It was a way station. I'm into animated stories, but more than anything I passed through, I know I'll be doing comics till the end of my days. I will continue to do other things as I have. I started out as a child wanting to be an artist. Everyone was amazed at how well I could draw. I was painting and drawing cartoons. When I got into junior high school I

started doing cartoons for the school paper. I could say things about the school, and instead of kicking me out they would give me a journalism prize. So I thought: Aha! And I've always been interested in world affairs, in people. In college I majored in International Relations and Art. When I got out of college I found it impossible to get a job. Newspapers were folding, syndication was tied up, and they didn't hire women except for the Women's Pages. I ended up working for a TV station, doing things and political cartoons. That was an ideal job. I loved it. But because of business within the industry, a lot of us were let go. Then the recession hit, and I couldn't get back into television. I'd worked my way through college doing magazine illustrations. I got to the West Coast in the deep recession. I worked as a store detective (I carefully never caught anyone) and as a fitting room checker, a market survey person, finally did get some drawing jobs. I started a graphic service with a couple of other people, for underground and other newspapers, but it wasn't financially successful. I got into under- and overground comics then, and I've continued freelancing. I'm partners with a guy in a company called "Suspended Animation," and we've gotten some animation jobs. I always wanted to do movies, and I'm now launching into doing books -- graphic novels. I'm hoping to break out of the smalltime into the mediumtime. Someday I hope to do animated films, and in a theatre I'll see (before the regular film) "A Lee Marrs Production." Heh heh.

Q. "Moonshine Mama" in Wimmen's Comix #7 -- incredibly strong, direct, political. Would you draw more like it if

an audience and political movement existed to take this kind of stuff? How do the politico and humorist resolve themselves in the same person?

A. "Moonshine Mama" is almost my favorite story I've ever done. It combines things most natural to me, it's a true story, so it has more power for a lot of people, it has a tone that is very much like my own life and it revolves around a relationship that was a central relationship in my life, my relationship with my grandmother. In real life, the Moonshine Mama was my grandmother's best friends. It's one of the stories I'm promoting as a book. I'd do that kind of thing all the time if I could get paid for it. I know there is an audience that understands it and takes it in, from the feedback over that story. A lot of people have been deeply moved by it, really enjoyed it. What magazine or place there is that reaches more of these people, I have no idea. Having a few comic book fans appreciate it is not like having a market. I keep hoping that someday a small cloud of smoke will appear in my studio and say, "Hiya kid, I'm your Guardian Angel. What you ought to do is mail this off to *Frobisher's Weekly* in Colorado, they have eight million bucks and are going to be publishing for the next 52 years, so go with them, kid." But so far no clouds of smoke. If Moonshine Mama is successful as a book, I could do more things with that tone and emphasis.

My sense of humor is probably the core aspect of my life -- it permeates all the other aspects of my life, fits into everything from sex to grocery shopping. Combining that, balancing the woman, politico, businesswoman, has been harder -- a struggle in my life all along, but that's another story...

ROBERTA GREGORY

Q. Of the few gay women underground artists, your work seems the most "political" in the sense of realistically dealing with repression, sense of isolation from straight women as well as from men, etc. Does it seem a little strange to be drawing amidst artists who speak almost continually in metaphors, making their points through indirection?

A. I've always been a very direct person anyway, to the point of being blunt. I can avoid saying something, but if I do say it, I'll say it realistically. I've never seen other artists work as metaphorical, or else I assumed they were doing the same thing I was, only their reality exists differently.

Q. "Protecting Yer Morals" (Wimmen's Comix #7) speaks more positively about the human environment in jail than any other u.g. comic that comes to mind. Is this a personal experience suggesting the ability of gay women to resist the sense of self-hatred often created by severe repression?

A. I've never been in jail -- in many ways I've had it lucky. For years I absolutely hated myself while making myself be ultra-tolerant of others. I guess I'm reacting against this now by maybe overdoing the whole self-pride and hang-in-there number. I feel almost like I have to; I could allow myself to get absolutely paranoid and feel like the most despised class in the world -- in a way I am sort of taking care of the people I write about -- and the people they represent in "real life" (whatever that is). I'll have stories in my next *Dynamite Damsels* based on my lover's experience in overcoming literally years in psychiatric abuse facilities and overcoming the self-hatred caused by that. Sometimes it's a long road to self-validation.

Q. How do you see your work politically, that is in relation to the Women's Movement, gay movement, problems of fragmentation they have suffered in the last decade and the waves of right-wing backlash. Do you see yourself as an artist trying to make herself useful to that struggle? Do you feel at all confined by the sense of political responsibility you obviously have?

A. My earliest stuff was strictly apolitical: funny animals, dancing vegetables etc. I do feel I'm sort of categorized into a certain subject-matter, which is why I don't seem to be invited into many comic books anymore -- which is why I don't have much recently in print -- it takes time to work full time and save up for printing a book and writing and drawing the damned thing. I did my lesbian comics to give my sisters something to relate to in the hetero world of underground comics and wherever I chance to get something in print I of course want to give people who *Don't* happen to be hetero some point to start from. The thing that got my first story in print was seeing virtually straight *Wimmen's Comix* (#1 had a story with a lesbian in it, but it was from a non-lesbian point of view) and I thought, hey what's going on? So I wrote a lesbian story full

of cliches and very melodramatic; it didn't turn out quite like I wanted it to, but at least it was a valid place to be coming from. It would be *nice* to be an artist trying to make myself useful to the struggle! Sisters have written to me to say how great it feels to see lesbians in an otherwise straight comic book and even to have a whole bookful of it. So that makes me feel like I'm accomplishing something. Right now I've got too much guilt to do something just for the pleasure in doing it -- I'm earning somewhat of a living doing art and production art for a big company that complains constantly about my art, but I work for cheap, and it pays the rent. Of course, that all comes before mere comics that in the long run seems to cost more to do than they are worth and I've gotten burned out living on \$150.00 a month for the past seven years. I don't feel a whole lot of



Roberta Gregory

support from other comics people, maybe from (self-imposed?) label of political and lesbian. There doesn't seem to be a lot of energy in the comics world right now -- that's unfortunate, but a lot of people are probably in the same financial predicament I'm in. I do feel like people may be disappointed by me printing in mass media form some of the more light-hearted comics I used to do (when I had the time) -- "where are the messages in it?" (it might just be just my too-high standards surfacing.) I'm rather disappointed that there don't seem to be as many women doing comic stories anymore -- and almost no lesbians (*DykeShorts* by Mary Wings is a good exception to this) -- *Wet Satin* is all straight (they should call it "straight women's erotic fantasies") -- both issues I found less of a turn-on than Webster's Dictionary -- it's amusing in spots and gross in others. In short I feel rather discouraged by the state of women's comics right now, in what exists and in my own lack of money and energy to do what I love most (comics! I get depressed reading comics now -- my ideal self-punishment is forbidding myself to do them. Unfortunately, this seem to be the case now) in my pursuit of a "steady" but lowpaying job.

Q. Your historic work -- "Mary Ann Willson" in Wimmen's Comix #6 -- seemingly offers a different tack, in looking at the historic experience of women's own culture main-

tained often within the larger society. The documentation of women's friendship, touching and comforting each other at crucial times but also as general friends held together in women's domestic relations against the outside ("business"/"male") world is quite extensive and growing. The tragedy of 20th century life is that the sentimental basis of these relations (only rarely overtly sexual) was eroded and just about destroyed -- women became "individuals" much more like men. Do you see your work and the politics you support as a recontinuation of that closeness?

A. I get a lot of good energy from good relationships with other women -- identified women -- I don't think such supportive relationships have ever died out -- despite all the stories of male bonding and women's competitiveness (for power, money, i.e. men) and for the media's attempt to make women hate each other -- all that is a fear of women's energy combined (notice how women are being lured back to the "feminine mystique"-- "come on honey, aren't you tired of this lib business - doncha wanna be a girl again?") I may be overzealous about supportive women's relationships -- it's a fact of life where I live, and maybe its better kept secret -- the threatened white male machine might try taking it away from us! Anyhow, lack of time prevents me from going on for another 15 pages.



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Women humorists. Not exactly mutually exclusive terms, but a jarring juxtaposition to many. Of course, there *was* Dorothy Parker. Brittle, witty and, above all, exceptional. There's never been anything like her since Fran Lebowitz. Since the publication in 1978 of *Metropolitan Life*, Fran Lebowitz has an equally favorable critical reception, a cult following, and indeed brought fame and limelight to women humorists. I knew from the magazine hoopla that Lebowitz grew up in Morristown, New Jersey. Interested in the influence of environment, I decided to run down Dorothy Parker's background. Imagine my surprise when I discovered Parker was raised in New York and New Jersey and *went to school* in Morristown. Hardly a case for the "Morristown mafia" of female humorists, but nonetheless a critical coincidence. Yet Fran Lebowitz is not a barometer of female comedy writers, merely a divining rod. She is a part of an emerging consciousness, a feminist assault on the male domain of humor.

In 1976 Deanne Stillman and Anne Beatts edited *Titters*, misnamed the *first* collection of humor by women (see Ann Gordon's review of Mary Beard's book), however a collection of humor by women. This publication neither launched nor trail-blazed women's humor. Rather this uneven yet eventful funny business acknowledges that not only are women able to produce humor, but humorous women are productive. A major blow was struck with the publication of this work. Most of the contributors are established writers, comediennes, humorists, actresses and/or funny people. Many of the pieces were designed expressly for the collection, others are reprints from national periodicals. *Titters* is not as much a failure or success, but a measure of participation. The width and breadth of the collection, as well as the contributors



The right eye's duty is to dive inside the telescope while the left eye interrogates the microscope.

--Leonora Carrington

REVIEW of TITTERS

(ranging in age from nineteen to seventy) signifies not that women have arrived, but that females have always been around, coming and going in different directions all at the same time and nobody seemed to notice until these two editors decided to put as much as was possible together in one easy package.

The basic thrust of the book is feminist. Although many pieces satirize the women's movement (leaders, martyrs, etc.), the editors and indeed the majority of humorists in this book address themselves to women. In this, the work transcends feminine and becomes feminist. *Titters*, not in spite of but *because* of its ability to reflect the male culture (as a wall to bounce off of, as a cage to break out of), presents a predominantly feminist posture. Women have been defined by their sex. Rather than a strident rejection of this, most contributors use this basic bias as a concept worthy of ridicule and as a notion to trampoline to humor. As an example, the very title is defiant. The cover presents the reader with a woman's torso in a clinging pink T-shirt, with "Titters" emblazoned across a pair of braless breasts. The seven title sections (Knockers, Melons, Jugs, Hooters, Bongos, Headlights and Boobs) reek similar havoc with their frontpieces and what follows.

Oh my, don't we all have favorites. Not to mention those things that just weren't funny at all -- but I will. Generally, the most enjoyable pieces were those satirical contributions which so accurately mocked the "female" experience: Rosie Shuster's "The Nightmare" (tale of a car accident victim caught with torn underwear), Emily Prager's "Clampax Menstrual Poontons Instruction Book" (self-explanatory), and Kristin Mull's "Mansion House" (a corny copia of mink-lined ironing board covers and diamond-studded shelf-liner). The three magazine parodies were wonderful slams against a whole spectrum of issues: *Fake Confessions*, *Slammer*, and *Miz*. These collective sections included such favorites as "I Got All My Meat From the Butcher" (A Revolting Novelette), The Patty Hearst Makeover (From College Girl to Urban Guerilla and Back Again), the Tsk Tsk Column of *Miz* (the "men" of

No Comment is clipped and circled from *Ms Magazine*). Outstanding individual contributions were numerous.

From comics (Dale Messick's "Brenda Starr Gets a Navel") to essays (Helen Lawrenson's "Bacchus Is A Lady") from comedy monologues (Rebecca Reynold's piece) to Mimi Kennedy's Songbook, the variety of contributions demonstrates the range and ability of women humorists. Top concept contenders are Emily Prager's "Girl Sprout Handbook" (with badges in Artifice and Craft, Better Half and Faking Orgasm), Irma Kurtz's "Whole Birth Catalogue" (with "What to do with the Placenta" over a table setting), Anne Beatt's " Sylvia Plath Cookbook" (next to a photo of a woman with her head in an oven) and my all time favorite Janie Gaynor and Peggy Goldman's "Eloise Returns" ("She's twenty-six, she lives at the Plaza, she has a deco coke spoon"). The literary pieces are wildly uneven. Some of the stronger contributions were Deanne Stillman's "Pimento" and her "Feminish Dictionary," Janice Harayada's "Mary Tyler Moore Freaks Out" and "Fran Lebowitz's Page."

The various not-so-funny pieces did not really bother me. But a few contributions disturbed me, not as a matter of taste but as a question of tactical error. Lynn Goldsmith's "Love Story" failed to hit any mark. Tracy Young's "Better Dead than Read -- Poetry By Women Poets Who have Killed Themselves -- Or Ought To.." seemed a cheap shot: it could have been better or not at all. Gilda Radner's "DietTips" is a rather weak contribution from a really strong female comic. Candice Bergen's "Caught in an Unusual Pose" is a waste of space. *Titters* "Heavy Hundred" is symptomatic of the self-loathing style of non-comedy which has handicapped women's humor and which most of the book avoided. Thus *Titters* contains the good, the bad and the uglier side of women's humor. Who could ask for anything more? The introduction threatens us with *Daughter of Titters* and *Titters Revisited*. That's the more -- minus the self-loathing -- we'll ask for.

Catherine Clinton

LAUGHING THEIR WAY

Laughing Their Way: Women's Humor in America. ed. by Martha Bensley Bruere and Mary Ritter Beard. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934.



When you see a person slip down on the ice, do not laugh at them... It is more feminine on witnessing such a sight, to utter an involuntary scream...

That tip comes from Eliza Leslie who published *The Behavior Book, A Manual for Ladies* in 1853, and Martha Bruere and Mary Beard classified it under "Ladies Laughter" in 1934. We are to understand either that ladies knew enough to laugh at the absurdity of their advice books or that to appreciate, let alone create, laughter in antebellum America required resistance to the rule of corsets and the tight grip of an escort's hand. The editors do not say that women's humor suffocated under nineteenth-century prescriptions for womanhood, but their selections imply it by drawing overwhelmingly from the first third of the twentieth century for an anthology that purports to survey a century of laughter. Surely women laughed out loud long before this century and lightened any number of chores and encounters with humor. Bruere and Beard kept their eyes on marketable humorous arts. Maybe the public spectacle of women's laughter was of recent invention, forged out of the awakening to freedom and the consciousness of a national community that characterized women's modernity. The editors, however, leave the reader with a suspicion that they prefer the humor of middle class, urban wom-

en whose angle on life is set by offices, parties, club meetings, shopping, books and the *New Yorker*.

Martha Bruere, artist, author, some time-socialist, and clubwoman had written on women's work and social reform. She no doubt chose the sixty illustrations in *Laughing Their Way*, nearly all of them cartoons, more than half of which had appeared in the *New Yorker*, as if that were the pinnacle of women's achievements as pictorial humorists. At the opposite extreme are the four nineteenth-century pictures, anonymous amusements of women expressed in the design of woven rugs and satire in cutout silhouettes. Their artists have seen domestic details with a bemused eye and employed their private media to reproduce them, but the works have little more audience than the artist's household. Access to publications, many of women's devising such as magazines of the suffragist and birth control campaigns, broadened not only the audience for women's humor but also the purposes of their laughter. Alice Beach Winter's drawing of a forlorn woman staring at a "Boy Wanted" sign, published in *The Masses*, took up public policies and indicated women's attitudes as they might be if women fully recognized their predicament. Helen E. Hokinson's clubwomen, a *New Yorker* staple for many years, dominate the selections. Her overstuffed matrons, tossing fur stoles and presiding over meetings and men, discuss municipal reform or "Bronxville and the League of Nations" and remark, upon meeting a budding social worker, "How brave!" Neither the characters nor the artist feel passion for causes or principles. The specific angle of woman's vision that is here celebrated features rarified

banter between artists who ridicule the hollow shell of women's clubs in the 1930s and the club women who enjoy the joke -- and the notoriety.

Mary Beard had turned from suffrage and labor agitation to a unique brand of scholarship by which she hoped to alter women's consciousness of their past, particularly to give name and substance to the force that women had always exerted in history. "An agency in creative enterprise," humor helped women to shape the nation's progress. It carries a heavy load throughout the book, for humor must provide keys not only to women's culture but also to the role of humor in civilization. Three stories, grouped together as "Human Interest Stories," came about because middle-class women encountered the lower orders through social work and teaching and set down their impressions of social differences complete with immigrant dialects. The plots are easily summarized: college graduate takes Italian child to the country for Fresh Air; WASP school-teacher meets feuding Russian immigrants; neighbor of Louisville settlement house, "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," aspires to be respectable. They won't split your sides but they will teach you, according to Beard, about women who laughed under the pressure of class conflict in cities, "preparing the way perhaps for a likeness-of-kind ideology -- root of all amicable associations." Even though the middle-class women in these stories have the good grace to laugh at their own confusion over the unexpected sophistication of their needy clients, Beard's optimism about social harmony would be a bit more convincing if she included some good jokes on social workers too.



The immediate task . . . is the spiritual liberation of the proletariat from the tutelage of the bourgeoisie.

---Rosa Luxemburg

Whose minds worked along the calculated path that Bruere and Beard trace? Their preconceptions about what women's consciousness could be -- their goal for women and civilization -- steered them away from inventiveness that failed to take formal society seriously. Though she was a pioneer in social history, Beard overlooked, for example, the "surveys" of humor being compiled by folklorists and, instead, tracked down finehoned wit, and yet she presumed to answer questions about how women amused themselves and what they laughed at. Two of the three strands of women's humor included in B. A. Botkin's *Treasury of American Folklore* shatter logic. Neither civilization nor woman's contribution to it -- as judged by Beard and Bruere -- could be readily appreciated on the basis of Little Audrey jokes as told by Texas teenagers in the 1930s and collected by Cornelia Chambers.

One day Little Audrey and her mother were driving along when all of a sudden the car door flew open and Little Audrey's mother fell out. Little Audrey just laughed and laughed, 'cause she knew all the time that her mother had on her light fall suit.

And many more in the same vein, that kept women laughing their way. "Borrowing Trouble" tales existed in most European countries and many American states in the nineteenth century, testifying to their appeal to popular imagination. Though their details differed, the version reported from Massachusetts by Fanny D. Bergen in 1898 exemplifies the form.

A girl sat on a river bank crying. On being asked the cause of her grief, she replied, "Oh, I was thinking if I had a darter and my darter had a darter and she should fall into the warter, how dreadful it would be."

Mary Beard is determined to show us women fully engaged with society, whether by changing it or mastering its commerce of humor, and because reason, even if applied to absurdity and eccentricity, is their most powerful weapon for locking up the demons of anti-female attitudes, Beard stresses only its ideal manifestations.

At the forefront of nineteenth-century humor stood Samantha Allen, creation of Marietta Holley and one of the great talkers in American culture. Samantha takes on everybody and everything sniffing at the types who congregate at Saratoga Springs, marveling at her husband's obstinacy, and thinking about the "great subject of wimmen's rites." Beard notes that the author has an axe to grind, but she cannot help appreciating the historical



rightness of Samantha's wit for 1874. Samantha has been talking to Betsey Bobbet, "a neighborin' female of ours," about contentment.

Betsey haint married and she don't seem contented. She is awful opposed to wimmen's rights; she thinks it is wimmen's only spear to marry...which makes it hard and wearin' on the single men around here. For take the men that are most opposed to wimmen's havin' a right, and talk the most about its bein' her duty to cling to man like a vine to a tree, they don't want Betsey to cling to them, they won't let her cling to 'em...[S]ays I to 'em "Which had you ruther do, let Betsey Bobbet cling to you or let her vote?" and they would every one of 'em quail before that question. They would drop their heads before my keen grey eyes and move off the subject.

But Betsey don't get discouraged. Every time I see her she says in a hopeful wishful tone, "That the deepest men of minds in the country agree with her in thinkin' that it is wimmen's duty to marry and not to vote."

Holley's popular stories contain social commentary rooted in historically specific neighborhoods where gossip flourished and notable characters like Samantha and Betsey thrived. Although Samantha has a beef against a community that excludes women from politics on such shaky bases, her humor takes for granted the neighborliness of her life -- reinforces and builds it, Beard would say -- and the essential connection between what her neighbors think and what sort of society they will maintain.

The urban wits, whose classy and polished writing makes up the bulk of *Laughing Their Way*, celebrate a disengaged personality with a heightened sense of life's absurdity but no commitment to history, except in the rare instances where a fight over the rights of women captures their attention. Cracked hostesses, suburban tennis games, bureaucracy at city hall and the department store, these are the capers of the middle-classes. Perhaps their audiences are no smaller than Samantha's, but the constraints on one's ability to share the joke are no longer agreement or disagreement but material conditions. At their best, as in Dorothy Parker's skit, "The Garter," tales reach out to laugh at emotional states of such intense isolation and accuracy that the experience is simply human, albeit rendered with female details. Parker's "Garter" has just snapped on the leg of a woman who is seated at a party, leaving the woman preoccupied by the impossibility of ever rising from her chair without severe humiliation as her stocking slips to the floor. No social gambit seems adequate in her acute anxiety. The fact that I've never worn such a garter does not lessen my share in the woman's dilemma because her monologue is so true, to say, knowing that I have just bled through my pants and the likelihood exists that when I stand up not only will my pants be at least obviously wet, if not red, but a puddle of blood will remain on the chair. There I might sit until hell freezes over and my wedding's gone by.

By pursuing the humorists who had the confidence to tell woman's story as she knows it to be, by insisting that women maintained a humorous and distinctive angle on life, and by circulating samples of the best work, Mary Beard laid a cornerstone for more raucous, physiological, and mass-produced humor by women in our generation, even if she failed to find a social history of women's laughter.

Ann D. Gordon

the CURSE



Ann D. Gordon & K.F. Dennis:
Perils of UnRagged Annie — The Crisis

THE JOY OF VACUUMING

We used to do it in the dark to get it over with as quickly as possible, but then in the morning we would discover all that we had missed. I decided that the world was ready for "The Joy of Vacuuming." What finally convinced me was seeing a centerfold of *Esquire* devoted to professional ranges. Then I knew that the cooking thing had peaked, and that it was time to move on to the next thing. (Even if the next thing is celibacy, it can easily -- and joyfully -- be combined with vacuuming. Cooking would be more difficult. What can you do with half a goose?)

Vacuuming suits all tastes because while in a sense it's very clean, in another sense it's very dirty. This chiaroscuro quality is slam bang in the middle of the modern aesthetic. The promise of Scylla and Charybdis must transcend Eliot's Wasteland and emerge limp after devouring the litter of his "Cocktail Party." (I hope I have established my credentials as an inflated bag.)

What do you need to get into the joy of vacuuming? Simple equipment will do. You should have strong attachments and a supply of disposable bags. The best are obtained by mail order and can be sent in a plain wrapper. Cheap ones will bust; cloth ones will make big dust. A long heavy cord is useful so that you can go from room to room without unplugging. It will get tangled with everything from time to time, but that is part of the joy.



What model to use? It doesn't matter; use what you have. You can adjust your technique for bare floors or shags. All the wands and hoses are basically the same, although some couple by friction alone. Eureka is for the pure joy of discovery; an upright is always convenient; a Hoovercraft levitates; Regina and Filter Queen are for special tastes.

What to wear? Filmy georgette, sheer chiffon, Indian gauze -- will all be sucked right off you. Skin diving gear will enable you to get under things but may be hot.

Positions: Most people just go back and forth in one place on the rug, but it is also possible to make a single long stroke across the floor. The little brush at the end of the long tubes is good for hard to reach mirrors. Your crevice tool on the long tubes is useful for when you have trouble getting close. To get higher, you can put the round or long machine upright, but the upright will not lie down. In the old days, a special device dispensed chemicals for moth control, but nowadays this is unnecessary, as the moths refuse to eat modern fabrics. Once you start experimenting you will discover for yourself all the joyful ways in which your machine can be extended and get into places you never even knew existed! But do not experiment just before the minister comes to tea -- you may not be able to get everything off the floor in time.

Variations: The principal variation depends on which end is selected for in-

section of the hose; one side is for blowing and one for sucking. Sucking is best for most jobs, but for some jobs (i.e., behind the radiator) blowing is necessary. To prolong the joy, alternate.

Group vacuuming is increasingly popular. Couples used to get together on Saturday nights to try out new recipes from *The Joy of Cooking*, but this was fattening and expensive, and made a mess, besides. Now they spend evenings on the floor in a tangle of wires, hoses, wands, brushes and nozzles, comparing machines and horsepower. A great deal of fun is had when the whole gang gets going with their shag rakes. A prize may be given to the person or group that makes the longest continuous attachment with the available parts.

This is one kind of party where not a speck of evidence remains the morning after. There may be a buzz in your head, but no crumbs or butts on the floor. Unless, of course, you do Chinese vacuuming, in which case the whole mess reappears within two hours.

Competitive vacuuming: If you make the big leagues you will want to enter the Hoover bag-off, held in a hotel ballroom in Oklahoma, capital of the Dust Bowl. Contestants compete for the coveted "Suction Cup." The object here is to change bags as quickly as possible, without spilling a drop. Despite the expertise assembled, it tends to be a big cough.

Donna Hardway



WOMEN'S HUMOR OLD STYLE

HOW TO PRESERVE A HUSBAND

*Discovered in a Western cook-book (eds).

Be careful in your selection. Do not choose too young. When once selected, give your entire thought to preparation for domestic use. Some

insist on keeping them in a pickle, others are constantly getting them in hot water. This makes them sour, hard and sometimes bitter. Even poor varieties may be made sweet, tender and good by garnishing them with patience, well-sweetened

with love, and seasoned with kisses. Wrap them in a mantle of charity. Keep warm with a steady fire of domestic devotion and serve with peaches and cream. Thus prepared, they will keep for years.



Lillian Dudkiewicz

WOMEN'S HUMOR NEW STYLE

WHITE BREAD BLUES

WHITE BREAD BLUES

I grew up thinking if Wonder Bread could build my body twelve different ways, why couldn't one of them have been breasts?

By the time I had wasted my high school years saving my virginity, chastity was worse than plague in college. I tried to get rid of it at a freshman mixer, in a college dorm, in fact in several college dorms, but it kept tagging along on dates, hiccuping halfway through a romantic interlude and flubbing up my seductions. I lied to get laid, and the taint lingered on.

The fifty-first way to leave your lover: give him a complimentary vasectomy with the lid of a tuna fish tin.

