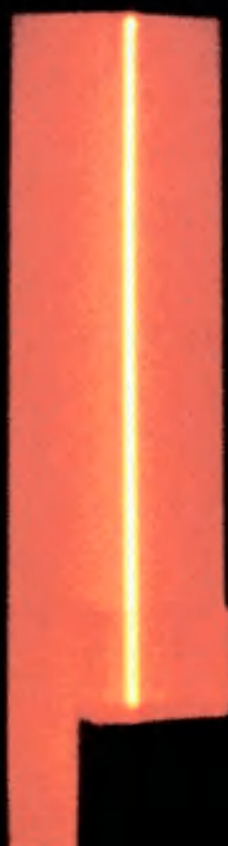
The UNESCO COURIER

DOUBLE ISSUE JULY/AUGUST 1993

INTERVIEW WITH OLIVER STONE

WHAT IS MODERN?



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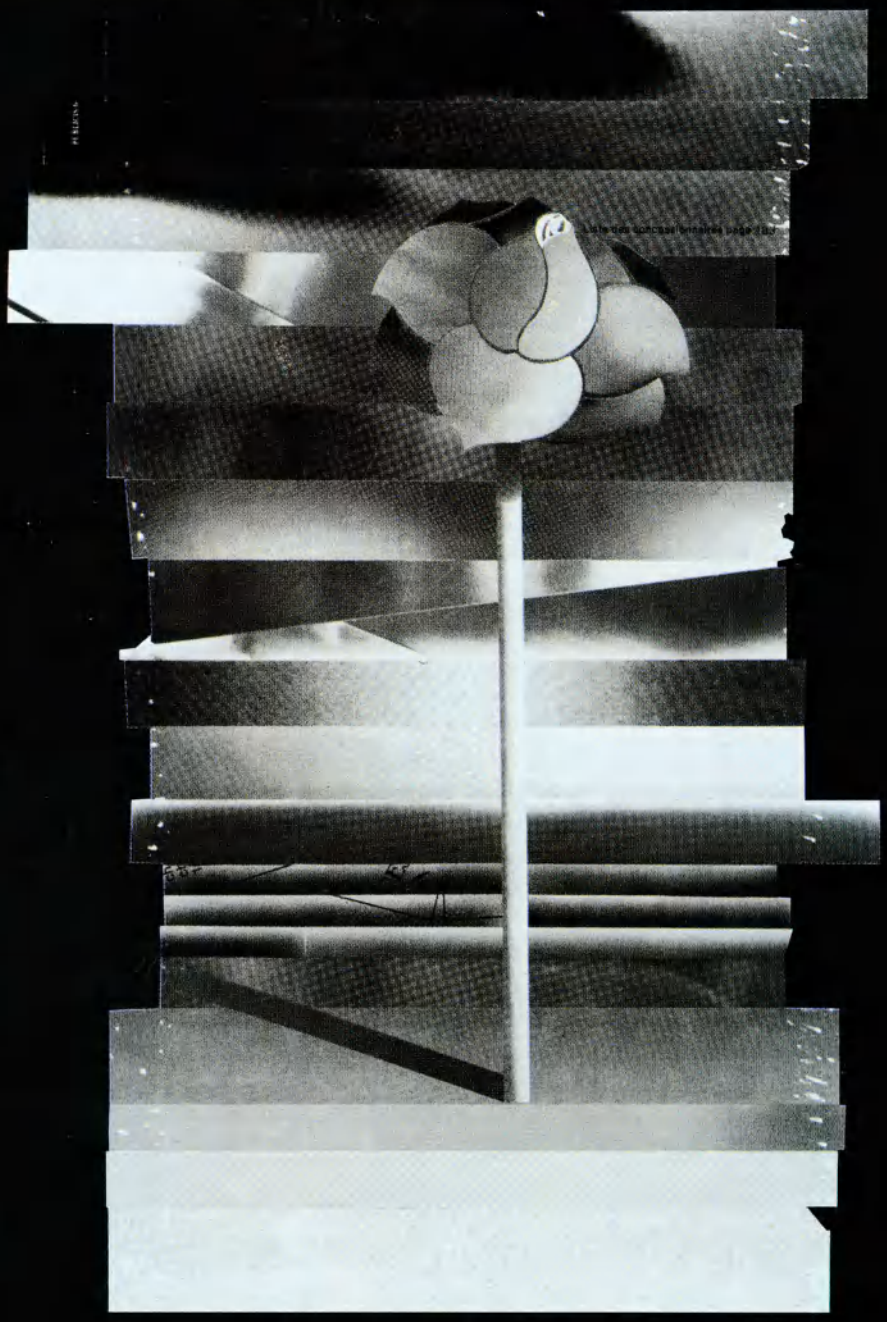
UNESCO'S DIRECTOR-GENERAL WINS PRESS FREEDOM AWARD

The Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, has been awarded the Golden Pen of Freedom by the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers (FIEJ), which represents more than 15,000 newspapers worldwide. This is the first time that the prize has gone to a personality from outside journalism. The reforms of UNESCO's media policy carried out by Mr. Mayor since his appointment, says FIEJ, "now enable UNESCO to become a real force for furthering freedom of expression in the world". Responding to the announcement, Mr. Mayor said that UNESCO was being honoured through him, adding that "The prize . . . is an encouragement and an urgent invitation to forge ahead. UNESCO must take an increasingly active role in the defence of human rights, of which press freedom is the cornerstone."