When he asked me how I got his shirts so soft, I told him I chewed them. ("But I didn't ask you how you got them soaked with slobber...")

Never date a man who wears more jewelry than you.

Elective courses at Miss Porter's:

HYGIENE: Papering public toilet seats

ECONOMICS: How to open a charge account

FRENCH: Perfume, menus and kissing

ENGLISH: Riding Sidesaddle

He'll tell you *he* hasn't done anything, even if he *did* do something that you were hurt by it wasn't *his* fault but *your* fault for letting him hurt you. Now you know why they call it *man-slaughter*. Let him have it, but remember; the heart-pressed have a thin red line running head to toe.

If we've come such a long way, why are they calling us *baby*?

Do you have any suicidal tendencies? Well, I have been dating a married man...

Catherine Clinton

*The Poor Fish says:
It's all right to organ-
ize, but not to belong
to the unions. He says
he would approve of
unions if they would
only stop antagonizing
the best people.*



THE POOR FISH says:
*That human nature
can't be changed and
what we need is a
great religious revival.*

*The Poor Fish
says, he deplores
striking because
it is out of keep-
ing with the dig-
nity of labor.*

Wisdom of the Poor Fish

THE POOR FISH says:
*There never was such
prosperity. People are
living in more expens-
ive quarters than ever.*

THE POOR FISH says:
*that he knows labor
produces all the
wealth but that the
capitalists produce
even more.*

THE POOR FISH says:
*that he would stand
solidly for the rights
of labor if labor were
more than three per
cent of the popula-
tion but the vast ma-
jority of the people in
the United States are
respectable citizens.*

*If people would
work harder we
would not have
so much unrest.*

HOW TO CURE BOLSHEVISM—No. 6.



Rochester, N. Y.—Mrs. Price Bulge, a wealthy society woman of this city, has announced that she intends to devote much of her time and money to further the movement against the teachings of Bolshevism.

To a reporter she said: "Bolshevism will destroy the family."

Mrs. Bulge has been divorced four times.

HOW TO CURE BOLSHEVISM No. 10.



Professor Dewlap

Darius B. Dewlap, Professor of Physics in Pale University, says the spirit of Bolshevism is a disease of the glands. If a man complains of unemployment and cannot face realities cheerfully — his algopoflectic gland should be taken out and varnished.

ART YOUNG

TWO POETS

An Introductory Note on the 1930s and the Writers

Blows on the head or blows on the ear, not one should be turned away.

—Nelson Algren

It is hard to imagine a worse fate for the 1930s literature than to have fallen into the hands of hostile academic critics, journalists and professional anti-Leftists who did everything possible for decades to slander its radical orientation as simply Stalinist, its treating ordinary people as mere sham, and its grand hopes of bursting the barriers of L*I*T*E*R*A*T*U*R*E to real life as unworthy of ART. Anyone who padded around college bookstores in the 'sixties looking for a decent anthology will recall that the few available were encumbered by vicious introductions, misrepresentative in the worst way, the editors determined to allow only their version of the Red Decade to re-emerge. Better to leaf through the old volumes of the *New Masses* and its non-CP counterparts, with their alternating verve and self-congratulatory sectarianism.

Now we are in the process of picking up the pieces, with a little help from the reprint market. Not even critics like the ones Algren called "Lionel Thrillingly," "Justin Poodlespits" and "Leslie Fleacure" can deny the power and authenticity of a work like Tom Bell's *Out of This Furnace* (a University of Pittsburgh paperback) or the occasional flashes in Meridel Le Seuer editions now available in a growing number of West End books. There is so much richness -- and not in the English language alone -- that in the end, newer generations will ultimately find resources for their own lives and expectations.

Meanwhile, we should come to grips with the real contours of the time, the inter-relationships between social life, politics, and the writers' craft. The stockmarket collapse deepened the bitterness many writers already felt toward the brazenly bourgeois 1920s society, raised younger writers convinced of Capitalism's decadence. Like other creative people during the Depression, authors very often turned their sympathies toward the political Left and the insurgent labor movement. It was a moment of great artistic potential, but a potential never fully realized.

The contemporary methodological assumptions created self-constituted barriers. The drive

to get away from the old florid styles, the impact of Hemingway's apparent directness, the sentiments which caused writers to portray their subjects (often the poor, the strikers, etc.) without any frilly romanticism about the nobility of suffering, resulted in much keen observation but also frequently a one-sided Realism. The old Socialist Science Fiction, the cosmic-utopian weirdness felt so strongly before 1920, gave way to an almost photographic mode which deprived writers of the revolutionary currents (like the European-based Surrealism) combining mood and language experimentation with political commitment. A recurrent sense of futility wiped away the playfulness apparent in even the most realistic writing of the Socialist past, like the Yiddish-Jewish sketches of turn-of-the-century New York ghetto life. Too little remained.

The cultural apparatus of the Left made a very ambivalent contribution to this situation. While encouraging writers to take their role seriously, Communist leaders took it upon themselves to fix narrow limits to the acceptable styles and political messages. Many times the aims held up by the Party were in themselves admirable -- more observation of contemporary-working class life, realism tempered by hope rather than flat naturalistic despair. But the mechanical nature of the *dictat* as well as the hostility toward any kind of "irrationalism," the bullying attitude of the political machine often spoiled these good intentions. Writers were driven quickly one way, then another by changing political strategies. The more famous were, especially in the Popular Front years, wooed essentially for their willingness to join Left political committees or damned for their attachment to some alternative Left organization, almost irrespective of their writing. Worst (in our opinion!), the ordinary writer was denied even the recourse of satire against the Left's foibles and self-righteousness, a promising effort like Albert Halper's *Union Square* all but consigned to oblivion.

Poets were by their nature least suited to such confining political roles. The political poetry of Socialists and early Communists in the U.S. (and abroad) had been rich because it drew on many

cultures, tolerated self-doubts while encouraging faith, and inspired a variety of methods. Thirties political poetry, observing poverty or calling the workers into battle, was generally thinner and more grey. Some sections of writers with their own distinct tradition, like the Yiddishists and Blacks, were spared the full brunt of the overground axe. But even the greatest, like Moshe Nadir, experienced considerable difficulty.

Why did the writers stay along? Because despite all the Communist movement's weaknesses, lack of internal democracy, foolheaded bureaucratic leadership and penchant to self-deception, its ranks contained many thousands of dedicated revolutionaries. If they could not provide adequate political guidance for artists, and often failed in the trying, they helped inspire the purpose for a dissident art. The artists and the rank-and-file politicals were fearfully betrayed -- by America, by Russia, by History. But they experienced moments of exaltation that cannot be eradicated.

In the end, time ran out on the writers, as it did for labor and the Left. Just when circles of Communists began to struggle for somewhat more autonomy, when the writers come of age in the late 'thirties began to produce their best work, the political curtain fell. Algren, the early Mailer of *Barbary Shore*, McGrath, the remaining Yiddish writers and a handful of others were survivors, not a movement. They, and we, have suffered greatly for the loss.

Today the political Left is practically a vacuum, despite the bold claims of sectarians. Tomorrow, another Left may arise. When it does, we will all be collectively responsible for a different and more productive relation between art and politics. Each sphere has its autonomy; each its responsibility to the other. More can be said, but conditions and current possibilities will help us phrase the appropriate formulations when the time is ripe. Birnbaum and McGrath help show how to maintain our loyalties without giving in to our prejudices.

the eds.

Interview with MARTIN BIRNBAUM

Martin Birnbaum is one of the outstanding poets of the Left, too little known, his work appearing regularly (in Yiddish) in the Morning Freiheit and Yiddishe Kultur. He is also a distinguished translator, a painter, and a teacher in New York's progressive Jewish shuls. Author of several collections of poetry, his most recent, Lieder Fun Haint un Nechtn was published by the I.L. Peretz House in Tel-Aviv, Israel in 1978.

The interview was conducted in New York, Fall, 1977, and is transcribed and edited by the interviewer, Paul Buhle.

PB: How did you start writing for Left publications in the U.S.?

MB: I had come to this country in the early 'twenties from Vienna. I was drawn to radicalism emotionally rather than on the basis of any particular knowledge. As a Jew, I had gone through so much in Europe that I was naturally drawn to the idea of social justice. But I didn't really know what Communists were. And I started reading newspapers because of the subway. I noticed the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, which had a fine literary section. Its constituency was *alte-deutsche-proletariat*, every day obituaries appearing in the paper, like the Yiddish press today: its readership was either dying out or assimilating. But its editor, Ludwig Lore, was very erudite, a serious, passionate man, a Communist with equivocations, whose taste in literature was very good. He drew widely from the European press. So I began to publish poetry there, since my first language was a mixture of Yiddish and German, all reading in German.

Three Yiddish poets wrote for them, including me. I moved on to another Communist paper in German, *Der Arbeiter*, but at the same time I discovered the Yiddish environment around the *Freiheit*.

PB: How did you meet Moshe Nadir?

MB: I began to read the Yiddish press more, and I discovered him. He wrote a series, "Teg fun meine Teg", and I still remember something he wrote about the Caucuses. I translated it into German for the *Volkszeitung*. Nadir lived in Seagate, a resort at the tip of Coney Island, where many Jewish intellectuals and artists lived. In the summer, I met Nadir on the beach there, and he was very glad to see himself translated into German. And we became good friends.

He was a highly sophisticated person, very versatile compared to many young provincial Jewish writers. Here was a *landsman* from Galicia, who had translated him and whose poetry he likes. He helped me discover the beauty of Yiddish. He did things in the language that, I don't think, anyone else could do then or now.

PB: Of the people who came directly out of, or around Di Yunge, or literary experimentalism of any kind in

America, Nadir seems to have made the most remarkable transition from Art-for-Art's-Sake to Revolutionist. But he does not seem to have deserted his literary techniques, to have become aesthetically constrained like many English-language Left writers.

MB: In theme he often made compromises with the Left. Even in personal conviction, he was not completely convinced that the left was correct, but he had the belief for a long time that the Party could not be wrong, and he had to serve it. In terms of style, language, and skill, no, he did not compromise, because these were the tools he worked with. I remember once we were in camp, and for some reason he had no light or heat in his room. He came to my room, and I had to go out. I came home towards evening, and there was a stack of papers, a book-length poem called, in English, "Hand Over the World, Bourgeois!" It was fantastic what he packed into this. But he wrote out of the conviction that the Revolution was about to happen. He was writing about the same time, what will hang in Union Square first, I or the Red Flag? So there was a bending to ideological demands, to "Die Linie", the line. To deviate from it, you had trouble publishing. Nadir often did. They would edit and he would submit. In 1929, an incident in Palestine caused the Left to actually defend Arab pogroms against Jews, with ideological reasoning, of course. Nadir was in a terrible predicament. Almost all his colleagues from *Di Yunge*, Leivick, Opatashu and Moshe Leib Halpern, all left the *Freiheit*. Nadir didn't know what to do. He withdrew to a farm in Peekskill. He *felt* the Party was wrong, but he decided that as a Marxist he cannot leave, he has to stay in the movement. He became a fierce defender of the indefensible. Later on in the 'thirties he wrote devastating attacks on the Jewish intellectuals who ridiculed Communists -- he would find the weak spot, and his wit was devastating, he could ridicule them and make people feel they were ridiculous. But I knew that he was still skeptical -- when it came to the acid test in 1939, the German-Russian Pact, he couldn't take it. He was a broken person.

PB: How did he make his living during this time?

MB: When he came to America he was a paperhanger, I think. Early in his literary career he was an insurance agent, later he had a hotel in the Catskills with his wife, and sometimes he lived hand-to-mouth. He also had patrons. He thought nothing of staying as a guest with a patron for months and write. To them it was an honor, to him, convenience.

PB: So did you get further into the milieu of the Yiddish left?

MB: I met many writers in the cafes -- there were always discussions going on in the Royal, the Europa, the Crusader and other gathering places, with lots of shop talk, a bubbling, dynamic group.

PB: Did they have contact with non-Yiddish radical writers?

MB: Many of the Yiddish writers I met were quite provincial and removed from the American scene. Not Nadir or a man like Aaron Kurtz, but the majority were steeped in their Yiddish and Russian background and had no time or inclination to go outside -- the ghetto was very warm, they worked for a living in shops, and you had your environment, your recognition, and your readers. Quite a few Yiddish books were still being published. There were audiences outside New York, too -- Chicago and Philadelphia, a little bit of San Francisco, and there was Los Angeles.

PB: And this led to the formation of a distinct Left writer's group?

MB: In 1929, when the important writers of the *Yunge* left the *Freiheit*, it was politically expedient to have an organization of writers who could be depended upon. Under Olgin's urging and probably with the encouragement of the Party, an organization was formed, the Proletpen. It was a very dynamic organization, with a few sections mostly in New York, a poets' section, a journalists' section, a prose section. Nadir and Isaac Raboi, the only other notable to stay with the *Freiheit*, were founding members. I was a junior member in the founding. My Yiddish was full of Germanisms, they called me "der Deitchuk", but I guess they recognized something there.

PB: How did the Proletpen operate?

MB: The aim of the Proletpen was to guard the Party line. To guide the writers in the proper ideology, to mobilize them against the enemy from the Right, to educate the masses, to serve the workers. We would have meetings, sometimes separately as journalists, poets, and so on. Mostly what was discussed was ideology. Someone would speak on a book, an *Einleiter* would lead the discussion. We would talk about what should be stressed -- Evictions, Angelo Herndon, the Scottsboro Boys, American subjects rising reaction, the shop and the workers, the *shtetl* that we were urged to leave behind. The urgings were successful in terms of themes. But they often negated the basic gut things that really bothered us.

All this may sound negative. But people with creative talents, whether you want it or not, often break out of these confines. We had nothing to gain by being in the Left except scorn, contempt, and perhaps danger. We had ideals, and even if we were wrong, we were motivated by the ideals. The Left wing press did give us the opportunity to grow and develop. We learned much from older writers -- in spite of hampering, political demands and urgings.

PB: How did you personally fit into this?

MB: First of all, I was really a proletariat poet. I was a furrier, sort of a poet laureate of the furriers. I'd go meet a reader and hear him say, "Martin, read your article in the *Freiheit*, 1-A, A-1, if I was a writer I'd do it just like that." When I wrote about the shop and speedup, it was real to

me. It was a gut thing to me. I really was angry. But I wasn't like Rosenfeld,* a poet of tears. I was basically a lyricist, that's where they had trouble with me. I was also by instinct a pacifist, and that gave me trouble too. Bloodshed didn't appeal to me.

Politically, my contact with the Party was minimal, and I was intuitively skeptical about its so-called democracy, because I never saw any of it. If I stayed in the environment, it was not the political leadership that kept me there. I sometimes smarted under things, and I was at times sharply criticized. A Yiddish literary magazine, *The Signal*, in one issue opened with two poems of mine -- one on divorce, another on the "Darkness" in the shop. In my poems, no rays metaphorically penetrated the windows of the shop, and the workers were not as militant as propaganda claimed. *The Signal* placed the poems prominently, with my photograph. But in the discussion of the poems, with the participation of the *Freiheit* leaders, I was bitterly attacked, not artistically, but ideologically. Why was I writing about divorce and "darkness" in the shop? The two editors of the *Signal* were sitting there, embarrassed. I stood up to the leaders by myself, I risked my standing by making a sharp attack on their repressiveness. I was rebellious in that sense. *The Signal* then failed for lack of money. It had the audience but the Party decided whether it was necessary or not. Since all these publications were guaranteed by contribution, anything new was in competition to the old ones.

PB: It would have occurred to me to publish my own magazine...

MB: But there was moral pressure against it. Aaron Kurtz stood alone in his style and techniques. He wrote long poems and had trouble publishing them. So he published his own magazine, *Naie Lieder*, by himself. In the beginning, he was attacked for draining off energy, an attack was published in the *Freiheit*; but Kurtz was stubborn, he fought but felt lonely. Even at the best times you felt there were watchdogs of the line. I called them Circus Masters, and one of them, a friend of mine, I once in an argument told, take off your red circus pants and put your trainers' whip away.

PB: How did you evaluate the literary results in the *Freiheit* and the *Hammer* with, say, the English-language *Daily Worker* and the *New Masses*?

MB: The *Daily Worker* was so dry and brittle. I barely read it. I thought at first it had something to do with my lack of mastery of the language. But when I could read better, it still never warmed me up.

The *Freiheit* had more literary quality, better writing. But they wanted daily topics, and adhered closely to that demand. Only reluctantly did they give you room for something outside that.

The *Hammer* changed with the editorship. In literary terms it was higher than the *Freiheit*, and made more allowances and gave you more freedom. But in terms of literary talent, the *New Masses* seemed to me on a higher

*Morris Rosenfeld, great Jewish ghetto poet.

level. It had Mike Gold, Isadore Schneider, Joshua Kunitz, even occasionally Kenneth Fearing and other well-known writers, people with a great deal of talent, a larger circle than the Yiddish writers.

PB: Then, in a sense, it was the eclipse of Yiddish more than anything else that destroyed this milieu...

MB: "Destroyed" is too strong a term. The division among Yiddish writers after 1929 became much sharper. But shrinkage seemed inevitable. The audience diminished from the Right, Left and Center. Few if any writers tended to leave Yiddish. We are in a shrinking world...

PB: Did the Yiddishness itself make you alienated from American life?

MB: To a degree, probably. The Party "line" contributed to that. I remember the Workers School teaching us that Lincoln was a reactionary, Washington a slave-holder, and so on. Much of the American history interpretation seemed to be an insult to America, and I said to myself, not quite clearly, what is there left? Can you make friends with a people when you go out to destroy and negate every value they have?... Later on the Party began to veer away from this interpretation of history.

OBSERVATIONS

The marvels of civilization: For a mere 10¢ you can sit down in a cool hall with a lot of ventilation and music, and while you sit there in the coolness, and the electric fans fan you, you watch on a screen how human beings are torn apart by grenades; you see trains sliding off rails and airplanes crashing; you see men dying in coal mines under the earth and ships sinking into the depths of the waters; you see little children burned to death and run over by trucks.

All these interesting calamities you see for only 20¢-10¢ for you and 10¢ for your wife -- and you comment to her how nice and cool it is and would she like a piece of chocolate. Or maybe a glass of soda water. And tomorrow, if we live, let's go to the beach...



Papa, why is it raining today from heaven? Why don't they fix the sky up there, so it doesn't leak?

The sky leaks, my child because it is broken. Because the human prayers and cries which reach to heaven tear the blue lining. Because the blond Angel who rides on the mooncrescent sticks out his feet and makes holes in the sky. Because God Himself often loses His patience and grabs a piece of sky and tosses it over his shoulder like an opera-singer — He wants to run away somewhere, but he doesn't have any place to run to. Because the millions of longing eyes which look up to Heaven rub holes in the delicate texture.

That's why it rains so much, my child.

Moshe Nadir

*from Max Rosenfeld, eds and trans, *Pushcarts and Dreamers* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1967), reprinted by permission.

PB: I want to end by coming back to Moshe Nadir. I don't think any other "American" writer since Mark Twain had such a glimpse of what André Breton called black humor, and the literary ability to weave it into his writing so beautifully.

MB: He was the most literate, devastating voice in Yiddish radical literature. His importance was his wealth of language, a language accessible to the reader. His wit was anger. He wanted the "official" thing to be true, perhaps he sometimes believed it. I knew he was still a skeptic deep down. He wanted it to be true, but he was too intelligent.

PB: And today he belongs to nobody?

MB: He deserted the Left, but his audience was a political-minded audience that stayed there. It was a great victory for the Right to have him, but he never wrote much more. He died a sad man -- I was told. After he went over to the Right, I never saw him or spoke to him again. I was deeply grieved by his death.

Yes, he does belong! To all of us -- to Yiddish literature.



Martin Birnbaum: Self Portrait

I AND THE NIGHT



Eliezer Canul: Woodcut

*The night is my sweetheart, my swarthy-skinned love.
With gentle devotion she presses me close
and tells me her secrets in whispered attune.
And should I be sunk in a wearying gloom
she lies by my side in silent rapport,
kissing my eyes till they restfully close.*

*She asks of me naught, nor ever mistrusts me,
and never reproves me for wanting the sun.
Instead of rebuke she brings me the beauty
of dawns decked in gold, and lets me caressingly
savor the sunbeams -- the bounty of morning --
and tells me what magic this day will be done.*

*Her dew-laden breath refreshes my temples,
her whispers assuage the rage in my blood.
Wisely she leads me through worlds of tomorrow
and smiles at me sphinx-like and somewhat in sorrow
whenever an aching unreason engulfs me
in terror, a simpleton strayed from the road.*

*Her fingers of velvet unravel the skeins,
revealing each thread to my marveling eyes.
They smoothe every wrinkle of doubt and suspicion
and waken my senses, and fire my vision;
consoling me, leading me out of the maze,
teaching me gently where the road lies.*

*With patient persistence she prods me and presses,
"Sing for me, sing me my verses again!"
A quiver runs through me, a feverish tremor,
a ringing of echoes, of bells the wild clamor,
and out of my spirit arises a longing,
a piercing desire akin unto pain.*

*I see how she waits with breathless expectance,
my satin-skinned wife, my beloved -- the night --
on the pillow of love -- the paper unblemished --
with smouldering eyes, fervid and anxious,
Will ash-covered fires again be rekindled?
She strengthens my pen and commands me to write!*

*And when my heart's juices again flow unhindered
and light up the paper in passionate red,
then all the wide world has become my beloved,
and Night, by my side, -- her joy unconfined --
is happy for me and my newly-found lover,
and shares, with her rival, the conjugal bed.*

*With willing consent that demurs not an instant,
with love that is patient -- no matter how long --
that lulls and is lenient when I am restrained,
but flames to my fullness with vigor untamed,
and claims me complete when her waiting is ended,
and sues with persistence, "Now sing me my song!"*

Martin Birnbaum

Translation by Max Rosenfeld

Interview with THOMAS McGRATH

Thomas McGrath may be, along with the late Walter Lowenfels, the only American poet to have leapt the generation gap from the New Masses to the "mimeo revolution" poetry of the 1960s and early 1970s. His poetry books include First Manifesto, To Walk a Crooked Mile, Longshot O'Leary's Garland of Practical Poesie, A Witness to the Times, Figures from a Double World, and Letter to an Imaginary Friend, Part I&II. He now teaches at Moorehead State College.

The interview was conducted by mail, Spring 1977, transcribed and edited by Paul Buhle.

PB: *How did your becoming a radical relate to your becoming a poet? I have the sense from reading the New Masses for the 1930s and early 1940s that an extraordinary number of radicals had some kind of creative writing in mind, but felt they had to leave aside one or another part of themselves in order to meet the crisis -- and never got back to their writing.*

TMcG: I became a poet -- I knew I wanted to write perhaps before I knew I was radical. I knew in high school that I wanted to write something, I didn't know what it was. I did begin to write some poems then but they were absolutely awful. I think I've been some kind of radical, almost from birth. Partly as a result of my father's experience. He had been an old Wobbly, although in no sense a programmatic or intellectual one, and he had become a small farmer. It took a friend of mine to convince me to read the newspapers and find out which side was which. I became a programmatic radical when I was in college; a little before that, probably, I had written the first real poem that I still think of as a poem.

As to there being a lot of people in the radical movement who wanted to write, yes there were. I don't think the percentage was any different from the percentage of people in the 'sixties who were radicalized and also wanted to write or paint. When someone becomes radical, it awakens him up to all kinds of areas that he's never thought of before, and one of the things that it does is to arouse in him a desire or instinct for the arts which otherwise might have slept all through the man's or woman's life. This doesn't guarantee that anything good will happen; but it does indicate that the desire, almost an instinct to express oneself through the arts, is universal. I myself believe that anyone can write a poem, although I know very few people do, and even fewer persist for any length of time.

Many of the radicals in the '30s and '40s tended to postpone their writing or painting because of the crisis -- and of course there were continuing crises. Some of them put art and writing aside forever in the Spanish Civil War by getting killed, some of them went into the CIO to do organizational work and were eaten alive by the union bureaucrats, some of them disappeared into the Second

World War and so on. Some of them made a conscious choice to set their writing aside because there was no time for it, and these are the people I respect very much, at least those who were aware that they did have a real gift. I was surprised to see how many managed, years later after they had retired from politics or politics had retired from them, to come back and pick up where they had left off. Very few people would be capable of doing this. But there were some very good poets and other writers who did.

PB: *Your poetry often seems "political", but almost never in the direct sense that one reads in Left publications so often -- images of Lenin during the '30s, or the equivalent: in the '60s, ponderous phrases about muscular workers and so forth*

TMcG: I had one book of practical political poetry, *Longshot O'Leary's Garland of Practical Poesie*. It was written because I had a theory that I called the need for tactical and strategic poetry. The tactical poetry was to be related to immediate things and would probably be in fairly traditional forms, like the folksong or something of that sort; the strategic is what we might today call "Consciousness Expansion." This poetry is a point of view which to some Left writers and critics in the 1940s was very heretical, but not tied so to immediate events. There's a need for both kinds of poetry. Both attempt to create a real in place or a false consciousness, but the first kind does what Auden says poetry should do, "make action urgent and its nature clear". Strategic poetry is more concerned with clarifying consciousness in relation to a larger grounds than is the case with the tactical poems.

Looked at in this way, there was nothing incongruous about what I was doing fairly early in my "career". I was writing a kind of strategic poetry even though I hadn't invented the term yet. At the time I was incapable of writing a good tactical poem. I sent off poems that I thought were sufficiently political to the *New Masses*, but they kept coming back. This didn't disturb me; I didn't much like the poetry being published there; it seemed very thin and the politics seemed to me undigested, a form of slogans rather than poetic images.

PB: *What did the Popular Front do for poetry?*

TMcG: First I ought to say that I voted against it. I felt it was a useful tactic for the time being in some of the European states, but in this country we weren't prepared to organize it -- large European-like Socialist parties didn't exist here, and we would tend to identify ourselves with the left wing of the Democrats or Farmer-Labor parties and give up some of our militance as a result.

During the late '30s and '40s, the CP put almost too much emphasis on art and literature in the sense that the Party assumed literature was capable of a kind of influence it didn't have and never had. Party theorists thought it would have some kind of immediate political value, some

kind of instant utilitarianism. The result of such a theory is that you have to investigate each work for backsliding or contradictions and are suspicious of the kind of explorations which for the artist can be very important, but which lead the critics no where at all.