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Cover: *Le spectre du regard* (1984), by Nissim Merkado, who describes the elements of the composition as "video, sound, text, neon and Cécile".

Special consultant for this issue: Hugues de Cointet

The UNESCO COURIER

46th year — Published monthly in 32 languages and in Braille

"The Governments of the States parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare,
"that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed ...
"that a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.
"For these reasons, the States parties ... are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives...."

EXTRACT FROM THE PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF UNESCO, LONDON, 16 NOVEMBER 1945

OLIVER STONE

talks to Mahmoud Hussein and Régis Debray

One of America's leading film-makers, Oliver Stone has won several Oscars for best film and best director. He has made many big hits, including *Scarface* (1983), *Platoon* (1986), *Wall Street* (1987) and *JFK* (1992). He follows political and social developments in the United States closely and describes them uncompromisingly. Here he talks about his commitment and the conditions under which film directors operate.

■ *You have made several films dealing with very sensitive matters. That is not easy. In the movie business, it isn't a question of wanting to do something then going and doing it, is it?*
—No, it's never easy, because the studios want to make money. That's always the issue with movies like this: if you take on a large subject that's controversial, you're going to upset a certain group of people. That doesn't generally help the movie; people think it does, but many people stay away if there's controversy.

■ *That wasn't the case with* Platoon, *your film about the Viet Nam War, was it?*
—*Platoon* caught the national mood when it came out. President Reagan was about to invade Nicaragua, there was a feeling we were going to be drawn into another war, and there was a genuine curiosity, eighteen or twenty years after the event, about the Viet Nam war. People were getting tired of Reagan. The Oliver North trial had just happened in 1986, and opinion was beginning to turn against the militarization of the country. So I think the timing of the movie was just right.

■ *Was there an autobiographical element in the film?*
—*Platoon* is based pretty much on my own experiences in Viet Nam. I was in

Oliver Stone (holding script) with Kevin Costner during the filming of *JFK* (1992).

the 25th Infantry and the 1st Cavalry. It was not straight autobiography, I fictionalized the story and ran characters together.

You don't see much when you're in combat, but I felt that every platoon that I was in was divided into the people who were more sensitive to the Vietnamese and the people who were insensitive to what we were doing in Viet Nam. There was a moral division inside each combat unit. I thought the same about America when I got home. It was very divided between what they called the hawks and the doves. Most people were neutral, but there were strong opinions on both sides. I fought with my father, with my family. I felt very alienated. I tried to deal with those feelings in a film I made about coming home, *Born on the Fourth of July.*

■ ***We often hear from the American film industry that cinema is entertainment. When Hollywood turns to history, accuracy is hardly the main concern. How do you feel about this? Must entertainment come first?***

—That's two different questions. I agree that movies are entertainment. A good movie has to grip you. Most people don't want to sit for two hours in the dark watching a documentary, so you have to introduce the element of tension, the thriller element. I think I've been able to deal with relatively serious subjects in my movies and make them intriguing, so that people want to see them. There are a million films made, in Europe or even in America, that, let's face it, nobody wants to see. They don't want to see life down on the farm if there's nothing to hook their attention. You know, the sun comes up, the sun goes down, the farmer washes his laundry. . . . But if the farmer has a daughter and—aha!—she gets involved with some rich guy, then the complications start, that's when the audience gets interested.

■ ***Let's look a little further into what you call the thriller element. Is it always simply a matter of good guy versus bad guy, or can it be more complicated than that?***

—Good movies play with your idea of who the villain is. You think some character is the bad guy but he's not. The good guy turns out to be the villain. So movies are not that simplistic. In Alfred Hitchcock's films you rarely know who is going to do what to whom. In *Vertigo*, is the woman bad or good? In *Notorious*, is Cary Grant bad or good? We play with identity in movies.

I have to agree that the film business has notoriously bungled history. It's famous for it. We've made heroes of some very hollow people, no question

A scene from *Salvador* (1986).

about it. We would have made films about Senator Joe McCarthy if he hadn't been found out. J. Edgar Hoover was a hero in my country until recently.