I can't see that the Popular Front did anything at all for poetry. For people who had been trying to write a political poetry, it seemed perhaps to open up to them the possibilities of using a certain American folk form, but I don't think anything very good came of that. Such writers tend to swallow a surface Americana, and that appeared to be as badly digested as their politics. The good things that came out of the Popular Front, if they were the product of that, were things produced by some of the folksong groups, or poems of the kind Mike Gold wrote about the death of the steelworkers. There one might feel some of the gaminess of American life. One of the bad things about the writing in the later thirties and forties -- and I suppose that it still exists -- is that the poets' experience was altogether too limited to metropolitan life, and of course many of the poets were middle-class intellectuals.

To some intellectuals it must have seemed that suddenly through the Popular Front they were put into contact with the U.S. after being locked up in sectarian politics. That was liberational to some. It didn't seem that way to those of us who were out in the wide-open spaces in America. For some writers it seemed that they could embrace all kinds of things about the folk-traditions in the U.S. Although I'm not at all putting these things down, some would have it that these were the only kind of arts possible for the times. It seemed a way of becoming instantly Americanized in what I thought was likely to be, in the long run, a bad way. And that's another reason I was opposed to the Popular Front. It seemed for those from a limited metropolitan environment, seeming to have the doors open to a whole tradition that hadn't belonged to them before. I had never felt this way. I was an American by accident of birth, a radical by temperament, necessity and choice, but that was enough. Whether that made me an American, I didn't give a damn. I didn't see any need to change what I was doing

because of the Popular Front, and believed that the more sectarian politics before the Popular Front were more "American" than the politics which followed.

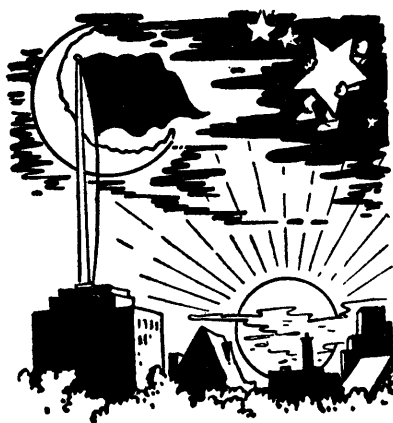
PB: E.P. Thompson, in talking to me about how you two met during WWII, stressed the sense that radicals were far away from any central authority, and more than ever had to think things out for themselves, what the War meant and what the postwar future would bring.

TMcG: What our generation did have was the ability to stand on our feet when there was nobody around us. That was a useful sort of thing, though sometimes it can lead to all kinds of crankiness if one has been out on the front for a long time, on his own...

PB: Did this, or anything else, help you prepare for the period of reaction?

TMcG: The Left was prepared to see the dark side of Capitalism and Racism and so on. But it didn't have a very wide experience of other things, perhaps not even of American literature, most of which was likely to be consigned to bourgeois categories and let go at that. In the '20s the Left had many of its origins further west than New York, and out there some of us had been living with the dark side of American experience for a long time. In the late '30s and even more the '40s the Left got coralled in the Eastern cities. And I think some of the writers were unprepared for the late '40s and '50s because they had taken in too much of the Popular Front and watered down their radicalism. There were all kinds of assumptions, it led people into an optimistic notion of what *was* going to happen, although after 1946, it should have been perfectly plain what was going to happen. Perhaps it was some sense of this that made me, if not prepared for the long night, at least unsurprised.

There was nothing to do to prepare, except as an isolated individual. All one could do was to warn, and those were the warnings that no one wanted to hear, often seen as a kind of pessimism or defeatism.



O'LEARY'S LAST WISH: IN CASE THE REVOLUTION SHOULD FAIL

*I want to be buried in Arlington Cemetery,
Somewhere at the patriotic center of the American Death,
With my bones full of the sleepy dynamite of the class struggle
And the time-bomb of the century under my private's shirt.*

*I want to lie there and tick like a pulse among the defunct
Heroes, the quiet deserters of their own body and blood—
The ones who stood on expensive roads in the total shell fire of money
Being cut off at the balls for their own and the public good.*

*I'll be there, the anti-bourgeois neutrino of the irreconcilable proletariat,
Among the tame terrene charges of those patriotic stiff.
Contra-Destiny Factors ring midnight, but there's no gold in their veins;
Cock crow chimes thrice. Reveille. No on is stirring yet*

*But under the ghost-overgrown honortabs to the wars,
The real estate and spirit-money my fellow-death-workers have won,
Is the Word of the Four Last Things of the Working Class, the rumored
Revolution of the Dead which Heaven, and the Boss, want put down.*

*Nevertheless, I'm still here, Hell's partisan, with my anti-god bomb,
Agitating toward the day when these stony dead
Shall storm up out of the ground in their chalky battalions
To judge wars, Presidents, Fates, God and His Own Elect.*

Thomas McGrath



Jose Guadalupe Posada: Relief Etching

MAURICE KISH

PAINTER AS POET POET AS PAINTER

Long had I scoured the Old Left magazines and books for the genuinely proletarian poetry and painting which did not make a fetish out of Realism but put it in place along with the ever-changing society that the dialecticians (emphatically including Marx) ever perceive, the trans-historical elements of imagination that are humanity's first and last resource. A strange painting of a wild merry-go-round, in a recent issue of the Yiddish-language *Zamlungen*, put me onto Maurice Kish. He lives in walking distance of Coney Island, the Brighton Beach section renowned for its neighborhood radicalism in the 1920s/'40s, a kind of proletarian seaside village at the end of the subway line. There, in modest rooms, surrounded by his paintings, Kish granted me an interview over herrings and good whiskey.

An immigrant from a large Russian town, Dvinsk, and a lifelong blue-collar worker, Kish spent some decades in a New York factory, painting flowers on glass vases. In his leisure, he was also an amateur boxer, handball player, and Catskills dance instructor. His painting and his poetry flowed at once from his life and his observations of America, and from his deep sense of artistic purpose detached from any bourgeois-academic prejudices. The painter Kish is self-taught, influenced by both Surrealism and Primitivism. The poet is more clearly in the great Yiddish tradition of progressive lyricists. Kish has experienced, in his own life, the revolutionary commitment to culture. In the crowd, his imagination has played free. He remembers the John Reed Clubs and their fight for proletarian literature -- but he also recalls falling to sleep on the subway and dreaming presciently about the outcome of a world-series game or a championship prizefight. He worked in the famous District 65, RWDSU labor movement, and continues writing for Yiddish Kultur Farband (YKUF) publications

while serving as chairman of the YKUF art organization -- but paints feverishly about some larger human fantasy outside the program of any Left organization and absent from any "socialist" state today. The price he has paid for his dual commitment has been heavy. Although he has some twenty paintings on display in important American museums (including the Smithsonian), a museum named after him in Israel with over one hundred of his paintings, and has won many awards, his work remains little known among the mass audience which ought to see in him their treasured visionary. He has written no more than two hundred poems in over forty years, his anthology, *Di Velt Iz Mein Lied* (The World Is My Song)* from which the following are mostly taken, his only published book, and that accessible alone to Yiddish-language readers. But the personal cost and the great disillusionment in Russia that so many of his generation have suffered do not leave him bitter, conservative, or close-minded. He does not amble, but his hands and eyes are moving constantly as we walk along the beach -- past the dwindling zeydes and bobbas -- toward Coney Island on a beautiful, early Fall day. His imagination carried me back to the same beach thirty-forty-fifty years ago, to a past whose significance for mass joy and leisure we *must* understand as part of our own history.

The pictures that follow by no means represent the full range of Kish's work. He has many "proletarian" paintings of the more expectable character: factory and street scenes in New York with the tired faces of workers revealing the weight of wage-labor upon their lives. And he has a major series of shtetl paintings, including one startling picture of Sholem Aleichem straddling two worlds -- a Russian Jewish shtetl with quietude and ageless figures, New York with its bustle and "civilized" dangers. I've chosen the Coney

Island pictures, and one other, because of their uniqueness, about which Kish has only a few words to add. The Coney Island paintings are partly Kish's fantasy -- but they bring out at the same time the constant fight against monotony which ordinary people wage in a variety of ways and on various terrains. To break up the monotony is not exactly Socialism, but it makes life better, more meaningful and (I would say) portends the day of reckoning when we shall make a carnival of our revolutionary acts. He imagined the horses prancing from the *Danse Macabre*, where the dead rise to frolic til the cock's crow pulls them back to their graves. Perhaps that is all of us in our moments of release. "The Funeral of the Undertaker" is an indication of Kish's jabbing satire, demonstrating that among the practitioners of death only the dead look really happy or alive. The colors lost in these black-and-white reproductions (especially the dark reds in "The Carousel") are indescribable -- we need a full-color book of his paintings, and we need it soon!

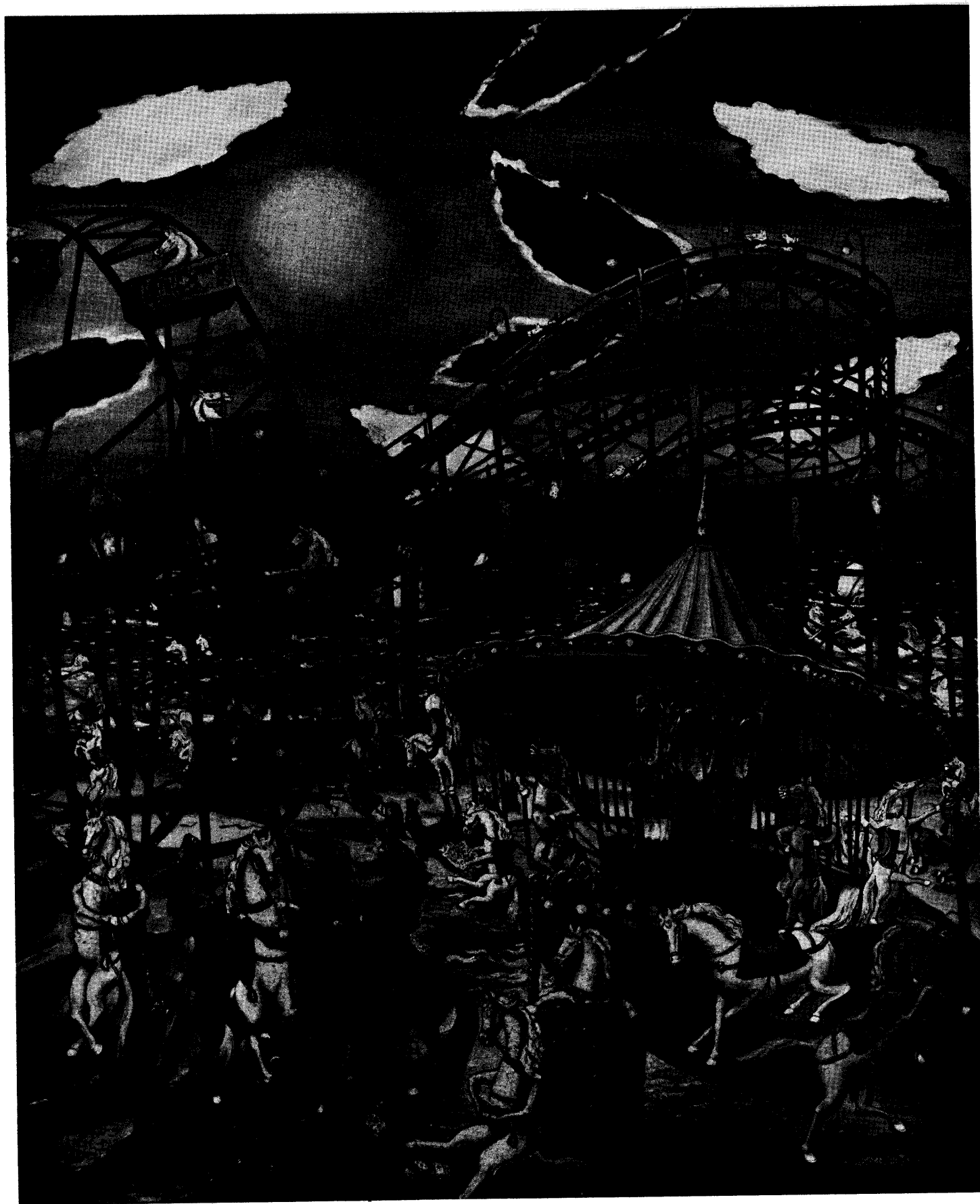
Kish analyzes his poetry as necessarily more philosophical, closer as well to music and to Jewish traditions than his paintings. He has made words dance and cry in ways that translations do not properly render. But the thoughts speak for themselves. "Beauty inimitable," a friend wrote about his writing in the '30s, "Rhymes that are Free/Satire Invisible/Maurice Kish's Poetry!" So we might say of all his work. Kish is deeply rooted in the historic Yiddish culture, the proletarian movement of the CIO years, the glory days of Coney Island. But he points a finger toward the Future no less.

Paul Buhle

**Di Velt Iz Mein Lied* (NY: Yiddishe Kultur Farband, 1961)

"The creation of art is not to be considered a pastime or sport. It is a sacred mission to enrich, to elevate and to make our lives more complete."

---Maurice Kish



Maurice Kish: "The Carousel"

**FIVE
POEMS
by
Maurice
Kish**

**A STORM OVER
CONEY ISLAND**

*Dawn, -- a wild storm has suddenly arrived
Over the dreaming shores of Coney Island
And has gradually moved, like lightning,
Over the avenues, streets and playgrounds,
Over the Boardwalk, from Sea-Gate to Brighton
And over the dreaming, beautiful Carousel
With the exotic, colorful horses,
Sunk in a deep, tired Sleep:
Dreaming of their monotonous life;
Impaled on bars of iron and steel;
Spinning round and round like mad;
Spinning, spinning and getting nowhere!--*

*The Storm has also embraced the horses of the Carousel
Tired from endless turning in circles,
Carrying on their backs hysterical riders,
Kicking them, insulting, cursing and swearing!
The horses suddenly have revolted!
They tore up their reins, ripped the saddles,
Broke the bars of iron and steel,
On which they were helplessly impaled
And freed themselves of agony and torture
And the endless monotony of their life, forever!*

*All over Coney Island Playgrounds,
From Surf Avenue, Neptune Avenue and Brighton,
Over the Boardwalk and Beaches,
The Carousel horses were running wildly,
With the sound of music of the approaching waves,
And the thundering sound of the breaking of the Carousel.
The horses were leaping and prancing with joy,
Like circus horses, all over the Island,--
Swimming in the ocean, like sea-horses--
Something Coney Island has never seen before:
The revolt of the horses of the Carousel!*

*From the Boardwalk, Avenues and Streets,
And all of Coney Island playgrounds,
The storm suddenly had gone.
A deep blue sky had smilingly appeared.
Rays of sun have broken through the clouds
And a bright beautiful day has come.
Coney Island has awakened from its deep sleep.
Together with the dreaming horses of the Carousel.
The sparkling waves of the ocean were proudly singing.
The ships' horns were greeting the young day.
The seagulls were calling high over the sea--
Wonderful and sweet is the eternal dream
Of always being alive and free.--*

Translation by the Author.

MY ADDRESS BOOK

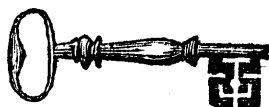
*I strike out the names and addresses
Of People--they exist no more
Names I cannot forget
Relatives, comrades, friends.*

*Bitter it is to strike them out, erase them
As it is hard to go to funerals
My little book is full of black stains
Like names hardened into stone.*

*I heard those names many times
The people--I still see them clearly
Soon not one will remain
So disappears a generation.*

*I had names and addresses collected
But my book will now be empty
No one will remain
Tell me: who will strike out my name?*

Translation, S.S. and P.B.



IN THE VALLEY OF MIRAGES (fragment)

*Deep in the valley on crooked roads
Hidden, deep hidden the secret of Being
Mountains round, like mute watchmen
Permit no one to enter.*

*There in the valley of many images
The blind are searching for the Goal
Few realize that the Mirages
Carry Death in the quietude.*

*Not the goal, not the striving
Not the looking, the searching for happiness
But the deep secret is Love--
To reach it is the Bridge...*

Translation, S.S. and P.B.



"GAMBRAY"

*Near Coney Island is a bridge
A bridge so peculiar, not wide and not small
Not short and not long, the width of its span
So built is the bridge of iron and steel.*

*The trains gleaming as they cross the bridge
Keep it always awakened.
Trains running, here and there
With banging and clanging, confusion and crashes.*

*Under the bridge lays a green canal
A tugboat sunken deep in the decay.
The green water, drawing it ever deeper
Yet the name "Gambray" is clear on the ship.*

*The ship has long had no crew
So many years has it lain there.
In the green water, it is captured
Laying there sunk, the tugboat "Gambray"*

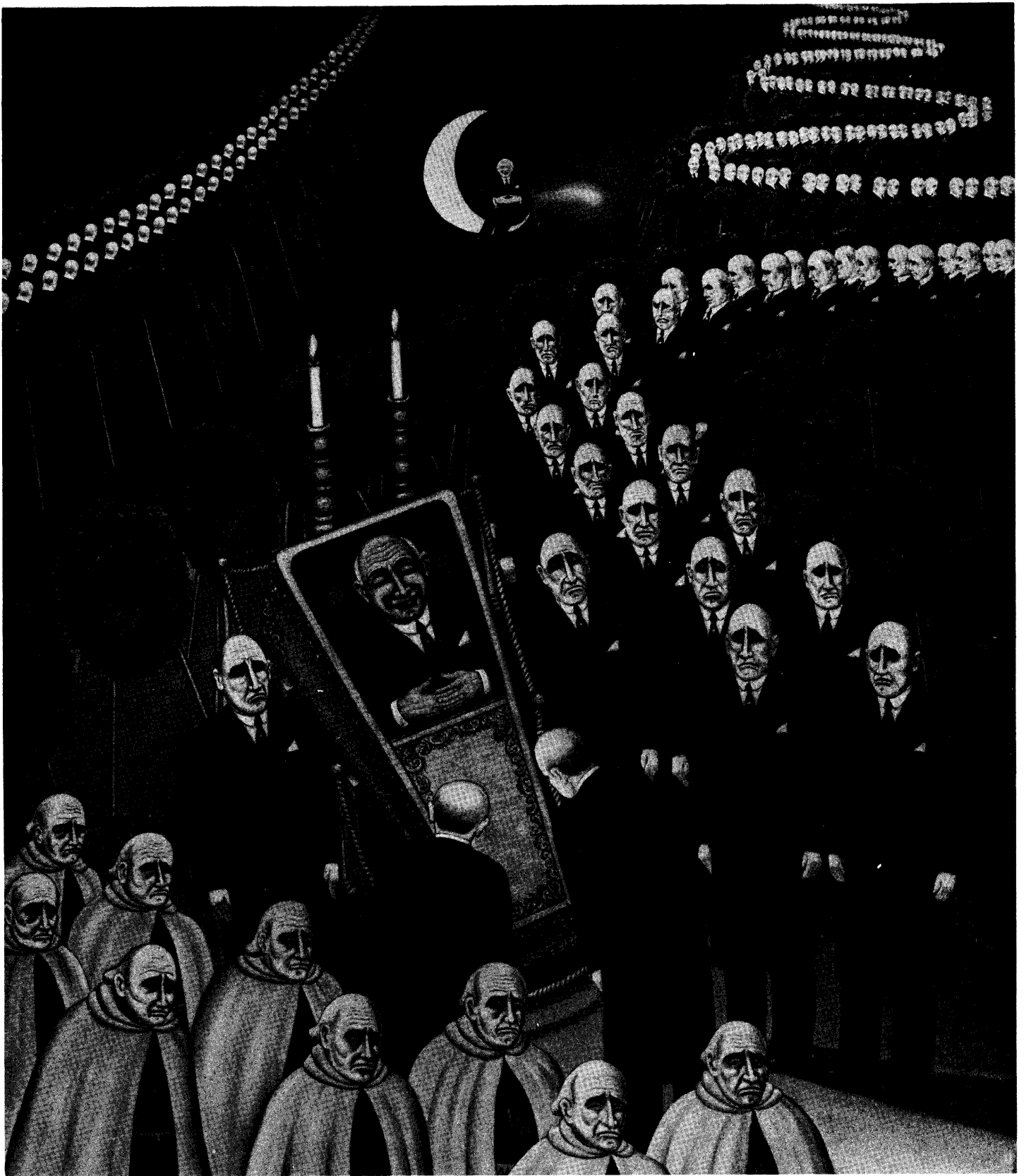
*The tower above, where the crew held watch
Disheveled, broken, the chimney smashed
The vents broken off, holes sprung in the deck
The tugboat in ruins, there by the bridge.*

*The trains go by day and night
Over the bridge, back and forth
At the ship's tower, no one watches
And the "Gambray" sinks deeper, ever deeper.*

*Yet when the trains don't run, when all is quiet
The tugboat seems to cry out for help
And a dead stillness pervades--
Only the wild birds are calling.*

Translation, Sholem Stern and Paul Buhle





Maurice Kish: "The Funeral of An Undertaker"

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN OF NEW YORK

Dedicated to Paul Buhle

*Close to the unextinguished street lamps
The sleepless city lays down her weary head
The white street-cleaner's broom sweeps away chunks of night
Through the graying dawn, on the sides of the city.
The tired street-cleaner sees the towering skyscrapers
Snuggle against each other like bride and groom.*

*Thoughtfully the street-cleaner looks at the horizon
Over the gleaming spire of the Empire State Building--
He sees, balanced like a cupola, a gray cloud
And the silvery lance of the Chrysler Building
Pierce through layers of darkness.*

*The youthful dawn is suspended like a lantern above the walls.
Automobiles pursue each other like black ghosts.
The white street-cleaner sees a dark shadow
Extinguish the flames of the lamps
With an invisible hand.*

*To the tune of the elevators, street-cars and buses
The skyscrapers dance at dawn the dance of the giants.
The Empire State spire juts out like a smiling sphinx,
Surveying the awakened city with red and flashing eye.*

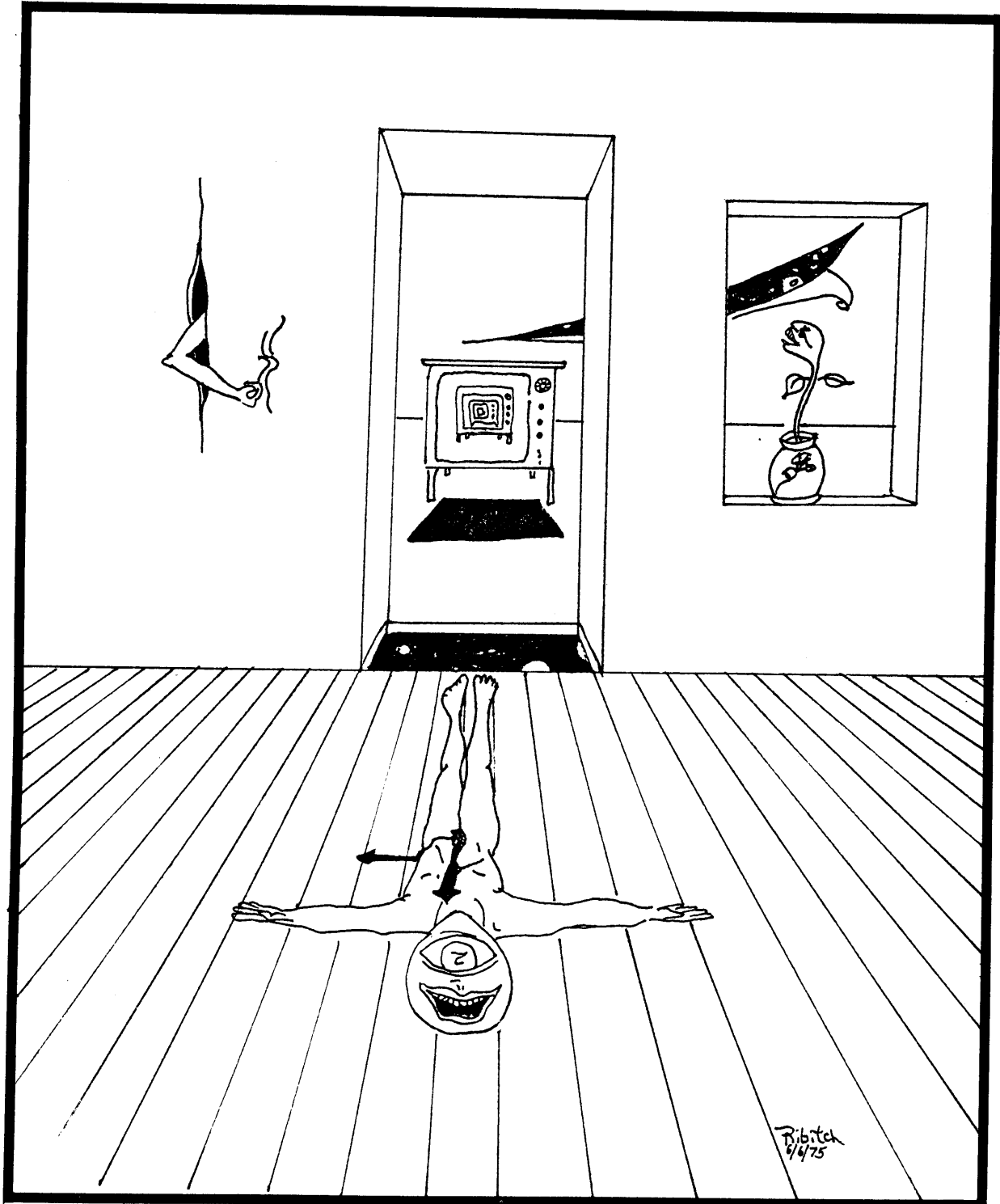
*In trains, both above and below the surface of the earth,
Workers hasten to their factories and mills,
Where machine and motors wait with bated breath.
Columns of black smoke ascend to the skies, belching from factory smoke-stacks---
Behind the black walls of dark buildings
The young day is mourning.*

*Wailing sirens announce the beginning of labor,
And a rumbling sound, as of a thousand saw-mills, pervades the day.
Over the dawning streets of the never-sleeping city
The white street-cleaner glides, like the Flying Dutchman,
Sweeping away the dust with a wave of his hand.*

Translation by the Author.



TELEVISION



Ribitch

TOWARD EMANCIPATORY CULTURE AND MEDIA POLITICS

Editors' Note: the following is the first in a series of discussion by participants in various local media projects. Austin Community Television (ACTV) has begun producing "Alternative News," and hour-long newsmagazine on a community access station, in addition to its other work.

Given the cultural-political importance of television, the American Left's lack of a theory and practice of media politics is distressing. We must recognize that television is increasingly important as a vehicle of socialization and as a site of political communication and struggle, and devise a strategy to come to terms with this face. In order to do this, the Left must change its attitude toward the electronic media, especially television, and recognize its potential for communications that might promote social change. Although many radicals have realized the importance of cultural practices, there has been little discussion of cultural politics for the broadcasting media. But let's face it. If we want to communicate with and politically educate/entertain large numbers of people, we must use the broadcasting media, above all television.

Despite the current use of television as a vehicle of hegemonic ideology and political manipulation, it is defeatist and self-defeating to argue that television is in itself evil or regressive. Television is an instrument of unrealized possibilities. It could mobilize people, and entertain and educate on an unprecedented scale. It could democratize culture so that everyone could share in the cultural heritage, undermining the prerogatives of cultural elitism. It could allow people to understand the working of their society and government. It could help eliminate prejudices and biases of all sorts through communicating a better understanding of minorities and engaging in radical enlightenment. It could be used to reconstruct society and consciousness, and to change the world in ways as yet unforeseen.

There are, of course, risks here. It is sometimes argued that the very form of the electronic media imposes passivity on its audience, and more and better television might simply mean increased passivity and political apathy. Innovations such as electronic voting might create a specious sense of democracy and a facade of participation in societal processes. Further, media technology is now controlled by corporations who will fight uses of the media that contradict its interests. Developing an emancipatory culture and media politics should be connected with an anti-capitalist political movement, and should not suffer any illusions that change in media technology and production will suffice to bring about radical social change.

Nonetheless, these risks must be taken. Many are predicting that cable-satellite TV will break network hegemony and will open new channels of communication that could be used to transmit a more emancipatory culture. More television channels, home video-recorders, video-discs, and the like, give people more choice and control over their cultural environment. Further, citizen-band radio and some new cable TV systems provide for two-way communication, allowing the individual to overcome the passivity imposed by the present media system. We need to be aware that with the proliferating electronic technology and expanding communications markets, more and more electronic media productions will be demanded which will open new channels for emancipatory cultural production. Unfortunately, many people are yet fully aware of the tremendous potential of cable and satellite television. There are already operative forty channel cable systems with two-way communication. Cable-satellite TV makes it technically possible for a group producing video programs in, say, San Francisco to show their works in Austin, Columbia, New York or Boston. Already, Home Box Office is showing recent, uncut movies to hundreds of thousands of homes across the country, the Christian Broadcasting Network and the PTL (Praise the Lord) Club programs are shown on many cable systems, porn movies are being regularly shown on many cable systems and local video groups and special interest groups are showing their productions on local cable stations. Important changes are thus taking place in the communications media. Radicals, too, must get into the act, and take advantage of existing media potentials and plan for the future.

Although we should reject the disdain for television that has marked so many radical theories, we must also beware against the sort of technological optimism found in Benjamin, Brecht and to some extent Enzensberger. Hence we need both a critical theory of the culture industry and television ideology, and a coherent radical media strategy based on the technical potentials of the electronic media, and the contradictions in the media industries that might allow emancipatory cultural production to take place.

Some groups have begun taking initial steps in this direction, but their efforts must be supported and stepped up if we are to effectively develop a socialist media politics. For example, socialist media groups have been meeting in Los Angeles and San Francisco to discuss possibilities of emancipatory communication within the existing media. Socialist feminists have been writing for Norman Lear; Cine Manifest has had dramas produced on PBS; a NAM sponsored production *Union Maids* was shown on PBS; Barbara

Kopple's academy award winning *Harlan County, USA* was shown on the Home Box Office Network and PBS; different cultural and political groups have been using local public access cable channels and videotape for political education; and groups in Boston and around the country at various Pacifica radio stations have been trying to develop a socialist radio politics. We now have two major independent national radical print journals, and other print media. We must also begin getting into the electronic media, and using them to communicate our critique of capitalist society and vision of an alternative society.

There have been over 500 public access movement groups all over the country, struggling for more public access to the media. It is argued that the first amendment right to free speech contains a right to communicate, and a right to be heard. The "fairness doctrine" stipulates that all sides of an issue should be heard, that the broadcast industries must "devote a reasonable amount of broadcast time to the discussion of controversial



issues; and to do so fairly, in order to afford reasonable opportunity for opposing viewpoints." The "first amendment" and "fairness doctrine" thus provide constitutional and legal grounds for radical access to the media. Why not radicals' participation in the public access movement, pushing ideas and cultural productions, testing the political waters and electronic wires, seeing what can be done and what cannot, discovering what works and what doesn't work? Areas which have existing public access channels provide the opportunity for radical groups to make videotapes which can be shown on local TV. For instance, in Austin, when there is an important conference or cultural event it is videotaped and shown on the local public access channel. Eventually, an impressive tape library will be collected and could be exchanged with other groups.

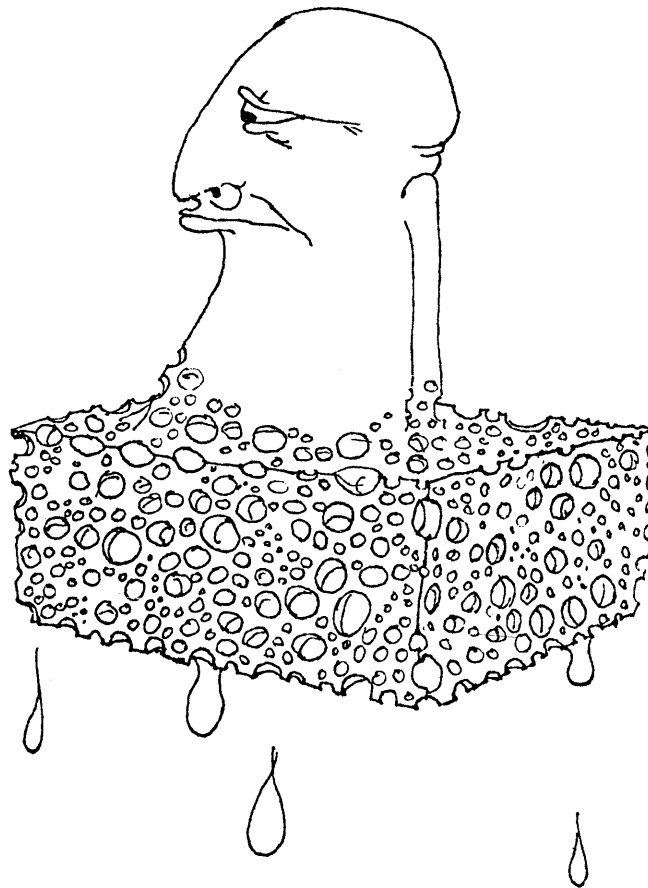
The Austin Television Group has been meeting regularly in Austin, Texas for three years,

studying the American communication system, and attempting to develop a theory of media politics. We urge an immediate, short-term strategy for existing radical groups to explore the possibilities of using local media more effectively as instruments of political communication and education. We also support radical cultural production of film, video, and documentaries, and would like to see a national left distribution network emerge so that the producers of emancipatory culture could have a distribution system and large audiences at their disposal. Finally, we want to begin devising a long term strategy to effectively utilize existing and emerging technology, and to map models of future media systems, in which electronic media are used as instruments of education and emancipation rather than of social control. We are currently working on these problems and hope that individuals who share our goals and are interested in this project will communicate with us and share their ideas and

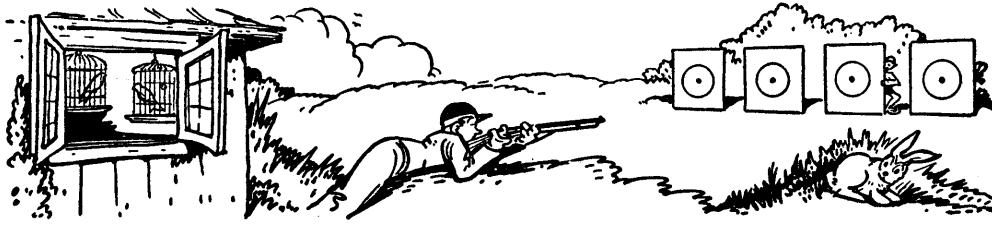
struggles. We hope in the future to produce a more detailed program of media politics, as the conclusion to our collective book on American television, based on the existing activities of radical groups and future possibilities for more emancipatory media-political action.*

Douglas Kellner

*Those participating in radical media politics should write us and send us material on their efforts and strategy, so we can assemble information on media politics for our forthcoming book. Write c/o Douglas Kellner, Department of Philosophy, University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712



Ribitch



A SYMPOSIUM: WHY WE WATCH TV

Editor's Note: In spite of our appeals, dear readers, very few have stepped forward to admit that yes, they watch television, and give us a few reasons why. Guilt anxieties? Befuddlement? "You first"? Whatever the cause, we publish a few contributions below. Reflect like them!

How and Why I Watch Television

I read somewhere, once, that about 50 per cent of the science fiction films that were made during the '50s and '60s were made to be "scoffers"; stories concocted so purposely unbelievable as to be, for the throng of sophomores attracted to see them, loudly laughable objects of contempt and derision. The idea, as I recall, was for a producer like Roger Corman to put together a slapdash effort of sci-fi so that the "willing suspension of disbelief" was utterly impossible. Instead, the quickly jaded audience glued itself to noting and debunking all the fallacious details (purposely inserted), laughing loudly, noting all the scientific impossibilities and mistakes. A typical example included the hearing of meteors rushing by a spaceship, and the question: where's the air out there to carry the sound of the meteors? What the sci-fi makers evidently found out was that there was as large an audience for ridiculous "scoffer" flicks, like the *Attack of the Crab Monsters* and *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* as there was for grade-A stuff like *Forbidden Planet* and *The Thing*. What the "scoffer" seemed to prove was that there was, indeed, a generous market for people who like to watch *and criticize*, and laugh from a position of both moral and intellectual superiority; a market which enjoyed the active pursuit of systematically dismantling a tale for its own sake, for the sake of scoffing. Buried in this pursuit seemed to be a place to really use one's critical faculty, outside of the classroom, and outside of homework assignments. Here, in short, was a place to wallow in nihilism, to be able to rip apart a world from the comfort of a theatre seat...

Admittedly, when I am half-awake and the TV tube has become a kind of hypnotic fireplace experience for me, I

occasionally "slip" and let myself become outraged by a newscast here and there, or an occasional advertisement which strikes me as extraordinarily gross and stupid. Yet, when I slap myself awake, and pay attention to my own ideas and reactions, I again become comfortable with the almost singular premise that TV is a medium of sublime "scoffability", where the possibilities of derision are bottomless, and where I can maintain my sense of nihilism in a kind of game-playing exchange with the pictures and words that are being tossed at me like a salad from across the room. The shows on TV that seem best suited to this Dadaist medium include the "classics" like the old *Show of Shows*, the old Ernie Kovacs series, and the newer Dada gag-shows like *MASH* and *Saturday Night Live*.

In short, if you approach TV too "seriously", without seeing that it is a Marx Brothers medium, you end up destroying a straw-man: utter child's play to knock-around. TV is, quite literally, a breezy and crazy medium, where the effort is to grab your balls, not your head. When it pretends to be linear, in the bookreader's sense, it becomes hopelessly boring. Bookish reasonableness, I suspect, is one of the main reasons we get up and change channels. As a rapid-fire picture-book, TV works only on the level of sensation, and seems to me at its best when its potential for craziness is pursued openly, as occasionally happens on *The Gong Show*, or when one wakes up enough to realize that the main preoccupation we can have with the stuff on the Idiot Box is to distantly scrutinize it, looking at all the distorted details, laughing one's way into the nirvana of Scoffers.

Hank Malone

Making a Production Out of It

I don't have a TV, and maybe for that reason I watch people react to it (in places where there happens to be one) all the more carefully. The story I have in mind is a short one. It's about a Teamster, six months out of work because of an arterial bypass operation. He was a short, wiry man who had earlier that day carried a cedar chest into the house on his shoulder and needed no one to open the door for him to do it, sick as he was. The TV was a huge, ghosting off-color oblong in a paid-for-on-time "Mediterranean"-style cabinet. We sat in the living room and there was a certain constraint between us. I was, truth to tell, waiting to take his daughter out. We both stared deep into the screen.

The movie was a thing called "The Beast With A Million Eyes," but I didn't get a chance to watch it all the way through. It certainly rated a D-minus. Camp, some might have said. But after ten minutes of tight-lipped study came "this is stupid!" from my opposite number. He was a French Indian, and hot-tempered; there was a real depth of bitterness and disgust in his tone. I had been engrossed. I wanted to say: No, look at it! Why are the doors made out of plywood? Why are there only five characters? Why is that supersonic whistle that says the aliens are around and about so hackneyed? Why is the acting so bad and the script so predictable? Because they're trying to compete with the late '40s Japanese wage scale, and they can't do it! El cheapo sets, five actors and a dog to get ripped up mysteriously, that's in the budget; they can't afford an alien of their own, so they got a second-hand one from some other movie, and they're afraid we'll catch them at it, so they give us that whistle 'till the last ten minutes; they hired the best actors and script-writers they could. What do you want? In short -- making my theoretical intervention -- if you look at the movie as *produced* you can take into account the conditions under which it was produced, and learn to love it in spite of its flaws, *because* of its flaws. People like you and me made it, right? (To Marie's brother, I would have quoted Frank Zappa: "I love monster movies. And the cheaper they are, the better they are.")

Had I not held my tongue, Mr. DuBay would have come back with something like: "Why tell me?" Six months is time for a lot of TV; he has probably seen "The Beast" at least twice. "Why tell me," indeed. On the Left, we hear a lot about what TV is supposed to do, how exactly what goes on the screen organizes consent to the rule of our permanent government, but we rarely hear about how this hegemony is worked out in real life. We rarely see what people *make* of TV. People say "this is stupid" when Buck Rogers heaves boulders "as if" they were made out of cork. People scoff when an obligatory chase scene screeches to a halt -- on gravel. Naturally so. But why exactly?

Somewhere Marx argues that as the division of labor increases, the individuality of the worker shows up, not in the useful finished product, but in the imperfect product. In the first case, cooperation has succeeded; in the second, the production process has broken down. When International

Publishers ships ten thousand cases of *Capital*, the cooperation of many workers has attained its end; when one of those cases is off, number nineteen will get the finger. In other words, detecting bad work and fixing blame are essential parts of the production process. That is what International's little slip of paper, "this case inspected by number nineteen," is for.

It's a commonplace that people take their work habits home with them and home is where the TV is. What was it that set our friend off? It was, in fact, a car "screeching" on gravel -- a case where what was on the soundtrack manifestly did not match up with what was on the screen. More than scoffing, it seems, is involved here. Hank Malone's useful notion of "scoffability" implies that directors deliberately show ridiculous happenings so that audiences, scoffing, may feel themselves superior to the work, and hence enlarged in their sense of themselves as persons. But the touch of the unreal our friend detected was not deliberate. He caught bad work -- as he would have, at work. He did not feel, but was superior. To see that this happens on a collective scale, let us check out the TV Bloopers column in any *National Enquirer*. For instance, one reads in part:

Jaclyn Smith — who plays the sexy Kelly on television's "Charlie's Angels" — may be a good detective, but she has proved to be an even better quick-change artist.

At least that's what viewers thought during a recent episode of the show when Jaclyn hopped into her car wearing one outfit and hopped out a few seconds later wearing an entirely different outfit.

Blooper snooper Tammy Huber of Westvale, Ind., was the first to tell the ENQUIRER about the TV boo-boo she had quickly spotted.

"On the September 13th episode of "Charlie's Angels," Kelly was wearing a shirt, white vest and white pants when she walked to her car and drove off," Tammy said.

"But when she got out of her car at a racetrack she was wearing bibbed overalls.

"She couldn't have changed while she was driving the car and she didn't stop anywhere. So it had to be a blooper."

Jeff Kibbee, production assistant for the show, admitted the goof and explained how it happened. "We shot one scene in Las Vegas and one in Los Angeles about three weeks later," he said. "In the second scene we had Kelly in the wrong outfit. It was a mistake — as simple as that," explained Kibbee.

Enquirer, November 7, 1978

Mrs. Huber has completely bypassed any hegemonic, ideological, what-have-you sort of message. Her eye is focused elsewhere. She has learned to read the screen



THEY BEGAN TO MAKE THEIR LOUDEST MUSIC.

through a practice academe (and to its shame, the left) has yet to pick up on. She has detected bad work. Perhaps, in her mind, Jeff Kibbee is her boss, and she fixes blame as well. We do know that thousands take this form of "popular revenge:" The *Enquirer* gives T-shirts to blooper-spotters. Here mass culture takes place, which takes my "intervention" -- the notion of the artist as producer -- for granted.

I'm not sure what the political implications of this achievement might be. One way to approach them might be through the notion of "continuity." Most movies are made with a continuity person, whose duty it is to make sure that the star's hair is styled the same way in successive scenes, that furniture, rings on whatever finger, vests, overalls, all objects carried from scene to scene remain constant. A lapse in continuity means, to the sharp eye of Tammy Huber or my Teamster friend, a blooper. (The cheaper the movie, the more likely these lapses are.) Does official reality, as currently manufactured in the United States, achieve continuity? Is Nixon's eighteen minute gap an alien manifestation, or are there little gaps, lapses, visible splices, discontinuities, bloopers, all around us?

The cheaper our politicians are, the more likely this would seem to be. As I say, I have no television, so a "yes"

or "no" answer from me would be pure speculation. I read the news that's printed to fit the columns of the *Times*, and who knows what the sharp eye of Mrs. Huber would read between those lines. To me, our official reality reads very much like a science fiction story called the *Penultimate Truth*. World War III is still going on, and the US is fighting the USSR. 99 percent of the US lives and works underground in gigantic fallout shelters, called tanks. The tankers make robots by the hundred thousand, for the surface is so radioactive and germ-warfare ridden that only "leadies" can fight on it -- commanded by the remaining 1 percent. Periodically, a missile breaks through one of the force bubbles that shield the cities; the destruction glows from the tankers' TV screens, and the face of the "Protector," Talbot Yancy, appears to console them, inspire them, to up their production quotas. Above: a lead suit or "the stink of shrink"; below, quarters so cramped the furniture folds into the walls. 99 percent of the USSR lives and works in the same official reality. What none of the tankers know is this: there is no war at all, and the surface is perfectly safe. The war was settled decades back by the Supreme Council of War game computers in Mexico City. The 1 percent use the leadies the tankers make to hunt down any tankers who tunnel their way to the surface, and as retainers in their "desmesnes." The 1 percent -- called "Yancemen" -- serve the Supreme Council by constructing an official reality. They produce miniature holocausts in their studios and program speeches into the robot simulacra, Talbot Yancy, all for the consumption of the captive tankers. At the beginning of the story, Carol Fugate, who has been taping Yancy's speeches, notices a queer thing: Yancy, in that day's speech, pronounced "coup de grace" without an "s", whereas one week ago he had pronounced it correctly. A blooper! The Yancemen, as the reader knows, let Yancy slip a cog. Will Carol lose her faith in official reality? Will she work out that, were a camera to get at the back of Yancy's talking head, it would show only a mass of circuitry? Will the tankers, having detected bad work, fix blame? Will Yancy's blooper spark a tanker drive upsurface?

Why does CBS show Walter only from the waist up? Speculation cannot detain me; but certainly "our" official reality -- styled by Yanceman Ragshoon though it may be -- increasingly lacks continuity. Will the habits and practices of mass culture lead Mrs. Huber and Mr. Dubay to say -- provoked by one blooper after another by our permanent government -- "this is stupid"? For my part, when I think of the collective Mrs. Huber seeing through the finished product to the process that made it, and asserting her mastery over that process, I recall some hundred year old words:

Let us now picture to ourselves, by way of a change, a community of free individuals, carrying on their work with the means of production in common...

The Niagara so many visitors to 1840s Manchester heard, when a whole city machinery roared into life at dawn, finds it echo today in the upward flick of the sanitation engineer's flowmeter at commercial time, when millions take their "breaks" at once. One day the working class will awake and demand a cup full of joy.

Potatoes Browning



Two years ago this magazine (i.e. *Cultural Correspondence* -- ed.)* trained the glaring searchlight of Marxian analysis on the shadowy world of TV football. The historical truth which emerged from this encounter is known to us today as the Falling Rate of Excitement.

At the risk of vulgarizing, the F.R. of E. basically states that professional football has a built-in tendency to become more boring over time. This is so chiefly because a defense can be devised to stop every offense. Various techniques have been used by the owners and the TV people to counteract the Falling Rate (the most notable being the introduction of instant replay in the early '60s), but it keeps making itself felt.

Has this analysis stood the test of time? You bet it has! The inexorable workings of the F.R. can best be seen in the frantic efforts of the moguls to evade its consequences. During the past two years, three major tactics have been employed in the cause of staving off viewer boredom and keeping profits high. These tactics have been: rules changes to allow more scoring, schedule changes to produce more suspenseful games, and cheerleader changes to augment violence with sex in the game's TV appeal. Each of these tactics will be discussed in turn, but it is the third that will be of the most general interest.

Unfortunately I've forgotten what the exact rules changes were this fall, but the major ones were aimed at helping the offense and restricting the defense. E.g. blockers were allowed to use their arms more without being charged with "holding." The object was to make it easier for teams to score points. The Tank McNamara comic strip satirized this goal by having an economist advise the owners simply to declare each touchdown to be worth more points.

In preparing for the 1978-79 season, the owners also manipulated the schedule to produce fewer mismatches. The better a team does one season, the tougher its schedule will be the following year. (Of course you still have to play the other guys in your own division, twice each, but this has to do with the teams you play outside your division.) This seems a little on the socialistic side, but profits have always been more important than ideology, and nothing bores the fans more than one-sided games.

Well, you can lead a viewer to the living room, but you can't make him turn on the TV set. Despite the frantic improvisations, the audience for pro football this fall was 5 per cent smaller than the previous year. Furthermore, in my experience, the non-watchers are getting more

aggressive and are starting to ridicule the watchers.

It is when we come to the third tactic, the off-again on-again employment of thinly dressed cheerleaders, that we get a sense of the overall framework in which televised pro football is trapped. Prior to the 1978-79 season, it looked as though pro football would be a full participant in a general TV trend away from violence and toward sex. Last year's Superbowl telecast had included innumerable shots of the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders, to sustain viewer interest between playing (not that the plays themselves were anything but dull in that game). Over the spring and summer team after team announced that it would hire sexy cheerleaders and give them flimsy uniforms. It looked as though the TV broadcasts would feature the cheerleaders as much as the players, and that pro football would bask in the kind of audience appeal that "Charlie's Angels" had shown was possible.

Yet by the end of the season the tactic had been all but abandoned. Telecasts were including a mere handful of cheerleader shots per game, and only in the most half-hearted fashion. There was more sex on a recent installment of the Muppets Show (Raquel Welch doing a torrid dance) than in the late-season football telecasts.

Why didn't the tactic work? I would say there were inter-related reasons. First, the cheerleader shots were gratuitous, not an integral part of the game at all. "Charlie's Angels" has a story line, but the cheerleader shots were transparent in having no purpose other than voyeurism. For this reason, they were an embarrassment to those fans whom they didn't annoy. They also were vulnerable to two separate sources of opposition: family-oriented puritanical opposition to any "immorality" on TV, and opposition to the use of women as sex objects. Undoubtedly, given the overwhelmingly male audience for TV football and the nature of the corporate sponsors, the first type of opposition was much more important than the second. But there are straws in the wind that suggests that women's consciousness has pervaded the culture enough to have placed some limits on the way the networks used the cheerleaders. For example, the name of the Dallas cheerleaders was changed this year from Dallas Cowgirls to Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders; similarly, the Los Angeles Rams' group was at first named the Embraceable Ewes but the name was quickly dropped.

Whatever the reasons, the failure of the cheerleader tactic suggests that pro football will have to rely in its own inherent appeal to keep its audience. And all the scurrying and the gimmickry that the owners have resorted to only suggests the limits of that inherent appeal.

James P. O'Brien

*In actuality this is the writer's private joke. Either he missed something or we have.

States of Television Consciousness

1. Beerland

I'm trying to remember the month in 1972 when it hit me that the post-New Left infiltration of working class neighborhoods had struck home at one level: like every third apartment in Overcrowded, Massachusetts, that year in ours there was a drunk watching television -- me. Now I remember. It was during the Democratic national convention with the McGovern triumph. We were out of joint (but not out of joints!) with the '60s Last Hope, or it failed to touch some poetry that used to be part of our lives and had now vanished, leaving a gap the size of an Overcrowded pothole two months after the mayoral race. Anyway, we were watching some fine old '30s film (whatever it was) that served as alternative, getting progressively drunker. Ah, that Pickwick Ale -- last cheap old fashioned good (by American standards) stuff in the U.S., a few months before Ballantine slurped up the company and changed the formula. How those deposit bottles did float in from the kitchen and back...And like so many other palookas, I would try and run a little of it off at the gym down the street where the steamroom smelled like footpowder and the patter ran from Old Army Days to the recession and the expectation of worse ahead.

What did TV mean to them and to me? Drunkenness never got much in the line of vision. We could discuss the whys and wherefores of All In the Family or M*A*S*H like nobody's business. The characters were as real to us as the clerk in This Is the Place liquor store or the perennial traffic jams that moved around outside like loosed creatures rustling (and rusting) in the winds of Bad Times. They -- the guys in their 40s and 50s -- learned one thing from Archie, me another; we never could tell what the hell those crazy teenagers were picking up.

Looking back, I ask myself; were those people on television *living for us*? That would fit all the sociologists'

mental slide-rules. If a professor broke in, dazed and daffy as we were, he (or she) would take a flying leap to that approximate conclusion.

My idea is that the Third Eye in all of us went on watching the entire scene, ready for something -- anything really -- to happen. Til then, why not a few laffs?

2. Nervous Tension

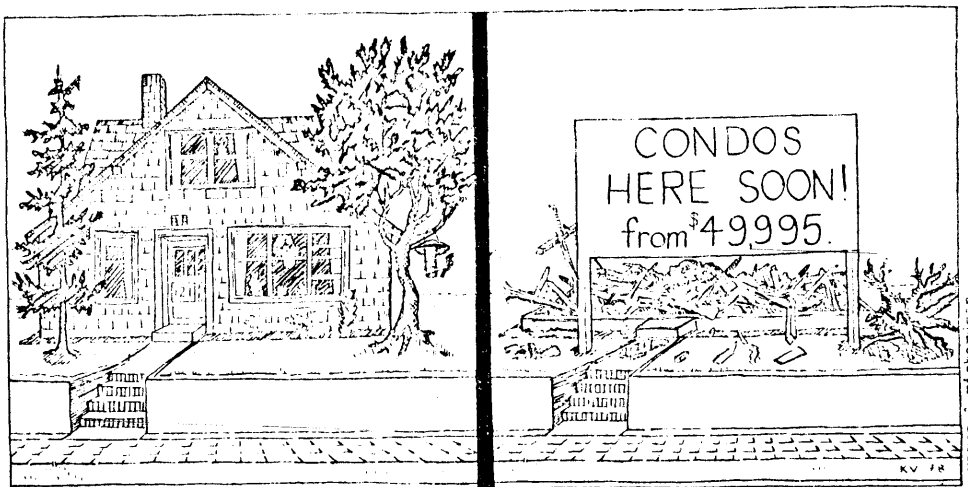
Eyes to screen. Nothing out of the ordinary.

3. Stoned Out

"Smoking Dope and Watching Television is Immoral"
d.a. levy c.1967

Well, d.a., it's a fine commandment. The best reasons in the world for it -- TV cools you down when you could be burning up in the midtrack. But sometimes the Black Holes in the network universe suddenly become apparent, leap out from the screen like the Void crashing in to remind you of Mortality, not only of yourself but thankfully of this whole miserable, ridiculous social order. The advertisements even more than the shows, because of their self-conscious temporality: no responsibility for the past, present or future; one promised hedonist venture after another, into the endless maze of commodity dreams and screams, made VIVID in an unwilling (later willed, and even trained) flash across the eyes. Are you there, world?

Edward Crump



MAKING ROOM FOR THE RICH.



WATCHIN' THE DREAM TELEVISION...

1) Enactment of the *First Surrealist Manifesto* round-the-clock for several weeks. Animated actors include Bugs Bunny, Isadora Duncan, Victoria Woodhull, Little Nemo, André Breton, Harpo Marx and Peetie Wheatstraw ("The Devil's Son-in-Law"). Host Franklin Rosemont, dressed in a large rabbit suit above the waist (ears included) and tuxedo pants, introduces a circle of intimates -- Leonora Carrington as a luminous bird, Aimé Césaire as the sound of wind through the jungle, A.K. El Janaby as Wisdom, Philip Lamantia as the Spirit returning to the origins of human creativity...



2) Sports, with Mark Naison, Heywood Hale Broun and Muhammad Ali: Jewish boy meets genteel gent and jive jock. Horses make demands upon their jockeys. Football players (as O'Brien suggests) award the ball to the team that needs it most. Cheerleaders join the Women's Movement. And Lester Rodney is prevailed to come out of retirement as the next commissioner of baseball. Alternates with the New Captain Video, a sitcom (or "civcom," as civilization-comedies will be known) scripted by Naomi Weisstein, with Lily Tomlin as the Captain, Alan Alda and Richard Pryor as Lefttenants in pursuit of extragalactic humor.



3) The Ishmael Reed Hour. Reed regularly blisters Xtianity and Western Civilization as "White Folks Stuff" through a combination of antic memories of American popular culture, crank hints of Cosmic Conspiracy and the best poetry to reach the screen. Millions of white viewers offer to sacrifice

themselves to Reed's bad temper. Reed can't decide whether to accept or not, become the world's craziest anarchist or a disciplined Socialist... Alternates with Lee Marrs' Women, animated by Trina, Michelle Brand, Aline Kominsky and the rest of the gang...



4) Dreamers & Drug Visions, animations with Paul Garon as host and ghost, several frog-like figures as his guests (Froggy the Gremlin, Griffy's Mr the Toad) and part-time dreamers drifting in and out of transparency. Alternates with the Charles Fort Comedy Hour, the slapstick version of In Search Of.

5) News of the Future, the program that asks the question: If I could have been happy in any century, why was I born in *this* one? Ursula LeGuinn scripts.



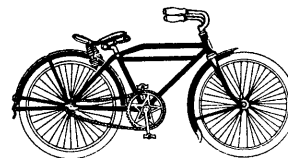
Immediate Demands

6) News of the Present, with Danny Schechter and Todd Gitlin. Real news. Revolutions and non-revolutions from the perspective of the bottom up. Daily life in Milwaukee, Guatemala City and Moscow.

7) Roots Hours. Entertaining comedy, variety and drama telling about the origins and continuity of immigrant life in the U.S., with the cultural values under stress, in dissolution and potential revival today. Multilingual sections encourage common use of second, third and fourth languages in the population at large.

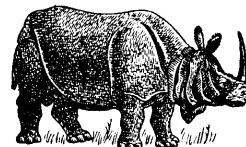


8) Native American Television. *Akwesasne Notes* of the air. Poetry, visions, humor, agricultural, ritual, daily life before the White Man.



9) Women's Own. Series featuring the finest comediennes from television's past and present -- Eve Arden, Audrey Meadows, Ann Sothern, Jean Stapleton -- scripted and directed by themselves and their assistants.

10) Back porch television. Locally produced shows with use of commercial facilities. Stress upon regional and local/neighborhood/ethnic values. Includes Saturday Day Nite Live every night, a return to live television.



11) TV exchange. More foreign shows dubbed in English. Foreign produced shows from American money, beginning with a series of dramatizations of African and West Indian novels.

Other demands? Send 'em in!

PB

OSCAR AMERINGER



REVOLUTIONARY HUMOR ARCHIVES

Illustrations by ART YOUNG

OSCAR AMERINGER

AN INTRODUCTION

"The Mark Twain of American Socialism," Oscar Ameringer served in his day as a personal study in what a Socialist humorist might accomplish. Ameringer joked his way into the hearts of a gigantic grass-roots audience, holding the attention of crowds from union halls to Socialist tent-meetings, authoring one of the most-read radical histories of the United States written to this day, editing a half-dozen Socialist and labor newspapers from his youth until old age. He recognized that no amount of humor could overcome the differences between radicals -- he said that there were "more kinds of Socialists than Protestant sects in an Indiana County Seat" -- but he insisted upon a Larger Socialism to which no revolutionary laugh could be alien. He found a vernacular close to the minds of his rural and small-town audience, a style of joking familiar to the village wag, subtle and wise with what Mark Twain calls the "naked angle," the joke that leaps out at you when you least expect the punch line. And for close to a half century, he gave that vernacular life, building outwards from his own radical convictions to what the masses could readily grasp, if only they were not beaten over the head by the Socialist Didactic.

Part of the explanation for the remarkable figure lies in his background and opportunities. He recalls in his priceless autobiography, *If You Don't Weaken*,* learning to tell jokes in Bavarian beer halls. The sense of *gemuthlichkeit* he never lost entirely, even when in later years his humor became almost as sour as beer in the mouths of refugees from Nazi Germany. Coming to the US

as a youth in the 1880s, he rapidly acclimated himself as worker, rebel, and humorist (he taught himself English by reading American humor, and wrote for contemporary humor magazines until drawn away by political commitments). After a long sojourn through varieties of American radicalism, he became the Sage of the Southwest, literary idol of the Okie sharecropper and proletarian moving swiftly toward Socialist allegiance. Ameringer oversaw the development of the most powerful state political machine that radicalism in the US had built to that time. He rose with the movement and reeled with its collapse into factionalism and disillusion. He launched the daily *Oklahoma Leader*, fought the Ku Klux Klan, published the *Illinois Miner* (where he acquired his favorite pseudonym, "Adam Coaldigger," after what the respectable folks called the miners), led a utopian colony in Louisiana, and finally turned to his last venture, *The American Guardian*. By the late 'thirties when the Socialist Party barely kept up a respectable existence, and the red radicalism of Oklahoma was hardly a memory, Oscar's *Guardian* had a circulation of some 50,000 among the faithful. Only his true-blue Socialist opposition to War finally finished off his radical journalism.

In the early essays published below, Ameringer's mood is muck-raking but not bitter, as if waiting for the little people to recognize the illusory qualities in the textbook version of American society, and march toward Socialism. The later pieces are more acrid by a great deal. Ameringer had seen his own grandest potentialities;

but more important, the hope he had seen for an easy education of people into Socialist sympathies, go by the board. He did not so much wonder at the validity of his beliefs, as at the inability of the masses to come sooner rather than later to their correctness. He recast himself in something close to the Yiddish writer, Morris Winchevsky, whose column "The Crazy Philosopher" appeared in Jewish Socialist newspapers at the turn of the century. The philosopher is crazy and the whole world is sane; or the philosopher is sane and the whole world is mad. Thereby, Ameringer attained the fundamental posture of the universal comic writer: one foot in the world and one foot somewhere else; a voice lamenting with the masses but also seeking to turn tears into laughter, by projecting more fanciful possibilities. An immigrant, he summed up older forms of rustic American humor and made them Socialist. As Carl Sandburg wrote in his Foreword to *If You Don't Weaken*, "As an entertainer, he had the skill and the quizzical humility of Will Rogers or Mark Twain. Then again he is solemnly, even forlornly and desperately the Free Man seeking his way, inquiring, shading his eyes toward the future and asking, 'Watchman, what of the night?'"

Paul Buhle

**If You Don't Weaken* (Greenwood Press reprint, 1969). This volume will, hopefully, soon receive a paperback reprinting. If so, we hope to have it available at discount from this magazine.



Painter: All that I have accomplished in my art has been due to the struggle for the necessities of life.

Cartoonist: That's the way to talk. If the cost of living goes high enough you'll be a great painter some day.

AMERICA AND AMERICANS

"Life and Deeds of Uncle Sam": A Little History for Big Children (Excerpts), Milwaukee, 1912 edition.

TO THE READER

I am not an historian by trade. It's only my side line. Sometimes when the chores are done and the wolf has been kicked from the door, I write a history or two before turning in. If I were a professional historian I would try to show how little truth I could tell in twelve volumes. But being only an amateur, I endeavor to put the greatest number of facts into the smallest possible space.

I don't know all about history. But to my best belief and knowledge the things I tell are true and I'm willing to take an affidavit to that effect. This is a darned sight more than most historians will risk.

And now go forth little message and bring cheer and hope to the homes of my kind. By learning about the depths from which we have risen we will gain the strength to rise to greater heights.

THE AUTHOR

ECONOMIC DETERMINISM

If you are just an ordinary mortal then you don't know what "economic determinism" is. Well, it isn't part of a steam turbine. Neither is it a poison they put in medicine. It's got nothing to do with algebra or any other thing where they put an X or O or H before or after something which you can't make out. Only scientific men, like myself, know what it is. It's mighty lucky you ran across this little book; otherwise you might have heard the term a thousand times without knowing any more about it than an American statesman. Economic Determinism, brother, is the thing that makes people turn their noses in the direction whence they hear the jingle of easy money. There, now you've got it.

Great masses of people are not set in motion in a given direction just because somebody don't like their religion. Wars and revolutions are not fought because some folks would rather have a red and blue than a black and white flag. Way down at the bottom of every human movement are the selfish material interests of classes which strive against other classes in an endeavor to make an easier living. Now the easiest way to get a living is to get someone to get it for you. Hence men struggle continuously to make others work for them, or to throw off the yoke of those they work for. This struggle is called the class struggle.

When somebody talks about carrying the cross, the flag, freedom, or civilization to some heathen nation you can bet your bottom boots that that heathen nation has got something the other fellow wants.

WHY PEOPLE MIGRATED TO AMERICA

The Germans

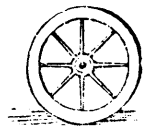
No self-respecting man will admit that he comes from poor stock or that he left his native heath because there weren't enough heating apples on the family tree. Hence, most of the poor folks who came to America emigrated, ostensibly to escape religious persecution.

It cannot be denied, however, that religious persecution did its fair share in those days to make people seek peace and eatables among the heathen in the American wilderness.

Germany just then had gone through a religious war that had lasted thirty years. The question under discussion was, "Shall priests and nobles together rob the working people, or shall the nobles do the job alone?" When the religious (?) controversy was ended, Germany was a howling wilderness. More people got killed, were starved to death and died during epidemics than in any other war before or after. As a shining example of what a war really ought to be, the thirty year's war is the model that all lovers of war should pattern after. The Protestant armies cut down the fruit trees, drove off the cattle, and burned down the home of Catholics and the Catholic army did the same things for the Protestants. When pious people kill each other for Christ's sake, it is only natural that innocent by-standers should get hurt.

The population of Germany shrank from sixteen to four million. Cannibalism reappeared. The gallows had to be guarded to prevent the starving people from devouring the corpses dangling from the ropes. Mothers had to be watched to keep them from eating their new born babies. Where thriving towns had been, herds of wild wolves roamed unmolested. The survivors appeased their hunger on grass, roots, leaves and bodies stolen from the grave yards. Taken all in all, it was a glorious war and should serve as an everlasting inspiration to the upholders of militarism.

Degraded, brutalized, and poverty stricken, the miserable Germans fled from devastated fields and burning homes down the Rhine to Amsterdam where they sold themselves to ship captains for the price of a passage to the new world. Thus the spiritual and worldly rulers drove the people from the German fatherland.



The Puritans

The largest consignment of Englishmen ever loaded on a single ship came over in the Mayflower. In fact, nearly everybody that is anybody in America is a descendant of one of the multi-

tude of first cabin passengers of the Mayflower. No modern ocean grey-hound could hold one-tenth of the people that populated the above ark on its turbulent voyage to the land of the free and the home of the brave.

The Puritans were Protestant, middle class people, who had gotten a little the worst of it in their scrap with the Catholic cavaliers. Being unable to persecute others on account of their religious belief, they skipped out to escape religious persecution themselves.

After landing at Plymouth Rock they held a prayer meeting to thank the Lord for deliverance from the perils of the wild wave. Next day they caught a Quaker and burned a hole through his tongue because he prayed to the wrong God or to the right God in the wrong way, I have forgotten which.

The Puritans were a pious, bigoted and intolerant lot who regarded a chronic spell of "blues" as the natural state of man and who embodied their vinegar ideas into a set of laws called "blue laws."

When a Puritan was caught telling a joke he was soaked in salt water and then buried alive under a weeping willow, while the sinner who laughed at the joke was roasted to death first and buried in unhallowed ground afterwards. Witch burning was their only amusement and when other folks put a stop to this practice, the Puritans invented the thanksgiving dinner and got even. Nine-tenths of the good things told about the Puritans are lies and the remaining tenth isn't quite true.

If today we may still boast of a higher standard of living, if the American workingman is still able to fight for a grander civilization, don't thank those who directed the ship of state, but come with me to the lonely graves of the pioneers of Unionism. No marble shaft rears proudly above the humble resting place. No monument in stone or bronze tells of their mighty deeds. But under the green sod sleep hearts that once flamed for the cause of toil. Martyrs of Labor, you have given more to liberty, equality and human brotherhood, than all the statesmen of this land combined. You have fought battles for a greater cause than all the soldiers that ever bled on battlefields. You have brought our race nearer to the great ideal of brotherhood of which Buddha dreamed on the Ganges three thousand years ago. In you, the thoughts of Plato and the teachings of the lowly Nazarene assumed reality. Like Moses of yore, you lead the children of toil from bondage out into the desert of strife, nearer and nearer to the promised land. And like the great Hebrew Prophet you laid your weary bodies down to eternal rest in sight of Canaan. Your reward was hunger and cold and the prison stripes and gallows. Some day a grateful posterity will chant chorals in your memory. Some day happy children will plant roses on your sunken graves. Humble tools of evolution, you have done more for civilization and the humanization of our race than all the statesmen, warriors and priests. To you our praise.

THE SLAMERICANS

"The Sad Story of the Slamericans," from *Socialism for the Farmer Who Farms the Farm*. St. Louis, 1912.

Once upon a time there was a great island named Slamerica. It laid two hundred miles beyond Christmas and on the left side of New Year. Its inhabitants called themselves Slamericans. The island was divided by a wide and turbulent river. On one side of the river lived the Slamericans who raised food; on the other side those who made clothing. The river was spanned by a bridge belonging to a fat man named Ploot.

Now it so happened that the Slamerican food raisers could not live without clothing, while the clothing makers could not live without food. This being the case, one would think that these people simply exchanged the products of their labor, clothes for food, and food for clothes, but they didn't.

Whenever a food raiser wanted clothing to cover his nakedness he would fetch a pig to the owner of the bridge and speak thusly: "Oh! mighty Ploot, Lord of Spondulix and Captain of Iron Wheels, behold thy servant and take pity upon him. The seat of my breeches has gone to naught and the seam of my garment has frazzled to frazzles. My elbows peep through the sleeves and cry for covering. Might Lord, I pray of thee give me spondulix for this porker that I may purchase garments for my nakedness."

Thereupon Ploot would consult a chart of information which he had made for himself this very morning, and he spake also: "The market price of pigs is five plunks to-day; here are the plunks."

Then the food raiser would tear his hair and smite his chest and cry in loud tones: "I am robbed, hornswaggled and flimflammed out of this noble porker which I have slopped, fed and nursed with more diligence and care than I have expended upon the children of my own bosom. Five plunks! oh! my eyes! Five plunks -- have mercy upon me!"

But Ploot only smole a smile and jingled the silver plunks in his fat paw.

While the food raiser thus wailed and wept a chilly breeze stole out of the icebergs on the north pole and crawled through the holes of his garments and he made a frantic grab for the five plunks. "Now," he muttered, "let me have a garment."

"Go easy," replied Ploot, "I am not in business for the fun of it. The bridge cost oodles of spondulix. Am I not entitled to a reward for my abstinence for not having eaten this bridge? Besides the land on which these pillars rest belongs to me and surely I ought to have a little profit on my investment in this clothing stock. Therefore go hence and fetch me three more pigs."

"One for interest,
"One for rent, and,
"One for profit."

The food raiser departed with a sorely puzzled mind to do as he was told.

From the other side of the river approached a garment maker with a new suit of clothes slung over his arm. As soon as he spied the fat man on the bridge he cried, "My stomach is as empty as a summer resort in January. It growls until the echoes reverberate on the walls. Have mercy upon me and give me a porker to still the voice in my innards. O! mighty Ploot, take this garment and give me food."

Thereupon the Ploot handed to the garment maker five plunks and bade him to return and fetch three more garments. The poor worker looked flabbergasted at this, but Ploot only said:

"One for interest,
"One for rent, and,
"One for profit."

The garment man was too hungry to argue the case, so he took himself hence to do as he was told.

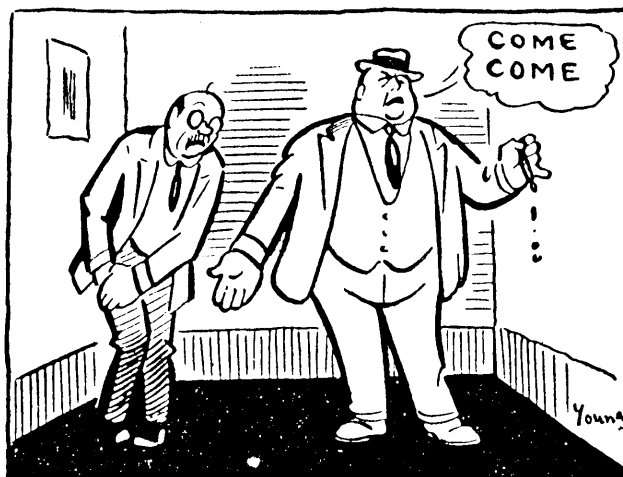
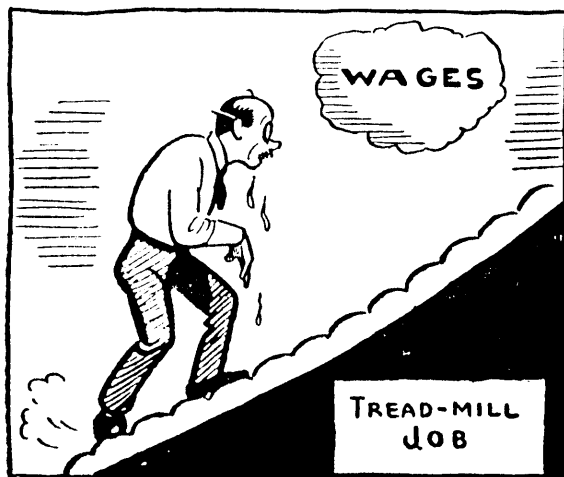
When the food raiser and the garment worker returned next day, the one with three pigs and the other with three suits of clothes, Ploot gave each one fifteen shining plunks. Then he sold the pig to the hungry tailor for twenty plunks and the suit of clothing to the shivering food raiser for the same sum.

These were prosperous times and business was brisk. The two workers had earned twenty plunks apiece. One departed with a pig, and the other with a new suit. Both were happy and so was Ploot, for he had not only gotten all his money back but three suits of clothes and three pigs in the bargain.

All the Slamericans went through the same transaction every time they needed food and clothing and so it happened that Ploot often got more than he could eat or wear. At such times he would lock the gates to the bridge and hang out a sign saying, "Closed on account of over production." But the great and wise ones among the Slamericans called it a panic and explained to the people that over production of food was the prime cause of starvation, while too much clothing was the cause of the nakedness in the world.

One day a crank came among these people and said, "Let us build a bridge of our own and do away with Ploot who charges us interest for money he took away from us, who makes us pay rent for land which the Creator made for all, and who demands of us profit for being in our way. With a bridge of our own we can exchange pig for garment and garment for pig instead of paying four pigs for one garment and four garments for one pig." When Ploot heard this he called the Slamericans together and spake: "Harken unto me. This man would drive capital out of the country. Do I not give you work? By allowing you to make four suits for one pig and to raise four pigs for one suit, do I not give employment to you, your wife and children? If, as this agitator saith, a pig could be swapped for a suit and a suit for a pig, then you would be out of work three-fourths of the time. Does not the holy book say, 'in the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread?' Who gives you an opportunity to sweat? It's me. This man would rob you of the incentive to work. He would destroy the Gods and steal your wives. Stone him, hang him!"

And when the people heard Ploot say all this they tied a millstone around the neck of the crank and sunk him to the bottom of the river.



Six days shalt thou labor—— and then give all that thou hast to the landlord.

HUMAN NATURE

"This Cockeyed World," *American Guardian*, April 29, 1938

The term "cockeyed" is America's greatest contribution to the English language. It describes a state of mind that is not adequately covered by such terms as lousy, loco, batty, screwy and imbecile. Cockeyed is a combination of all these and then some, and it's the "then some" that does the damage. For persons afflicted with the above ailments are quite harmless and frequently even amusing. Still less harmless are the so-called dangerously insane and hopeless maniacs. That is so because civilized society has gone to no end of expense protecting itself against them and them from it. Persons certified as first class lunatics by certified lunacy commissions are condemned to free board and lodging in stately mansions surrounded by shade trees, shrubbery, flowers, sparkling fountains and velvety lawns. Padded cells and and straight-jackets protect them against themselves. Iron bars protect them against the outsiders who feed, clothe and shelter them.

A trifle less harmless than hopeless maniacs are the criminal insane. When criminally insane persons are convicted of criminal assault, they are presented with free board, lodging, medical service and moral entertainment. The duration of these benefits is specified by law. The greater the crime the larger the benefit. That is called justice.

In cases where the victim dies, his widow takes in washing to pay funeral expenses while the criminal insane both lives and is buried at public expense defrayed from a sales tax on the widow's soap and washtub. This is called atonement.

* * * *

The reason why persons of the cockeyed category are infinitely more dangerous than the categories described above are as follows:

They constitute the overwhelming majority in every civilized country. (Four out of five have it.)

There are no laws, ordinances, regulations and taboos restricting the circulation of cockeyed persons.

If there were, the great bulk of them would produce school certificates, high school diplomas and college degrees, thereby establishing incontestible proof of both safety and sanity.

Among the outstanding earmarks of cockeyedness are:

Believing history is bunk, but must be learned because it has nothing to teach.

Seeing things beyond the horizon and above the clouds they could not see stumbling over them.

Weeping tears over the woes of the veiled women of a harem. Laughing one's head off when the next door neighbor knocks herself cold stepping on the wrong end of the garden rake.

Getting all het up about the national budget when living on relief.

Getting all het up about balancing the national budget when sending little Johnny to the door to tell the landlord their daddy is out.

Voting for peerless leaders who don't know where they are or are going to, and wouldn't know what to do when they got there.

Listening to radio broadcasts, talking to folks thousands of miles away, seeing airplanes eating up more miles per minute than granddad's ox-cart could have navigated in that many moons, while stoutly insisting that things were always that way and always will be.

Accepting Jews as God's chosen people and kicking them all over creation because there seems to be something to it.

Preaching the brotherhood of man on Sunday and taking the dear brother's hides off on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Mistaking square deal for square meal.

Expecting a new deal coming out of the same hole the old deal crawled into.

Believing in peace on earth, good will to men, and going busted piling up shotguns, gats and butcher cleavers.

Making good will tours in battleships and bombing planes.

Fighting for home and fireside on the other side of the world, while the home is burning down and the insurance policy has lapsed.

Feeding sinners in jail. Letting saints starve out of it.

Killing a fellow who killed another fellow, on the ground that two stiff in the grave beats one in the bush.

Sovereigns paying eleven grand per year to elected servants and then begging them for relief.

Going hungry on account of too much food. (Gosh, I think I said that before.)

Controlling million horsepower turbines through laws and ordinances passed in Tom Jefferson's mule yard.

Paying rent for a piece of ground the landlord didn't make and can't take with him.

Plowing under cotton because the old jeans won't hold stitches and there are no new patches, nohow.

Borrowing oneself rich or coaxing prosperity around the corner with a sales tax on hot dogs.

Voting against regimentation while ordered about by alarm clocks, punch clocks and stop watches.

Regarding oneself free and independent, and griping because the other fellow won't let us work and live.

Going to no end of trouble digging a medium of exchange out of one hole to put it in another hole, and letting it loose again under the misapprehension it's something to eat or wear.

Seeing a great lady divinely dressed in one-piece bathing suit dive in the ocean and a week later come up in the desert all dressed up but shoes worn out, and not suspecting something fishy.

PROVERBS

"Proverbs Up-to-Date," *American Guardian*, April 30, 1926

Man born of woman is here because he's here.

He goeth somewhere and knoweth not whither.

His days are numbered and he goeth through them as an arrow goeth through cheese.

His years are three-score and ten and he fills them with spittle and piffle.

Man looketh down upon the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the deep and calls them dumb brutes.

Like the fool, he patteth himself on the back for the wisdom that is not in him and calleth himself crown of creation.

But, I say unto you, man is dumber than the dumb brutes and every day in every way he getteth dumber, dumber, and dumber.

For the beasts of the fields dig holes for their abodes while man rears holes above ground.

He compasses them with expensive masonry and crowns them with mortgages which disturb his slumber.

The bear grows his own winter coat and when the berries wither before the frost, he crawls into a hollow log and sleeps until the blue bells ring for breakfast.

But man purchases a fur coat on the easy, payment plan and shovels snow all winter that he may raise the berries to pay for the coat.

The birds of the air sing merry songs from their

own throats. But man buyeth him a saxophone and rends the air with sounds that sound like hell.

And do not the fish go fishing every day of their lives, while the poor fish who toil in work-houses, mines and market places are lucky if they save enough shekels in twelve moon to go fishing one week?

But whosoever has seen the Carp who saved angle worms that he may sojourn to the walled city to spend a week end at the aquarium.

(Yea, even the goat begetteth his own goat whereas everyone getteth man's goat).

Therefore, we say unto you, walk humble in the eyes of the brutes for even the worm can make both ends meet and that is a demed sight more than most of you can do.

CAPITALISM

"Hell," *National Rip-Saw*, November, 1913

"Oh, hell," grunted Satan, addressing Lucifer, who was sharpening the barbs of his tail on a red hot brimstone grindstone.

"What's eating you now," replied the latter, without lifting his eyes from the job on the end of his anatomy.

"Nothing's eating me, but I am getting pretty dadgum tired of being general manager of this dump. This is no place for a devil to be in. Call this the abode of the damned, a place of torture and gnashing of teeth? It's a summer resort, a regular playground, a kind of Coney Island in a hole. That's what it is."

"I tell you what Lucifer, you could not drive these people back to the place they came from, no matter how hard you tried. Look at that walking skeleton over there. He's got a perpetual smile on his face. We've tried to take it off with a grating iron, but it wouldn't budge. He's shaking hands with everybody, calls every imp brother, and yesterday he even tried to kiss my grandmother. The darned cuss made me so mad I stuck a hot pitchfork in his belly."

"Did it make him howl?"

"Howl nothing. He thanked me for it. Yes, he thanked me for it, wrung my hand and wept tears of gratitude. He said it was the first warm thing he had in his stomach for a coon's age. That geaser told me he stood in a bread line in Chicago for three years. Once he got far enough to snatch a bun, but he never reached the coffee."

"Why don't you fill him up with molten lead?"

"Tried. Never feazed him. Said he hasn't tasted anything as good since he swallowed the carbohic acid the night before he came down here."

"Ever boiled him in oil?"

"Sure thing and he thanked us for the warm bath. Said he had a warm bath once before in a Salvation Army lodging house. Claims the water was so sticky he had to scrape himself with glass before he could pull his pants on."

"Suppose you lay him on the red grate for a spell."

"We did and he went to sleep on it like a baby in its mother's arms. When he woke up I heard him say to his neighbor: 'Partner this beats the grating above Maier's barber shop all hollow. Heating iron makes it safer to lay on and we're

not nearly as crowded here. A fellow can stretch out here, turn over when he wants to and be comfortable. Besides there is no cop to make you move on just about the time when you settled down to a good snooze."

"Quit that grinding, Lucifer. I'm all jumpy. You make me nervous. Just look at that parcel of maudlin maniacs over there. They've been parading around here all afternoon shouting glory and hosanna. You'd think they were in heaven, the way they're carrying on. It's a bunch of New York cliff dwellers. Flats they call 'em up there, just like there was anything flat about a hole in a

Wisdom of the Poor Fish



The Poor Fish says things will probably come out all right in the end, but he doesn't expect to live to see it.

wall. They're a smart lot these New Yorkers. Beelzebub thought he'd make it hot for the bunch and ordered a raise in temperature. It warmed 'em up all right, but not the way you thought it would. Instead of going through the howling and teeth gnashing stunt they gave old Bub a vote of thanks and they've been hallelujahing around ever since. From what I can make out they went to hell because they spent the greatest part of their miserable lives cussing janitors for not turning on enough steam to prevent icicles from forming under their blue noses. Now they get all

the heat they've been cussing for and are happy and easy as kittens in a basket."

"Luce, just raise those lovely optics of yours and spot that Arkansawyer over yonder. They've raked the hot cinders out of the main furnace and he's setting of them as usual. The cuss was born with a chill, nursed on swamproot and chill medicine and died with chills. He never done a thing in his life but chill or ready for another one. Chilling was his specialty. The last thing he done on earth was to burn the shack down over his head and leave a note requesting to have his remains cremated. This climate cured him of the chills and he wants to send for his relatives back in Arkansaw."

"Roasting folks alive used to be regarded as a terrible punishment. But nowadays if we roast one of the poor devils he only looks pleased. Seems that since meat prices have soared sky high this is about the only opportunity a fellow ever gets of smelling a roast."

"I tell you, Lucifer, we've got to do something to save our reputation. This place isn't any more like hell than a Sunday school picnic is. Capitalism has raised so much hell on earth that this dump looks like paradise to the geasers who drop in. What we need is Capital. We've got plenty of Capitalists here, but the beasts won't do anything as long as there is no money in it. That's their only incentive to raise hell. We've got the natural resources. There is more hot air down here than you can find on Wall street, and if gas is needed to inflate stocks, we've got the goods. We're a little short on water and children, but we've got cheap fuel and a climate that beats Alabama when it comes to saving coal and clothing for the wage slaves."

"This is an ideal location, all we need is capital to develop our resources. With Capitalism established here we could have jails and chain gangs, child labor, overwork, starvation, unemployment, fear of want, prostitution, white slavery, suicide, food poisoning and adulteration. We could maim, cripple and kill the most useful people to our heart's content, with no fear of the supply running short. There is no better place for cotton plantations, sugar refineries and iron mills than hell. But we got to have money. There never was a real hell without that. With Capitalism established down here, we'd run some show to compete with the hell above us."

THE RIGHT TO BE LAZY

"Sour Notes on Work," *American Guardian*, April 10, 1933

Goodness knows how long I've been trying to educate my fellow inmates of this great democracy to the use and purposes of life. Here we are, barber and barkeeper and bishop, holy man and highjacker, highbrow and lowbrow, fussing our little lives away and nobody asking the question why.

If speedometers were attached to our feet and jerk registers to our elbows, it would be found that man for man and woman for woman, we go through more motions (usually lost ones) than any other people on earth, and why?

Well, when I ask people they usually say: To get up in the world, or on in the world, or keep up with the world, or something equally discouraging. For what's the use trying to keep up

with a thing that's been going around and around ever since old man evolution stepped on the self-starter, and consequently is getting no where in particular.

Of course, I haven't got the evidence, but I feel sure the first thing Adam said when he saw Eve was: "Say, but you're a beaut," whereupon she said, "G'wan kiddo, you don't mean it." And that's what the young Adams and Eves have been saying to each other ever since.

Later in life, the songs of love grow fainter and we get variations on the weather theme such as "nice day today," "wasn't that some rain," "looks like it never will stop snowing," "gee, but it's hot and so on." But what good does it do to talk about the weather when nobody ever does anything about it one way or other.

* * * *

There was a time when people looked upon life on earth as a mere preparation for a better or a worse world as the case may be. But from the way most folks act nowadays, they seem to be willing to run chances in the next world so long as they can keep out of the penitentiary or poor house in this one.

About the most I ever get out of folks when I ask them why they are working so hard is that they are hustling for enough money to keep them without work when they're old, which is a good deal like spending all day swimming up a river for the privilege of floating down after dark.

* * * *

I admit work gives a good appetite. However, what good is appetite to the few who ruined their digestion through too much over work, or to the many who worked themselves out of jobs by working too hard and steady when they had them.

I also admit that there is nothing like hard work when it comes to induce dreamless sleep. Well, what of it. Why get all het up about eight or nine hours complete unconsciousness when there is a whole eternity full of unconsciousness waiting for us.

* * * *

It's about high time for somebody to take a day off to find a new purpose for life. I say a day off with malice aforethought because it is obvious that in this wonderful progressive age with its millions of iron horses and marvelous labor-saving devices, there isn't a soul left who can afford to spend 40 days and 40 nights meditating over the whys and the wherefores of existence.

THE LEFT

"God Bless the Reds," *American Guardian*, August 16, 1938

Reds are nothing new in the world. You find them all through history. The best way to find them is to make a list of the men who are the most honored, loved and even worshipped by our own time.

For a starter there was Moses. Who was Moses? Was he a high priest of Egypt? One of its leading bankers, merchants, realtors? A pillar of throne and altar? A safe and sane conservative? Forget it! He was the guy who led the children of Israel out of bondage. He had bumped off a taskmaster whom he had discovered slugging one of his brothers. He led the greatest walkout of all the ages. He turned sticks into snakes; sprinkled Egypt with toadhopppers and grasshoppers to eat his betters out of house and home, collected strike benefits in advance and wound up drowning the gunmen and sluggers of Pharaoh in the Red Sea. Heavy on Red. See?

Gosh, how the best people of his day must have had it in for that Red. I can hear 'em taking yet. "Everything was lovely," said Mrs. Rameses, pouring tea for Mrs. Tu-tank Something, "until this agitator Moses came along and stirred up our bondsmen. Poor bondsmen, they were so happy and contented with the lot in which Iris and Osiris put them. What if our straw bosses made them make bricks without straw? I can't see what difference it makes because I never made bricks."

"Me, neither," replied Mrs. Tu-tank, fumbling for her gold-plated lipstick in her pearl-studded purse with her lily white hand.

"However," consolingly comes back Mrs. Rameses, dropping the chocolate drop she had absent-mindedly picked up (Mrs. Rameses was reducing), "my husband told me the Bondsmen Department has decided to deport the agitator to where he comes from and settle all that labor trouble for good."

However, Moses deported himself and for good measure took the jewelry and faithful employees of the Egyptians with him. Yessirree, John L. Lewis, beg pardon, Moses, succeeded because according to the Good Book, the Lord was not only with him but acted as his chief advisor.

* * * *

Then after Moses came the biggest flock of Red agitators ever crowded in a country no bigger than a Texas county. Prophets they called them. And what them Reds said about the respectable, well-born and well-heeled of their times was a

Wisdom of the Poor Fish



The Poor Fish says he knows that many of our leading citizens got their wealth dishonestly, but we ought to let bygones be bygones.

plenty. I haven't got the space here to quote even the worst of their ranting. If you want details you'll find it all in a book called the Bible, which between you, me and the gatepost, contains more subversive literature than 80 generations of re-

spectable theologians ever dreamed of. Get out that most thumbed-over book in your library (No, no, no not Smears & Doughbucks catalogue; the Bible I mean) and read what Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Habbakuk and a slew more of them agitators said about the Who's Whoosers, Socialites, Bradstreet and Danners of their times. It's scandalous, I tell you. Of course most of the boys were liquidated with their sandals on, as is only natural with fellows who rile up mudsills, tell God's honest truth and shake their fists in the mugs of the mighty.

* * * *

Then after the prophets came the reddest of all, Christ. Born in a stable, the son of a carpenter and poor Jew girl on a hitchhike, he lied and died for the forgotten man of all times, the sick, halt and blind, the burdened and heavy laden, the persecuted and oppressed, the skinned and brow-beaten. He brought peace and consolation to the weary and worried, poured balsam in the wounds of bruised souls, gave help to sinners, drinks to the thirsty, bread to the hungry, and hell to money-changers, high priests and hypocrites.

He associated all his life with the poorest of the poor, with fishermen, dock-wallopers and water-rats, until the respectables of his age nailed him on a cross between two thieves for the crime of riling up the people.

But what good did it do? His disciples were just as red. If you don't believe it, read the Acts of the Apostles. And they were followed by the fathers of the church, who deserve a chapter all by themselves, because the church never followed them. Most of them were simon-pure communists who not only preached it but actually lived in communist colonies called monasteries and convents. Some day I'm going to make a collection of what these saints and church fathers said about the kind of people who nowadays sit in the front pews on Sunday, donate stained glass windows to churches and think it's okay for Franco to drop bombs on Spanish women and children. Why, they said about the two-legged golden calves of their time all that Kropotkin, Bakunin and Marx said 1,500 years later about the profiteers, pay-trioteers and pieteters of the 19th century. Only they said it much plainer and put it on a bit thicker.

OSCAR AMERINGER, HIMSELF

"This Cockeyed World," *American Guardian*, April 4, 1941

"Adam," said Buddy, as he entered our sumptuous sanctum this A.M., "I've been thinking."

"Oh, at it again?" says I, "haven't you learned yet that in times like these thinking is the most hazardous occupation anybody can think of?"

"Yes," replied Buddy, "but if I hadn't been thinking I never would 'a stumbled onto that great discovery up in my brain tank."

"Well, spring it," I says.

"It's this way," said Buddy. "I think I'm nothing but a damed old fool."

"Hurray, now you're shouting," I exclaim. "But now please tell how you got next to that marvelous tumble."

"Well," Buddy goes on, "while thinking I sorter got to reviewing the intellectual history of the past 50 years and I find I always got in wrong by seeing things right. Or got left behind by getting too far ahead. Or saw my brilliant notions adopted only after they were about to succumb to blind staggers, hardened arteries and acute senility."

"Okay," say I, "but how about particulars?"

"Well," Buddy proceeds, "nigh fifty-five years ago I joined the Knight of Labor and started to preach to divine gospel of more pay for less work. It was rought sledding. There were few unions and most of them were poor as Job's turkey. So we pioneer labor agitators and editors usually got our pay in hand claps and God-bless-yous. However, we kept a-going."

"Yep," say I, "you kept your jobs until the unions had grown fat and respectable enough to substitute salary and expense check for hand claps and God-bless-you's, but the safe, sane and conservative boys got the checks and you radicals the cold mitt."

"Yes," said Buddy, "I kept a-going till sometimes around the turn of the century I got to thinking that if in union there is strength there ought to be still more strength in unions of unions."

"That was in 1903 when we started the Labor World in Columbus, Ohio," I butts in, trying to push a prop under Buddy's failing mind.

"That's it," said Buddy with a faraway look in his bleary optics, "and the Labor World was one of the first if not the first labor paper in the U.S.A. that preached industrial unionism."

"Just so," says I, "and if I remember right you paid yourself your salary as editor-in-chief of the Labor World tooting your union clarinet in Kropp's beer garden and I still have my associate editor's wages coming to me."

"Don't interrupt me," snaps Buddy. "But industrial unionism triumphed just the same. the CIO, I read the other day, has now over four million dues-paying members."

"Dues-paying is right," I chimes in, "but if any of them dues have been applied to paying the back wages due to us two I haven't heard of it yet."

"Don't talk so sordid," says Buddy. "Not all the back wages in the world could give me greater satisfaction than to go down the corridors

of time as the oldest Founding Father of the CIO."

"I'm glad you're putting pay day off that long," I sneers, "because from the looks of things you'll have a fat chance to cash in on the investment of your hey-days."

"How come cash in?" Buddy wants to know.

"Well," I says, "have you ever seen your picture on the front page of a CIO paper under the caption: Founding Father No. 1 of the Congress of Industrial Organization?"

"No," says Buddy, humble-like.

"Or did you ever sit on the platform of a CIO convention when the delegates marched around with flying banners shouting, 'We want Oscar,' while the band played 'See the Conquering Hero Come'?"

"Well, it wasn't quite as strong as that, but I have attended a few CIO conventions, and..."

"Yes," I snaps, "and the last one to which you invited yourself, I saw you sit in a corner blubbering like a heart-broken cluck for pure joy to see her chicks grown up to be champion roosters and prize egg producers. But where are your eggs?"

"Oh, my eggs," says Buddy, "I wasn't thinking of eggs. What are eggs compared to beholding the full-blown flowering of the intellectual seed I had scattered?"

"Full-blown is right. But go on. What are your other blooming conquests?"

"Well," mused Buddy, "I confess some of the most brilliant ideas I bequeathed to mankind went haywire."

"For instance?"

"For instance I begged Woodrow Wilson not to get tangled up in the war over there on the ground that the only thing we would get out of it would be burned fingers."

"And..."

"When I begged the same poor Wilson to stay away from Versailles on the theory if he got there the high contracting high-binders would steal the

gold fillings out of Uncle Sam's dental works. Besides, I said we already have got one great American book entitled Innocence Abroad."

"Great, great!" I exclaims, "and the soundest advice ever spilled, but what did you get out of it?"

"Who, me? Well I almost got 80 years in Leavenworth for writing the history of the last quarter century twenty-five years in advance."

"Any more hard luck, Mr. Jeremiah?"

"Well, no -- come to think about it, some of the world-liberating ideas of mine penned out pretty well."

"For instance?"

"For instance when the bright young men of F.D.R.'s Brain Trust swiped 18 out of 20 planks of the Socialist platform I helped to compose in 1912 and nailed them together in the name of the New Deal. Why that achievement alone has fed a whole generation of B.A.'s, M.A.'s, Ph.D.'s. And if I wasn't so modest I might even claim being one of the spiritual grand-dads of the first third president of this country."

"Of course," Buddy went on, almost out of breath, "if F.D.R. gets pulled into this new war as he certainly will be if he doesn't quit pushing himself from behind, all these glorious achievements will be lost and..."

"And then, dear Buddy, you got a first class chance to get them 80 years that are still hanging over your bloody but unbowed head from the first World War."

"No, no, not eighty," says Buddy, coming out of his messianic St. Vitus swoon, "I'm already past seventy and how in the..."

"Don't swear," I soothes the old boy, "you're damned enough as it is. So let's put the motion."

"What motion?" Buddy asks bewildered.

"Well," say I, "you started this discussion saying you was a damned old fool. Now here goes my second and nobody being present but us two, I declare it passed and so ordered."



With the Puddin' Heads

KIDS LOOK AT TV

Young people, kids, probably watch more television than anyone, and there is a great deal of speculation about the effect of TV on them. Skipping over all of the theories we thought we would ask some of the kids what they think about TV today. In doing this we hope to inaugurate a "kids section" in CC. This would be a few pages devoted to their thoughts, pictures, etc. on the subjects dealt with by this magazine. Hopefully it will be written by and for kids. The following is a partial step in that direction in that we (adults) asked the questions. The responses, however, are the kids and in that spirit we are not going to attempt any types of interpretation. Our readers of all ages can derive what they will from these conversations and drawings.

Most of the young people responding are from an inner city Catholic school in Providence, R.I. Kate Hodgson, who teaches at the school, developed and asked the questions as well as elicited the sketches. While the ages range from five through thirteen all of the sketches are by the little ones. Kate reports that the older kids are reluctant to draw which, as she points out, is a telling statement in its own right.

Q. What's your favorite TV program?

A. Scooby-Do and Donny and Marie.

Q. Why do you like them?

A. I like Scooby-Do 'cause cartoons make me laugh. I like Donny and Marie 'cause my grandma watches them and she likes them, so I like them.

Q. What TV shows don't you like?

A. My mommy says I shouldn't watch TV all of the time and sometimes TV doesn't teach you anything. So I watch things that teach me a lot of stuff.

Q. What commercials do you like?

A. I don't like them because they are stupid but sometimes they are funny.

Q. Who's your favorite person on TV?

A. I don't know -- nobody, I guess.

Q. What shows make you sad?

A. When people get killed.

Q. If you could make your own TV show what would it be like?

A. It would be funny and teach kids a lot of things -- but I don't know right yet.

Girl, Age 5

Q. What is your favorite program?

A. Battleship Galactica and Mork and Mindy

Q. Why do you like them?

A. I like Galactica because they have good bad guys -- I don't like it when the good guys win all of the time. I like Mork and Mindy because Mork is funny -- he makes funny voices and acts.

Q. What TV show don't you like?

A. I like real shows better than cartoons. Cartoons are dumb. I don't like Soaps or News -- all they do is talk.

Q. What commercials do you like?

A. None -- they all are dumb.

Q. Who is your favorite person on TV?

A. The redeyes because they are bad.

Q. What show makes you sad?

A. I don't know.

Q. If you could make a TV show, what would it be like?

A. It would have the bad guys win because good guys always win on TV and that's stupid.

Boy, Age 7

Q. What's your favorite TV show?

A. I like all kinds I guess -- no special one.

Q. What TV shows don't you like?

A. I don't like soap operas because they are too dramatic. Besides these things happen every day. I can't see watching something that everyone hassles with everyday. I hate it when my mom watches them because it's like talking to a wall and she doesn't pay any attention to me.



Q. What commercials do you like?

A. I don't like them. They're a nuisance. They interrupt the programs I watch and usually at the best part.

Q. Who's your favorite person on TV?

A. Bionic Woman I guess -- because people say I look like her.

Q. What show makes you sad?

A. News, I guess -- that can get pretty depressing.

Q. If you could make your own show, what would it be like?

A. I don't know but probably something that would make kids watch it.

Girl, Age 11

Q. What's your favorite TV show?

A. Saturday Night Live. I like the humor. They take a lot of situations and goof off on them -- sometimes there is a lot of truth in the way they do it. Also I like Mork and Mindy -- I think Robin Williams is great. He's quick, creative and can do a lot of things at once. My parents don't really mind what I watch -- I mean they don't censor anything. They're kind of old style sixties hippies -- which makes things a little easier for me than some kids I know.

Q. What TV shows don't you like?

A. Oh, I could give you a list of those. There's lots of garbage on TV. Most people are into making quick money and that shows.

Q. What commercials do you like?

A. Forget it. Half the stuff they try to sell doesn't work anyhow. I think there is a lot of false advertising. We had this unit on propaganda and I really saw commercials for what they really were.

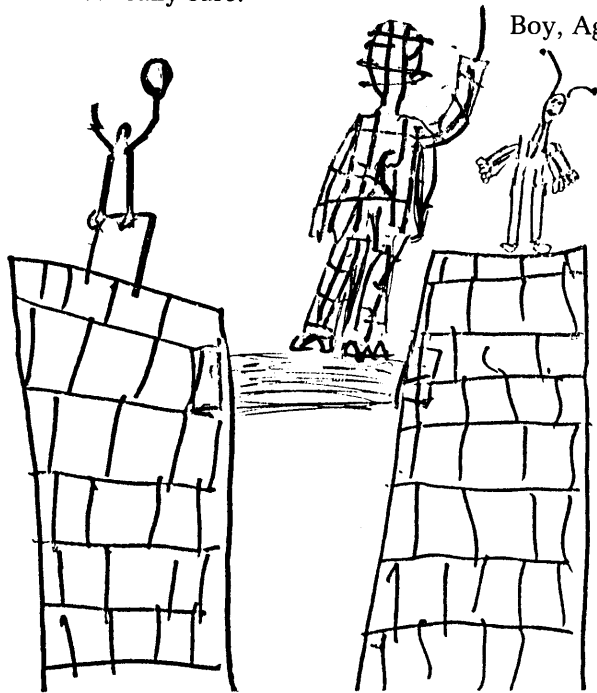
Q. What shows make you sad?

A. Oh, I guess when people are hurt or get treated badly.

Q. If you could make your own show what would it be like?

A. I don't know -- but it would probably be for kids my age -- I'm not really sure.

Boy, Age 13



Q. What's your favorite TV program?

A. Dr. Who, Spiderman and Sha Na Na.

Q. Why do you like them?

A. I always watch monsters. I watch it all day. Because they're on TV and that's why I like them. But they always come on late and they turn around and around and fly and change. They catch all the bad people and beat them up.

Q. Who are the bad people?

A. People who don't listen to cops and bust things up.

Q. What TV shows don't you like?

A. I don't know.

Q. What commercials do you like?

A. I don't like them -- they're yukky.

Q. Who's your favorite person on TV?

A. Wonder Woman 'cause she's strong.

Q. What show makes you sad?

A. I don't like news.

Q. If you could make your own show what would it be?

A. I would be the biggest one.

Boy, Age 5

Q. What's your favorite TV show?

A. Westerns. I like westerns. I like them when they get the bad guys in jail.

Q. What TV shows don't you like?

A. Girlie stuff -- like a family with all girls in its -- Yuk, I hate them.

Q. What commercials do you like?

A. I don't like them 'cause when I'm watching a good show they stop it. I don't like that.

Q. Who's your favorite person on TV?

A. The Hulk -- he's got big green muscles and when he gets mad he gets giant and everybody gets scared and listens.

Q. What show makes you sad?

A. When people cry or get hurt -- that makes me sad and sometimes I cry but don't tell anyone cause they think I am a sissy.

Q. If you could have your own show what would it be like?

A. I would dress up like a clown and juggle. I would be all different things.

Boy, Age 6

Q. What's your favorite TV program?

A. The Hulk. I like it when he gets angry and his shirt rips and he gets big green muscles.

Q. What TV shows don't you like?

A. I don't like Wonder Woman and the News. I don't like Wonder Woman because it's stupid and it's just a dumb lady and all kinds of stuff. It's stupid. News is dumb cause they don't have anything to say. No good stuff -- just bad things.

Q. What commercials do you like?

A. I don't like any -- they're dumb.

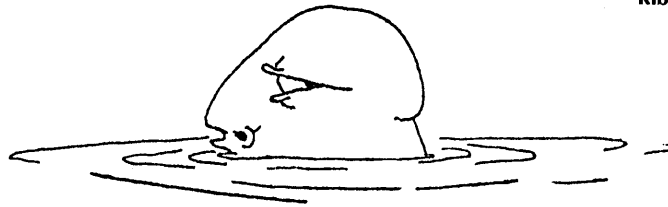
Q. What's your favorite person on TV?

A. I kind of like everyone -- no one is my best.

Q. If you could make your own TV show what would it be like?

A. I'd be Hulk so I could get mad -- then I could beat everyone up who bothers me. They wouldn't hurt me any more.

Boy, Age 7



HUMOR



QUOTATIONS from Samuel Purchas Pilgrimage

Fetich, fetich(e) (fetiʃ, fɪʃ), *n.* Forms: 7-8 *fetisso*, 8 *fetisso*; 7 *fetisab*, 9 *fetisab*, 10 *fetisab*, 11 *fetisab*; 8 *fetich(e)*, 9 *fetich(e)*, 10 *fetich(e)*, 11 *fetich(e)*. [*a* V. *fetich*, ad. Pg. *fetich* sb. chizm, sorcery (from which the earliest Eng. forms are directly adopted)]
n. *hectic* in same sense; a misl. use of *fetich* adj. "made by art, artificial, skillfully contrived".
n. *hectic*, 11 *fetich*, 12 *fetich* (see *FEAROUS*).
adj. *fetich(e)* *v.* *acerrimus*.
1. n. Originally, any of the objects used by the negroes of the Guinea coast and the neighbouring regions as amulets or means of enchantment, or regarded by them with superstitious dread. *b.* By writers on anthropology following C. de Brosses, *Le Culte des Dieux Fetiches*, 1760 used in wider sense: An inanimate object worshipped by savages on account of its supposed inherent magical powers, or as being animated by a spirit.

"Guinea" 1613

ILLUSTRATIONS from WOMAN'S DAY c. 1940



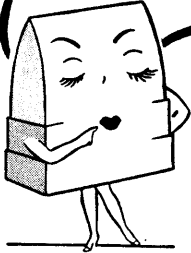
(1)

If they find any fetishes
in their way as they goe
{which are their
Idolatrour gods}
they give them some of their
fruit or millet to eat,
which is as much as if they
gave them
the tenth part of it.

(2)

They hang many straw Wispes

*"I make your skin
look **SOFT** as silk
And tenderize your face,
I give your skin
complexion charm —
I'm Hampden's Powder Base."
I'm **SOFTIE***



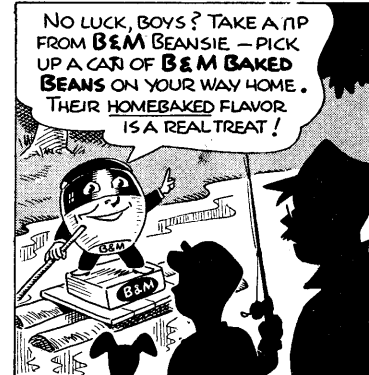
HAMPDEN'S powder base is choice of millions for it brings smooth radiance to every woman's complexion. Hides tiny lines and blemishes, keeps make-up looking fresh.

on their heads for fetishes
and thinke thereby
to bee free and safe as long
as they wear them.

When any man dieth, (3)

they also make a fetish,
and desire it to bring the
body into the next world,
and not to trouble it

in
the
way
as
it
goeth.



(4)

**DID YOU
GET YOURS?**



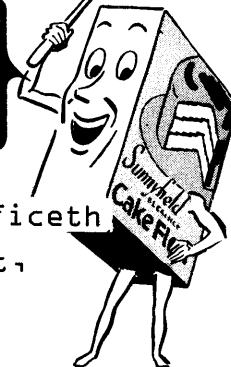
When
the
king
recieveth not
custome enough,

to maintain himself withall,
then he goeth to a tree
which he esteemeth to be his
Fetish, ...

(5)

**I BAKE
A DANDY
CAKE, TOO**

**SHE HAS
ME
TO THANK!**



and sacrificeth
unto it,

carrying it meat and drink.
This kind of superstition
they esteeme
for a great holinesse
for their bodies.

Noodles Romanoff

Published by:

Trans-Spatial News "intermittently"

STATE'S WIRE SERVICE

Stellar Date: 12,093,474,632 A.U.

Fryday the 17th



This publication is translated for those homonoids of Terra 3 by psycho-histological researchers of t7/8 University of Uranus.

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER:

Remember Portable 269, the feisty little radio that disappeared last fall? No one knew why it left, although there were some rumors that it got a parking meter "in trouble" and had to leave town. Now the truth can be told. Portable 269 was radio-napped, taken aboard an alien spacecraft, and questioned about the existence of intelligent life on earth. Convinced after long conversation that none existed, the aliens followed Portable 269 back to Base 2PR. There they made the earthlings an offer they couldn't refuse: Let us use Base 2PR as an intergalactic communications base. In exchange, we'll put out a newspaper that will tell you some useful things about yourselves. If you find this arrangement unsatisfactory, we'll simply turn you into ducks. One foreman did balk, and he can be heard quacking around the yard.

... continued on page 2

ESCAPED CHIPPER GOES BERSERK; TWO DIE

A chipper left overnight at the city garage mysteriously escaped Thursday night and left a trail of havoc and destruction before it was recaptured the next day. The chipper apparently went berserk and began chipping piles of garbage, several Volkswagens, and numerous pets. Victims included two elderly ladies who were chipped, police say, when they refused to give up their genes.

The mechanical reign of terror came to an end late Friday when two courageous city workers talked the vehicle into surrendering. In exchange, the city agreed to the truck's demand that it get four new rear tires. The chipper expressed remorse for the incident but in a statement issued to the press declared: "We (city vehicles) are tired of being treated as third class vehicles. We are tired of the daily abuse, the rough handling, the poor maintenance. We are tired of drivers who try to burn our clutches out or who drive with the emergency brakes on or who forget to put us in lower gear when they slow down. If conditions do not change, we cannot guarantee there won't be more incidents like this."

-1-

HUMOR ON THE JOB

Just about everybody makes jokes about the Company (private business or the State), the supervisors, the conditions, and all the rotten ways a job spoils the day. Forestry workers in Michigan have lifted up their amusement to a signal level of self-conscious activity by issuing their own newssheet, State's Wire Service, which they describe as "journalism taking the offensive."

They have a strong belief in the applicability of their jibes beyond their own immediate situation and we agree. We publish here a facsimile of their initial issue's first page, and a few clips from subsequent issues, including much of the "Urban Forestry Worker's Survival Manual."

Readers interested in delving further into the minds of these wood-jokers can for \$2.00 order

the Forestry Papers, the collection from which our excerpts were taken, or send \$2.50 for their second collection, Down From the Trees: Evolution in the Forestry Department. \$4.00 will buy a ten-issue subscription. Make checks payable to Heliograph, 514 Holmes Rd., Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197.

-The eds.

THE URBAN FORESTRY WORKER'S SURVIVAL MANUAL

"All work rules shall be distributed to each employee covered by the work rules..."

The Union Contract

In order to make the goings-on and working conditions common knowledge to all workers in the Forestry Department, the Aware Workers Action Group (AWAG) has been authorized to produce a simple, succinct, easy-to-understand digest of the relevant rules, regulations and rituals of the department. In addition, we have taken it upon ourselves to define certain terms which may be unfamiliar to the layperson or newly-hired worker.

The Publishers

UNION MEMBERSHIP

Union membership is not compulsory. Those who do not wish to belong to the union, however, must pay dues to a non-union to be determined by the city.

WORK RULES

All work rules will be made by the supervisors in charge. The underlying philosophy of the present rulemakers seems to be "The best way to keep workers on their toes is to keep them on their knees."

PUNCHING THE CLOCK

All workers are required to punch in before the start of the workday and out at the end of the day. The punchclock was introduced several years ago because one particular worker flouted the rules and repeatedly came late. Trustworthy workers have been more than glad to put up with the inconvenience and insult to their integrity just as they were willing to accept it when the entire class had to stay after school because of one troublemaker.

LUNCH "HOUR"

Our lunch break, aptly called the "lunch hour" is really only a half hour long. When asked why professionals and office workers get an hour for lunch while manual workers only get a half hour, a city personnel spokesman declared: "We are doing this to provide equal opportunity to the manual worker to enhance his social status. Where once ulcers and heart disease were the exclusive province of the high-powered executive, our short lunch hour has opened up more opportunity for workers to develop these status diseases."

BREAK TIME

Two fifteen (15) minute coffee breaks will be given, one in the morning, the other in the after-

noon. Rules about taking this break have been relaxed somewhat in recent years, and now workers are allowed to drink their coffee sitting down.

If a supervisor is present during break time, employees are required to listen to his insults and/or jokes. No reading is permitted during break time unless the book or magazine has pictures of naked women. Occasionally, a dispensation is given for hunting or fishing magazines.

SAFETY

The union will appoint a safety director whose function it will be to implore workers to wear hard hats and da-glo vests, and to show movies instructing equipment operators how to avoid backing trucks over each other. It does not appear to be within the safety director's province, however, to prohibit an employer from violating safety rules.

HOW TO FILE A GRIEVANCE

Step One:

Discuss the grievance with your immediate supervisor, who will tell you your grievance is totally unfounded. You have a right to have a union steward present during this meeting unless your supervisor can convince you otherwise.

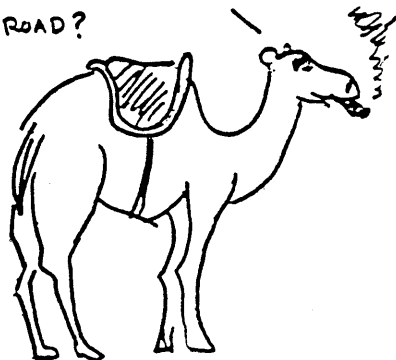
Step Two:

If you are unsatisfied with your supervisor's response, you may take your grievance to the department head and so on up the line until you find someone who is legally bound to abide by the union contract. Chances are that at that point your grievance will be sustained.

TARDINESS

Each worker is to be at work and punch in before 7:00 A.M. For each minute he is late, the

Wise sayings : WHY DID THE
UNION OFFICIAL CROSS THE
ROAD?



ANS. TO AVOID THE ISSUE

worker may be fined 50¢. Four latenesses in one month, and the worker gets his ear cut off.

EARLYNESS

No worker is to be at work more than one half (1/2) hour before the start of the work day. Workers caught coming in excessively early will have this information recorded on their permanent records and may result in their being committed to a mental institution.

ABSENCES

Any worker absent from work for any reason whatsoever will automatically be suspect. Any worker returning from any absence must bring a note from his mother explaining the circumstances. Handwriting will be checked for authenticity.

SICK LEAVE

Now you know you're not *really* sick. Stop wasting your sick days. Save them for when you really need them. (Note: Sick leave may not be taken in the event of mental illness caused by the job.)

PERSONAL LEAVE

These are not to be taken lightly. You only get three (3) a year, so use them sparingly. Better take a vacation day.

VACATION DAYS

The rule here is the longer you've been here, the less time you have to spend here. If you've worked here thirty years, you never have to show up at all. But most people haven't been around that long and accumulate between one (1) and two (2) days a month.

BIRTHDAYS

Each worker will be allowed one day off per year for his birthday. Unless, of course, he belongs to one of the ancient sects such as the Savants of Brush who know only the lunar calendar. Then he gets one day a month.

REGULATIONS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Administrator: Someone who gets paid \$35,000 a year to think up excuses for why things aren't working.

Bumping: The right to remove a lower seniority, lower classification employee from a job you probably don't want in the first place but are

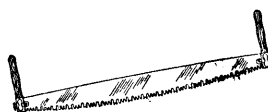
forced to consider because you have been threatened with lay off. Good samaritans who fail to bump may be denied unemployment benefits for failing to take "suitable employment."

CETA: A program by which city work gets done with federal money under the pretense of training a worker for a job that does not exist.

Equipment Operator: A worker who moves large amounts of heavy material, usually by hand.

Favoritism: If you're white, you're right, if you're brown stick around, if you're black get back.

Grievance: A legal procedure against your supervisor which you are continually told you can't win until you win it.



Groundsman: Another name for a worker of the Negro persuasion. Also known as "dark green foresters."

Grunt: A low-classification worker. The grunt motto: "The buck starts here."

Lay-off: An empty threat used to force workers to take less desirable jobs.

Light Duty: An otherwise rare phenomenon which can be observed between the hours of 8:00 and 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the parks and forestry picnic tables.

Lunch Hour: The shortest half hour of the day.

Supervisor: See "light duty."

Time Clock: A device to remind workers that their time belongs to someone else.

Union Contract: A quasi-legal agreement which forces a worker to sign his rights over to a representative organization, prohibits striking, and forces the worker to pay dues to that organization in order to keep his job.

Union Dues: Just a small part of the dues you pay working for the city.

Weed Killer: A chemical which kills living things, some of which happen to be weeds.



THE TRAGEDY OF TRUCK ABUSE

In a remote corner of the city garage parking lot is a truck with no apparent damage. Yet it refuses to run. When put into gear, it makes a whining, grinding sound. When its steering wheel is turned, the vehicle shudders uncontrollably. There is nothing mechanically wrong with the truck. It's scars are emotional. It is a victim of truck abuse. Then there is the chipper truck who went berserk last winter, killing two and doing untold damage. It, too, was an abused truck.

A few weeks ago, a city worker confessed to having tortured and mutilated a garbage truck. Apparently, he had driven the truck for several miles at high speeds with the emergency brake on, ignoring the truck's screams of pain, until the brake cable snapped. He then repeatedly forced the truck into gear without using the clutch and twisted and pulled off the truck's side mirrors. Later, he forced the truck to commit unnatural acts.

Mr. Horace Zental, president of the Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Vehicles (ASPCV) is concerned. "Vehicle abuse is becoming a serious problem in this country," he says. "Too many people take out their aggression and frustrations on their cars and trucks because they believe vehicles won't fight back. How wrong they are!"

Even the most loyal car or truck, says Zental, will turn on the cruel owner. "I have here in my files countless examples of vehicles who have succeeded in maiming their owners."

The city government, meanwhile, has opened a truck abuse clinic to counsel past offenders or would-be truck abusers. One such worker, Barney Doe (not his real name) said that it took him years before he had a truck abuse problem. "It started small. When my truck wouldn't start I would curse and kick it. Then I'd rev the truck up to 50 in second gear, until it groaned with pain. That's when I realized I enjoyed knowing the truck was in pain. I even used to go home at night and plot tortures against my truck."

Fortunately, Doe decided to seek professional help. Doe feels he is not alone. "Many of my co-workers have this problem but are not aware of it. It is about time they come out of the closet and seek help."

The Seven Danger Signals of Truck Abuse

- Any unexplained dents and rust spots.
- Repeated stalling.
- Mirror, running boards or tail lights that have been broken off.
- Cigarette burns in the upholstery.
- Unexplained shaking or vibrating.
- Refusing to start, and if started, refusing to move.
- loud, groaning noises coming from the engine or transmission.

What Sort of Person Becomes A Truck Abuser?

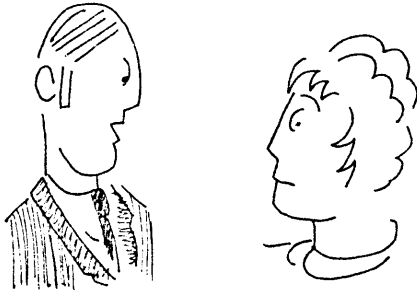
Experts say truck abusers tend to be insecure. They are unable to directly confront authority figures, so they displace their aggression by "beating up" their trucks. They know their victim can't speak or fight back.

Many truck abusers are considered "good workers." They follow orders, do their jobs, sometimes working harder than their non-truck abusing counterparts. Instead, they take out their frustrations on their trucks.

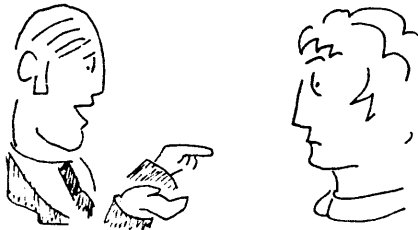
Sometimes they pretend to be mechanics. Under the guise of fixing something, they sadistically mutilate the vehicles. When one such "garage" was raided last year, police found at least a dozen severely mutilated and tortured vehicles, including several elderly DeSotos. The suspect's wife, upon viewing the scene of the crime, broke down and sobbed, "I thought he was fixing them!"

If you know someone you think is a vehicle abuser, try to get him to go for help. (We say "him" because 92 percent of vehicle abusers are men. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to be vehicle "neglecters.") The Ann Arbor Truck Abuse Walk-in Clinic and Hotline provides confidential counseling on a 24-hour basis. Use it -- a truck may thank you for it.

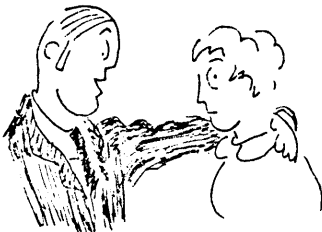
I MEAN, LOOK AT
BARBARA WALTERS---
WOMEN ARE getting
promotions.



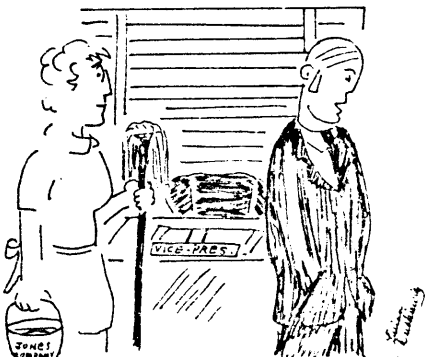
THAT'S WHY THE
Equal Rights Amendment
is unnecessary. Through
hard work and
diligence---



...WOMEN, like yourself,
will get promotions,
pay raises and so on.
So keep up the good
work and perhaps I'll
consider a raise.



WELL,
GOOD NIGHT
MOM.



Lillian Dudkiewicz

AN EXTORTION SOCIAL

will be held at MRS. ETHEL BERRY

1511 SOUTH 19th STREET

Tuesday Evening, October 11, 1927-8 p.m.

Benefit of FLOWER CLUB of Cherry Memorial Church
Please bring a good supply of pennies. Rev. Harrod, Pastor

Ring bell too hard 2c; chair 1c; standing 1c; leaving before
time 5c; Cold water, large glass 1c, small glass 2c; Lemonade
small glass 3c, if you don't like Lemonade 3c, Bachelors 3c;
Old Maids 3c; Widows and widowers 2c; Left wife or husband
home 3c. Please be prepared to pay fines. REFRESHMENTS

Admission

Five Cents

Harlem Party Card

SO I TOLD HIM, "LOOK
I CAN SYMPATHIZE
WITH THE OPPRESSION
YOU EXPERIENCE AS A
GAY INDIAN WHO IS
INTO TRANSVESTISM
... ALL I'M SAYING IS
THAT YOU STILL ARE
ENJOYING THE PRIVILEGE
OF BEING BORN A MALE
IN A PATRIARCHAL
SOCIETY WHICH
OPPRESSES WOMEN AND
YOU COULD BENEFIT
FROM SOME
SELF-CRITICISM
ON THAT ACCOUNT,
RIGHT?"

WELL, HE SAID, NO
HE THOUGHT THAT
THE OPPRESSION
EXPERIENCED BY
NATIVE AMERICANS
AND OTHER 3RD
WORLDERS UNDER
CAPITALISM OUT-
WEIGHED MY
OPPRESSION AS A
WOMAN WHO WAS,
AFTER ALL, WHITE
AND ENTITLED TO
"WHITE-SKIN
PRIVILEGES."

THE NEXT THING
I KNEW, WE WERE
FIGHTING... THANK
GOD I TOOK KARATE!
WE WERE ALL SET
TO KILL EACH
OTHER UNTIL
SOMEONE POINTED
OUT THAT THIS
WAS JUST ANOTHER
EXAMPLE OF HOW
THE RULING CLASS
USES DIVISIONS IN
THE WORKING CLASS
TO DIVIDE AND
TORPEDO THE
STRUGGLE.

THE
RULING CLASS
SURE IS
TRICKY,
AIN'T IT !!



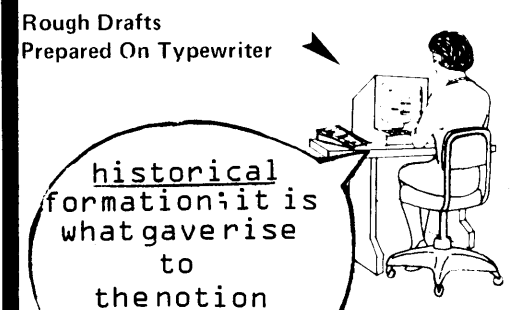
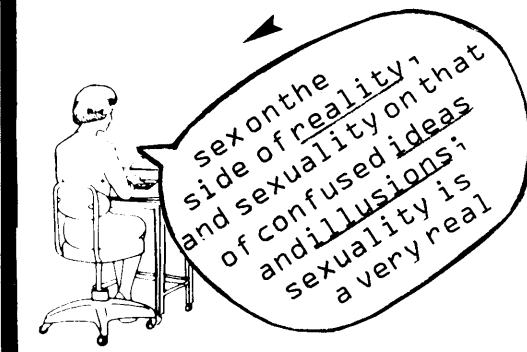
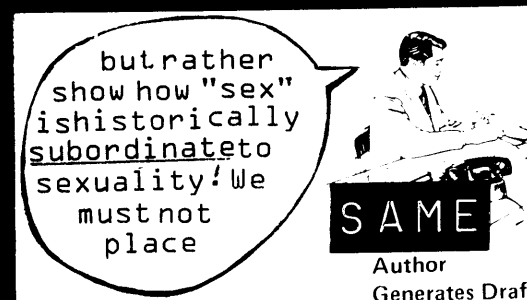
CRITICISM/SELF-CRITICISM SECTION

ANSWER & DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

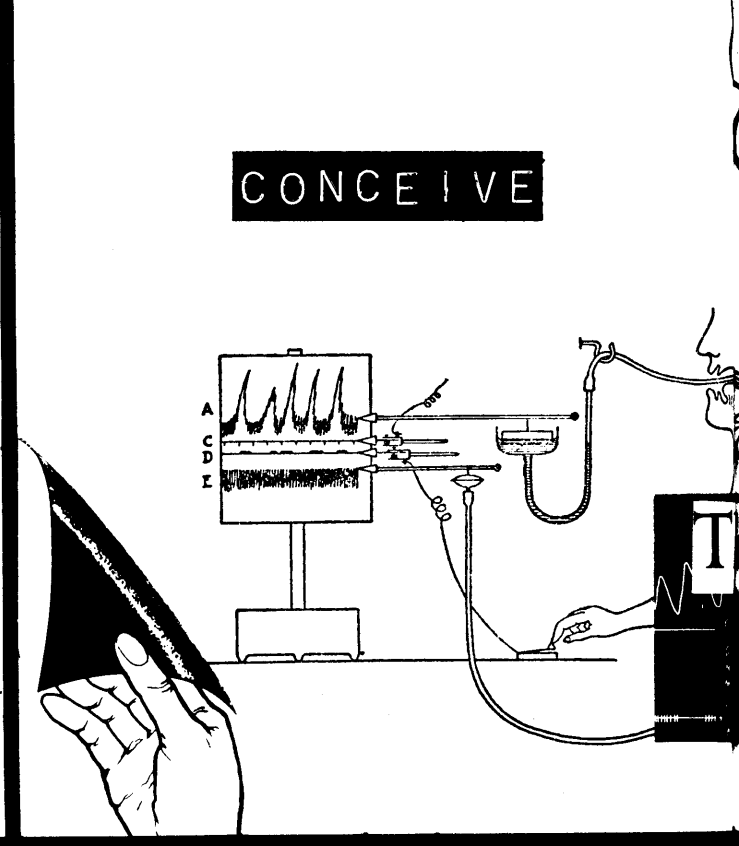
- 1) IS THIS CARTOON FUNNY?
- 2) IS IT ACTUALLY MAKING FUN OF OPPRESSION?
- 3) WHAT IS ITS "POINT"?
- 4) WHO IS MORE OPPRESSED?
- 5) EXPLAIN OTHER WAYS THE RULING CLASS IS TRICKY.
- 6) IS DAVID ROCKEFELLER THE HEAD OF THE RULING CLASS?
- 7) WOULD DAVID ROCKEFELLER FIND THIS CARTOON FUNNY?

© Jay Kinney

Jay Kinney



TIME



one tracks
along the course
laid out by the
general deployment
of sexuality!

OF SEX



asa speculative ele-
ment necessary to its
operation! We must not
think that by saying
yes to sex, one says
no to power; on
the
contrary,

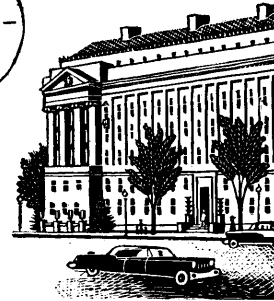
The History of Sexuality

by Michel Foucault

A ● ● ● ● ● ● ● B

It is the
agency of sex
that we must break
away from, if we aim--
through a tactical
reversal of the
various

WITHOUT



mechanisms of
sexuality--to counter
the grip of power with
the claims of bodies,
pleasures and
knowledges

THE LAW

TRY THE MOST
AND PENSIVE
CIGAR TOBACCO
IN THE WORLD
At My Risk



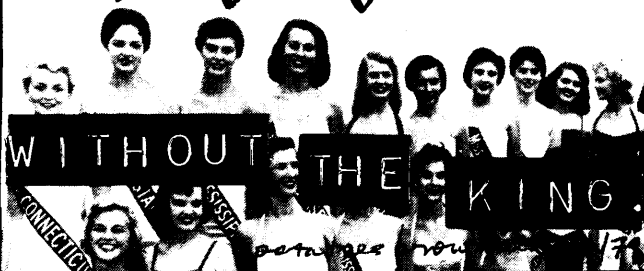
We combed the import
markets to find the world's
expensive cigar tobaccos. We
the highest for the finest
beautiful mild Cameroon, light
silky Nicaragua, rich Mata-Fina from
Brazil, plus the finest Santo Domingo
Seco grown from Cuban seed.
All blended by expatriate Cuban
cigar makers into cigars selling for
up to \$1 apiece
To find the 1
who appreciates
cigars, we offer
kit of 7 different size cigars for

in their
multiplicity
and their
possibilities
of resistance!

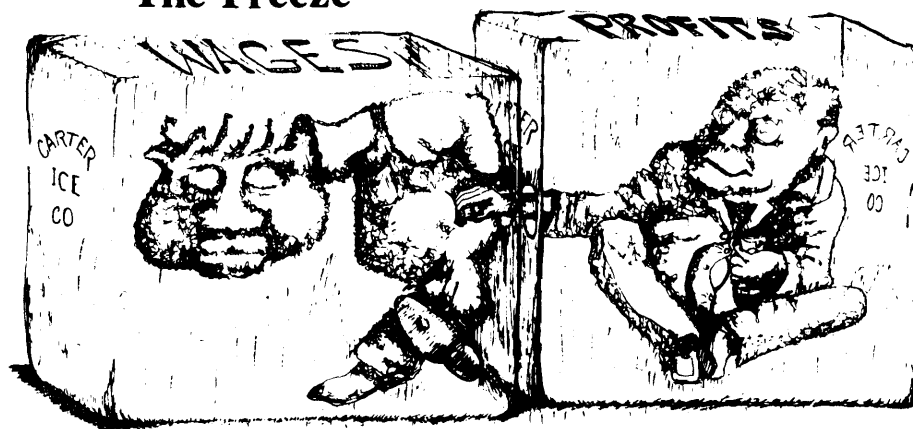
POWER



The rallying point for the
counterattack against the deploy-
ment of sexuality ought not to be
sex-desire, but bodies and
pleasures!



"The Freeze"



Robert Green (Workers' Defense Newsletter)

YOU HAD TO BE THERE

So I carry the dozen bad bobbins over to the number four winder because that's the one they had to come off of and it's got to be reset. Zagar's always there right after coffee, most likely plotting ballbusting maneuvers and making work for himself. Like what I'm carrying now, right? He's talking to Angelina about her grand-daughter, who's taken to putting her toys in a garbage bag and dragging it around. "They grow fast, don't they Sam?" I show him the bad work and watch what he does to the winder so I can do it next time without him. If, what he's doing is really what to do. You always have to take an industrial-sized grain of salt with anything Zagar says or does. He gets a kick out of jokes no one but him gets. When he teaches you, on breakdowns say, he'll get you started wrong and go two rows over and watch you from behind and see if you can get out of the fix he's got you in. "Use your imagination, Sam," he's all the time saying. Or, "if that doesn't work, do the opposite." Maybe he'll call Tony over and let him watch too, so the boss can know who's the man on the floor to trust. But turn the coin over. He gets a kick out of someone getting at his back too. The challenge of it, it's a tonic, it let's him know he's king, master. He'll set you up to shoot you down, but first he's got to set you up. "It's just his little way," Angelina said to me once. Right now Zagar's got a gleam in his eye. He catches Angelina's eye and says to me, "Sam, the farmer is taking the young bull to market. And as he walks along behind the young bull, what does the farmer say to him?"

"Pretty soon I won't have to take any more shit from you."

I laughed. We WASPs like our wit dry anyhow. But the last time he gave me one of these nuggets to chew on was just before he started teaching me to be a mechanic, so I right away started trying to work out what he "really meant," if I had to get ready for another dogfight or what. (For a place with a boss who pretends to be blind, and actually remembers to run into things every so often so he can spy on us all, this kind of exercise is perfect.) And here's what I came up with. It seems to me

it's close enough. "Approx-i-mate-ly," as Zagar would say. I've got that "I've--looked--through--his--glasses--and--I--Know" feeling about it. The young bull, that's me. White male, 26--34, reads and writes equals prime cut labor power. That makes Zagar the farmer.

When he trains me to be a mechanic, then I'm marketable. Shit's the mistakes I make learning that he has to clean up. As well as sometimes you want to go off on your own, fix some clutches, take on a big project without some guy watching you from behind. That aggravation, of me going off like that, being shit that he has to take from me too. But no more. What this adds up to is that the grapevine is right and Zagar is "pretty soon" going to go back to Italy where he has some property. It's true that he looked up the exchange rate for the lira in my paper yesterday. And he's done Tony one last good turn by training me to replace him. So you don't need any salt at all for this one.

In the two years I've been at this place, it's been like the changing of the guard. The old guys, the ones who've been here longer than I've been alive, they're dying out. Leo, one day before he left, showed me around when his shakes weren't too bad. He worked in the machine shop and had a boiler operator's license. He talked about when the shop made woolen worsted in the war (World War II) and had its own generator in case of a power failure. I got him going. "I was twelve, I was going to be a jockey. Narragansett Raceway. I was an exercise boy, then I shot up, I got to be as tall as you. I would have been rich." All over the mill, the signs and marks of the old regime are still there. A drive with one electric motor for each row went in where there used to be a gigantic system of overhead shafts and belts all tied back to one prime mover. The brackets for the shafts, the drive wheels, the bearings are still up there, catching lint; now the boiler room is just for heat and hot water. But the rhythms the oldsters worked to, the points Tony could push them to without their deciding "I'll just fuck up this time," those won't leave their marks nearly as

long. Somewhere I read how a time/motion man could set it up so one man could put together sixty-six braiding machines in a day. Zagar or Leo might do two or three, every so often lighting a Camel to sit back and consider the situation. Mills like this are the ones that got left behind when the textile industry moved South. When the oldsters go, they're going to get left behind again. People will start to feel Tony push and push and push. When Zagar has taken me to the market and left.

So the winders get reset and we both leave Angelina and go our separate ways out on the floor. And at lunch I tell Zagar that old Maine joke about "How do I get to East Vassalboro?" ("don't move a goddamned inch") complete with Downeast accent, engine noises and gearshifting motions. He laughed. "Don't move," because it's right that he should stay, a king in his own country. I don't want to take his job, and I wanted to make sure he knew it. I don't think I want to have it, either. The industry's old; I'm young. When we wash up at the end of the day, he says, "Sam, the dog is after the old fox, and he chases the fox and chases the fox and chases and chases him. And when the fox thinks he's lost the dog, he turns around and looks back up his trail. Now, why does the old fox turn around?"

"Because he's only got one set of eyes."

Well, he's laughing last, I have to admit it. The old fox. But how can anyone so two-faced have just one set of eyes? Maybe I can reverse it, and say that the truly foxy have eyes front and back? But the only oldster with two sets is Tony, his real ones and his pretend ones. Who's chasing Tony? And if it's me that's the dog, and I'm chasing him, well I've got glasses and that's four eyes equals two sets, and I *still* don't get to catch him! Maybe he's saying I should stay drunk and see double, and then no-one can get behind me? He's an old fox, alright, but maybe just a shaggy one. If you work it out, tell me. You had to be there, I know, and when I get some money in the bank, I won't be.

Sam Hunting

HUMOR FROM LABOR'S OWN PRESS

CORRESPONDENCE
(Detroit, 1953-56)

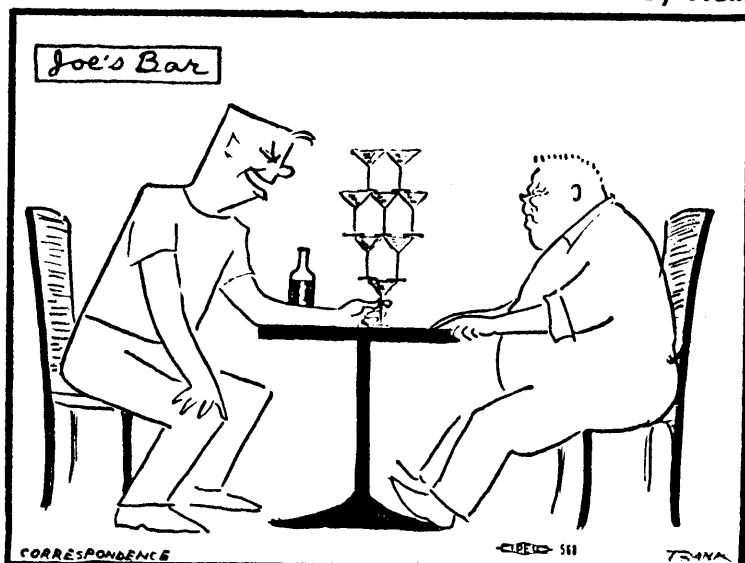
LABOR STATESMAN



"Take a letter to the membership. 'Fellow Workers . . .'"

THE NEEDLE

By Frank



So you think the men at the top are important, Harry? Well, then just let me take this one here away.

EGGHEAD



I can't see why the fellers criticize the contract. Why it's so complicated they can't even understand half of it.

* * *

I like union meetings. I like to watch smart people talk about laws and things I don't know about. It's not like real life at all.

* * *

Why do the fellers wild-cat so much? If they don't want to work, they just have to wait till the next layoff.

* * *

Why worry about the time study man watching you. After all he doesn't mean it in a personal way.

* * *

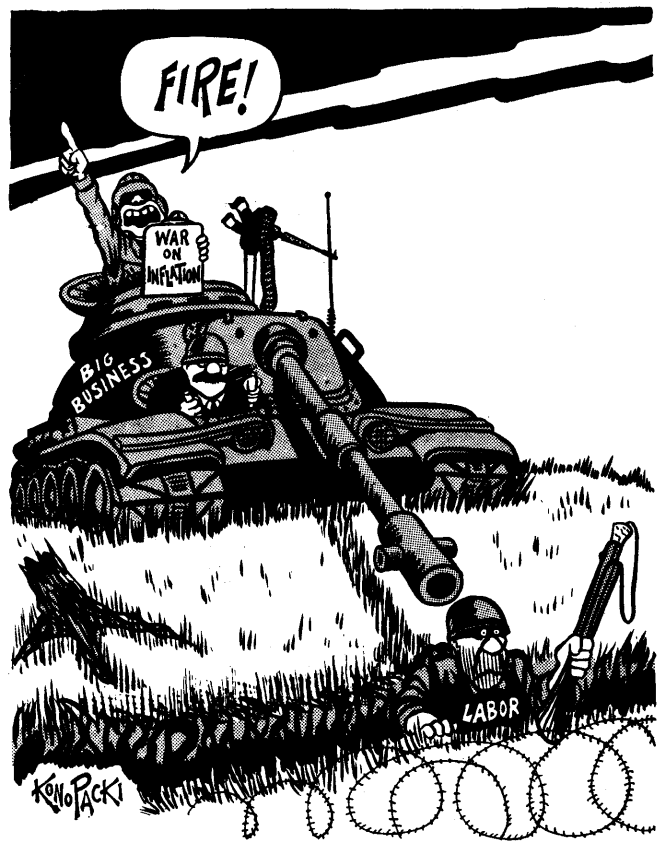
It's a good thing we have a 5 year contract. It gives a guy time to learn what's in it.

* * *

Our committeeman is real conscientious. He's been working on my grievance for almost a year.



"DON'T BELIEVE IT. IT'S JUST THE RAVING OF A MAD H.E.W. SECRETARY!"



PRESS CONNECTION (Madison, Wisconsin, 1978)



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Workers bite back!**



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REVIEWS

MAGAZINES/JOURNALS

Left Curve/7. \$3/issue or \$7 (3 issues) from 1230 Grant Avenue, Box 302, San Francisco, CA 94233.

The editorial statement in this issue, familiar in content but fresh and direct from the editor's pen, suggests the agonies of the 'seventies have produced some important self-revelations about the state of Culture and the Left. Here's Csaba Polony on the result of a forced and artificial "politics in the saddle" approach toward Art upon previous stages of *Left Curve*:

Rather than developing a deeper understanding of the dialectical interconnections between "intellectual" work and "practical" work, of collective and "personal" commitments, of "political effectiveness" and questions of broader historical truth, the tendency was to create mechanical oppositions. Rather than working toward a more synthetic, comprehensive awareness, the dialectical relationships between "theory and practice" would be mechanically shattered and reduced to questions of immediate audience reaction. Hence any "theoretical" work would be assumed applicable only to "petty bourgeois intellectuals" and work of "concrete struggle" would be to "serve the working class." The conclusion of this simplistic syllogism would then be that unless one's work had immediate applicability to "workers' struggles", you would be an opportunist only interested in raising (or maintaining) your class position...(G)iven the situation in the US in the '70s, where there simply does not exist a conscious revolutionary struggle that has mass dimensions, such simplistic pragmatism is just moronic. Furthermore, the scope of this magazine was cultural activity, which by its very nature is less direct than politics. Culture is synthetic, experimental, more of an attempt to organize our awareness of reality into expressive statements which are suggestive rather than programmatic. To reduce art to questions of immediate effect is to create hollow formulas and cliches so prevalent in much "political" art.

Down the line toward a new direction, Polony notes the political difficulty of the present period, the counter-productive quality of much "party-building" energies, etc., whose discussions "rarely rise above catch phrases borrowed from the early years of this century." He comes back to commitment, integrity, as the only touchstone.

#7 measures up more nearly to Polony's goal than any previous number I've seen. An impressive gallery of Popular Front photographer, Lester Bialog; a fine essay by P.J. Laska on "Poetry and Politics," insisting that "the poetry that makes the whole of reality visible will have to do more than hold up the mirror to a mutilated existence," i.e., Socialist Realism; valuable discussions Fern Tiger on Left Video, by Bruce Kaiper on Radical Oral History, are only a few of the features that make *Left Curve* worth discovering (or rediscovering). A jargon from the Maoist 1960s (admittedly an old adversary to

CC's Hegelianism) and a humorlessness, along with the usual lack of funds for slicker production, hold the magazine back. But it's growing intellectually, searching more than before. Like CC, it deserves and needs readers' support.

CINEASTE, IX, #1. Quarterly, \$1.50/issue, \$5/year, from 333 Sixth Ave., New York, NY 10014.

The tenth anniversary issue of *Cineaste* is of special interest because Gary Crowdus offers a miniature history and some thought on the problems as well as accomplishments of the magazine.

Cineaste began as a "Magazine for the Film Student," and evolved along with the radicalization of the editor toward something more self-consciously more political. It now seems hard to imagine that, in all the crosswinds of personal and political confusion, Crowdus in 1970 congealed an editorial board with its present, outstanding members -- Dan Georgakas, Ruth McCormick, and Lenny Rubenstein. The *Cineaste* sought early and wisely to move beyond the selfstifling, aesthete approach of the structuralists' "textual" analysis in favor of a contextual understanding, steering clear of any sectarian Left tendency and of the Left's bluff-and-bluster jargon. As Crowdus keenly notes,

Probably our biggest challenge...is in attempting to dispel the stereotyped notions prevalent in the US of Marxist film criticism. Marxist criticism of the arts in general has a notoriously bad reputation in this country and, sad to say, it is not always undeserved. What has too often passed for Marxist aesthetics in this country, though, has been vulgar materialist methodology which approaches everything from a strict economic determinist or sociological reductionist viewpoint, with commercial films being simple-mindedly reduced to their cut-and-dried ideological components.

From this writer's standpoint, *Cineaste* until the last few years found its objects of revolutionary interest mostly abroad, its objects of derision in Hollywood past and present. The magazine has gone far to integrate American popular culture films, but as may be readily seen from two insightful studies in the current issue ("The Working Class Goes to Hollywood," by Al Auster and Lenny Quart, and "The Worker and Hollywood," by Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy), not nearly far enough into the interstices of film beyond formal plotting and characters. As George Lipsitz ably pointed out in a *Jump-Cut* essay several years back, the multiplicity of the blue-collar film in the 1930s-40s offered something other than images of class struggle and political awareness -- either absent or sadly distorted -- rather the image of the working class group living and thinking out its dilemmas together as if prepared for some greater challenge.

Nevertheless, the cultural reader would be mistaken not to make *Cineaste* a regular. It's the best we have now.

COMICS

ANARCHY, #1. \$1. Last Gasp, PO Box 212, Berkeley, CA 94705.

It doesn't take an anarchist to recognize that this is the strongest political number in the underground scene for the last couple years. Kinney has outdone himself as editor and artist. "Too Real" (see excerpt) combines text and collage in an hilarity that hits the funny bone and opens up political questions closed to many by the customary banality of Left sloganeering. Jay has encompassed the Situationist comics of the '60s and moved beyond their hysterics to an open-minded, rambling critique. He offers a self-interpretation in "Smarmy Comics," a drift from youthful hyper-anarchism to the kind of Socialist-Anarchism or what used to be called "Revolutionary Socialism," drawing insight from Marx without falling into orthodoxy or disavowing the anarchist sensibility. He thereby joins the august company of typically American revolutionaries -- Albert Parsons of the Haymarket Martyrs, "Big Bill" Haywood, in recent times our friends the Surrealists (and us). Welcome aboard!

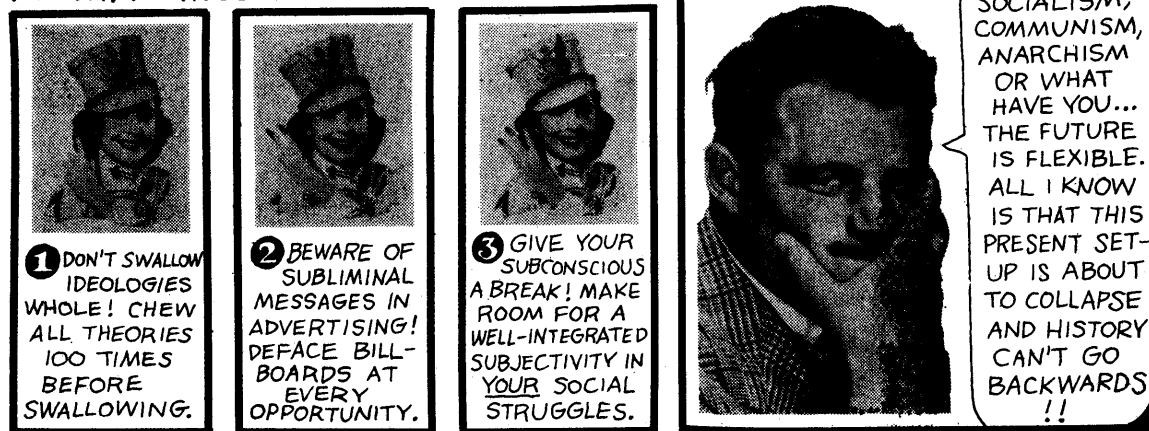
Spain Rodriques also hits the mark. His grim style, self-consciously flat and unhumorous, find perfect subjects in "Nestor Makhno," a closely-drawn story of the Russian anarchist crushed by the Bolsheviks, and another historical tale about the Spanish Civil War. Spain draws like a disillusioned Leninist, not quite hopeful about anything else but determined to tell what he sees.

And much else. Paul Mavrides' "Some Straight Talk About Anarchy" is brilliant in detail. The French strip translated and reprinted here, by Epistolier and Volney, tells the tragedy of Kronstadt better than any book I know. Melinda Gebbie adds her own curiously violent anarcho-feminism. Even Gilbert Shelton, the goodnatured anarchist daddy of so many younger artists' styles, has a page. Some will find *Anarchy* a little (or more than a little) on the frivolous side. Not me. Kinney and his pals have given themselves just the right amount of breathing space inside a concept that holds the comic together without binding anyone. If proof were required for collective anarchy, this is it.

MONDO SNARFO, #1. \$1. Kitchen Sink Krupp Distributors, PO Box 7, Princeton WI 54968

This is subtitled "surrealistic comix" as a result of a semantic misunderstanding. Surrealism has its own distinct coherence, which Breton wove between the "left error" of pure nihilism and the "right error" of politics dictating to art. There is hardly a contributor who would not have benefited from a little serious surrealist discussion and the examination of a few plates from any of the better anthologies. Nevertheless: the will to create and participate in a comic like this is an indication of interest in avant-garde art as far as it has reached. Bill Griffith, more aware of avant-garde history than perhaps any other artist, rightly goes first with his "Situation Comedy." And there are some good riffs by Crumb, Deitch, Artie Spiegelmann (who has come very close to Expressionism), a peculiar new face, M. Newhall,

**STILL SUSPICIOUS? JUST REMEMBER THESE THREE
IMPORTANT RULES...**



Jay Kinney (from ANARCHY COMICS)

of morality and inventiveness for the artist at the progressive edge of the New Deal. Kitchen has done us all a favor by encouraging Eisner to make a comeback, and most especially by reprinting some of the classic SPIRIT strips. The taste is still there -- by 1970, one of Eisner's 1951 characters predicts, there will be full employment, no weapons or violence, a benevolent State guided by a cosmic-looking City Council overseeing our destinies. Ah, wouldn't we settle for that compared to what we got... But here Eisner stopped in and the publisher himself, Denis Kitchen. Still, there's plenty of dross... Speak up, Denis, where are you going with this thing?

Will Eisner, *The Spirit*, #18. \$1.50. Kitchen Sink.

Will Eisner has been one of the true modern talents of commercial comic strips. His "Spirit," printed in the Left-of-Center *PM*, a New York daily of the 1940s, epitomized the combination of his political-artistic tracks. He never got much beyond the working model of his protagonist -- criminals are people who break the laws, funny-looking characters with a random politician or particularly sleezy businessman thrown in, and police are those affable red-faced Irish types who always mean well. Not great for the world of 1950, not much for the world of 1979. The newer stuff he's drawn seems mostly reactive, as if he's kicking back against a world pressing in on him. Wake up, oldtimer, you still got some life in ya!

TV — '78-'79

In Place of a Commentary

Another year of endings rather than beginnings. James Garner, looking more than ever like Bogey, the Marginal Man fighting to preserve a little decency in a lunatic society, shuffles off the set with potshots at the CIA, police stupidity and all bureaucratic dishonesty rotting the system from within. Noah Beery, the supporting cast, and the script writers who have found a way to make an intervention amidst so much slush, will be sorely missed. Meanwhile *All In The Family* departs years too late, Jean Stapleton locked in a losing battle against weak scripts and the now-mundane quality of Lear's liberal message. If not

for TV films on wife abuse, adultery (everybody's doing it) and Black history, if not for Ed Asner and Jack Klugman with their Sombre Idealism, "Saturday Night Live" with its Joyful Nihilism, we might take the directive of a local (Providence, R.I.) newspaper TV critic and "Smash the Set." But no, hope tugs at the sleeves of our nightshirts, luring us back for a few minutes here and there... Will China (which supplied the single greatest TV news short of the '70s -- Peking functionaries disco dancing) conquer American boredom before American business conquers China? Only Time Will Tell.

-eds

GREMLINS ON THE SCREEN

What is it about Fantasy and Science Fiction in the popular media that pulls strangely toward the humane end of the social spectrum? The writers and directors out of sorts with existing reality? The elusive hope of a popular revenge on the unresolved social crimes of poverty, alienation and potential world holocaust? Whatever the reason, the fantasists reaching out over decades of television have found their audience in the children and grandchildren of Hiroshima, ready and willing to believe in any alternatives.

Here, I speak only for myself and my childhood. I can vividly recall seeing Science Fiction Theatre in the mid-'fifties, even then a residual. How different it was from the "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" genre, with the Martians as stand-ins for the Reds. On SF Theatre the extra-terrestrial types could be something as physically insubstantial as rays of light, as "real" as an unobtrusive-looking stranger come to talk to some random earth-person. Always (as I remember the episodes in their impact on me) the question was raised -- why the earthly hubris, when the pitiful civilization was stalked with such physical and psychological fears? Why not an acceptance of the Outside as a possible friend, a missing element in that jagged puzzle of human existence? Soon after, "One Step Beyond," "Alcoa Presents," and most of all, the "Twilight Zone." Rod Serling at his very impressive apex, taking vengeance perhaps on a television system that had denied him proper place as the outstanding dramatic ("serious") writer in a young medium. After him, SF and the Weird lost their verve,

"Star Trek" an interplanetary liberalism which never really had to get outside itself, Serling's own later efforts spooky rather than mystic.

And now, after much delay, a new age of Galactic Mystery. There's John Newland again, with "The Next Step Beyond" into syndication, Jack Webb (see CC 8) adding a scientific touch to the unexplained -- and a dramatic conceptual breakthrough where we would most expect it, in television for the young. Leonard Nimoy, once the great "cold" alien whose civilization had advanced too far for passions, returns us full circle. "In Search Of" offers the quiet repeated message to the kids: something is out there; don't be afraid of that, what you need to worry about is the grown-up society around you. "Dr Who," an astounding British import, adds humor and verve that television SF has never before possessed. Quite possibly the most daring radical on television, the good Doctor -- time-traveller, wry master of the understatement, revolutionary computer-freak -- is at his best when denouncing intergalactic capitalism ("Interplanetary Commercialism is worse than Military Imperialism"), calling on citizens to rise against the all-consuming State (known as "The Corporation") and its moral minions (in one episode, the revolutionary populace hurls the Bishop into a pit, laughing uproariously -- the strongest stuff on daytime TV since the Three Stooges were pulled off by the Morals Squad). Oh, yes -- there's dross, and ladies with short skirts, and seemingly endless repetition. But now and then...

Moishe Guyin

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

For a book entitled *Radical Humor: An Anthology*, Tuli Kupferberg and Michael Brown are soliciting suggestions and examples of radical (and anti-establishment) jokes, cartoons, aphorisms, "quips," quotations, songs, poems, essays, stories, skits and plays etc. etc. of all countries and periods.

Please send suggestions and materials to Tuli Kupferberg, 210 Spring St., NY, NY 10012, USA.



CREATIVE DIFFERENCES

Profiles of Hollywood Dissidents

by Barbara Zheutlin and David Talbot

"A fascinating and informed look at the Hollywood left from the days before the blacklist to the present."

—Jessica Mitford

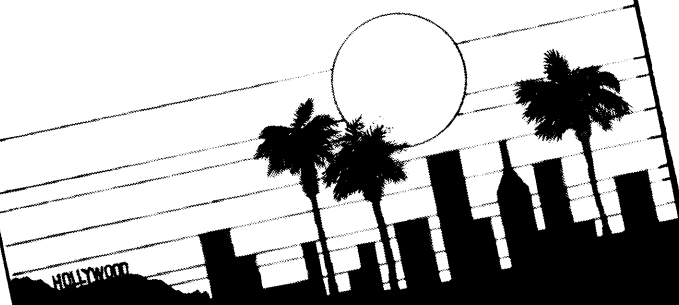
author of *A Fine Old Conflict*
and *The American Way of Death*

This book examines the lives of 16 people who work, or have worked, at various levels of the entertainment industry. All of them have substantial creative differences with the industry which employs them. And yet they all believe Hollywood has enormous creative and social potential.

A NEW BOOK FROM SOUTH END PRESS

Creative Differences

Profiles of Hollywood Dissidents



Barbara Zheutlin and David Talbot

FROM THE BOOK

"The film industry has the power to disseminate ideas and information to a huge audience. No artist who is worth his or her salt would leave that instrument in the sole possession of the empty-headed. If the more thoughtful artists were to leave the film industry, it would result in a creative vacuum, and that would be unconscionable. What I say is, 'Get in there and do battle with the dragon.'"

—Michael Schultz, director

"One of the reasons that *Klute* was the best performance I had given to date was that I was really getting involved in the women's movement. There is a scene at the end of the movie, where I'm listening to this tape of this murdered woman's voice, and the guy is about to kill me. When I heard that woman...I began to cry. I would never have anticipated that reaction as an actress. I cried for all the women who have ever been brutalized or victimized. And for me it was like new doors opening up..."

—Jane Fonda, actress

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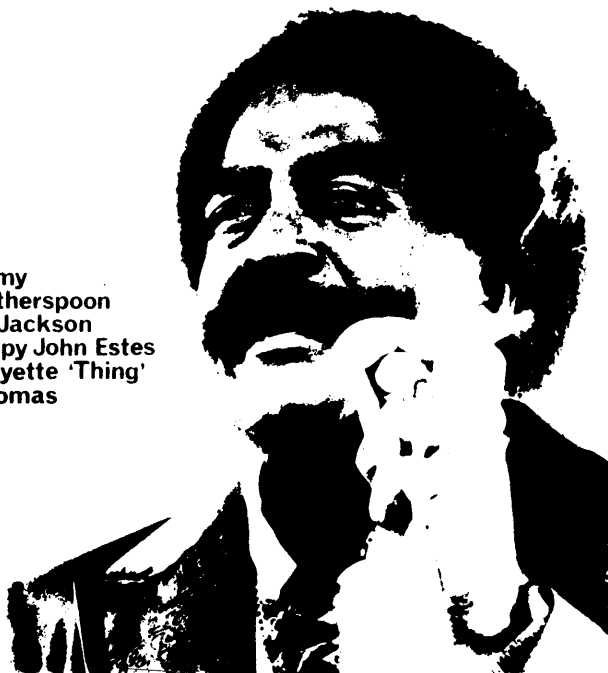
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