But history is always being changed and rewritten. Shakespeare made a villain out of Richard III and history says he was essentially a good king. Why blame Hollywood? Historians themselves should be held to account, because we are always re-examining history. A historian like Arthur Schlesinger reinvents American history to his liking, making a hero of President Andrew Jackson, for example. George Washington has been reinterpreted several times. Thomas Jefferson has been reinterpreted as a slave-owner, a good guy, a bad guy. Abe Lincoln's the only one I know who seems pretty much to have gotten away with it in American history.

■ *You say that history is reinterpreted every few years in America, but one thing that doesn't change is the presentation of Mafiosi and gangsters as heroes in American films. Why is there this perversion of the idea of the hero?*

—The glorification of the Mafia in our country is sick. As great as Coppola's two Godfather films are, they are, I believe, historically wrong in attributing this degree of power to the Mafiosi when they are really a bunch of thugs who have done much to corrupt the country via organized labour, business—the liquor business, Las Vegas, the jukebox business—kickbacks for politicians, and so on. Gangsterism in our country goes back before the Italian Mafia, back to Boss Tweed, the Irish Mafia, the ugly Mafia that existed in the time of George Washington. There were all kinds of gangsterism in American life. To glorify it as we have done is, as you say, a perversion.

■ *But why do American audiences respond to these films?*

—I think it's because we were revolutionaries, because we were mostly outcasts from Europe, because we have a tough-guy strain. We don't like being shoved around by authority, which is not a bad quality in some ways. We admired Bogart and Cagney, but they

Television footage used in *JFK*, with Martin Luther King in the centre.

were sentimental gangsters, movie gangsters.

■ *When you made* JFK, *for example, did you think of it as a militant film?*
—Yes, in a sense. I didn't give the Warren Commission's version of events because it had been defended for years by the establishment and the media. I touched a very sensitive nerve in *JFK* when I attacked the media, saying that the cover-up was not only the work of certain people in government but was propagated by the media, who accepted the story without doing any homework—and they didn't do any.

The power of the media is, I think, one of the biggest problems in my country. The newsrooms of CBS, NBC, ABC, *Newsweek*, *Time*, the *New York Times*—there are fifteen or twenty of them and they all think alike, they plug the same agenda over and over again. When Clinton came into office, they forced this young man to consider the agenda their way. They force the issue by putting tremendous pressure on somebody new who may want to address the situation in a new way. I think this is a distorting effect of the First Amendment, whose authors couldn't have guessed how strong the media would become in the electronic era. I don't know the solution. You have to have freedom of speech, but it's reached insane proportions when it's really control of speech, not freedom.

■ *Why is there this consensus among the twenty or so centres of power in the media?*
—I can't tell you where it starts, but there's a decision that certain things will be on the agenda, that they will make those things the issue of the day or of the month. One time it may be homelessness or taxes, another time it will be why the military must be supported in Iraq or whatever. As I.F. Stone said, the press are like blackbirds, they all take off from the telephone wire at the same time and when one comes back, they all come back. We're living in an Alice-in-Wonderland society where from one month to the next we stagger from one issue to another. We are told what is important for that month. I resent that.

I went to Viet Nam as a result of a media onslaught that convinced us we had to prevent it from being the next domino to fall to communism. The media messed this country up terribly with that one. With the Kennedy murder, they all lined up behind the idea of the lone gunman firing three crazy bullets and killing the President, although there is little factual evidence.

■ *Why exactly did you make* JFK?
—I think Kennedy was killed for political reasons, to remove him from power. First of all because, as of 1963, there was a significant change in his policies and the way he viewed the world. He made a deal with Khrushchev; the two of them signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963. He was talking to Castro behind the establishment's back. He had signed a memo to pull out of Viet Nam. This is not speculation: the document exists, he signed it, it's called the National Security Action Memorandum 263. Only recently Robert McNamara finally admitted that Kennedy was going to pull out of Viet Nam.

There was a significant acceleration of intention when Lyndon Johnson took over. On the very day Kennedy was buried, as I showed in the movie, Johnson called an emergency meeting with General Maxwell Taylor and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to push the Viet Nam agenda. There was a meeting in Honolulu the day that Kennedy was killed about the subject of Viet Nam. It's a fascinating story, what went on the last two or three days before he was killed.

■ *Did you have free access to all the archives?*

—The archives in America are like they are in Russia, they're opened but by the time the public gets to know of them they've been reviewed and censored by the bureaucratic process. A new legislation was passed, that the film helped create, opening up the Kennedy files. Anything that might endanger national security has to be reviewed by a special board of people appointed by the President.

I'm sure that Kennedy, if he had lived, would have ended the Cold War with Khrushchev in the late 'sixties, in his second term. It's interesting that very shortly after Kennedy was killed, Khrushchev was ousted. I think there's a linkage between the fates of the two men. That's why I think the subject is of such importance, not just to American history but to world history in the twentieth century.

■ JFK *is a mixture of stockshots and fiction. Were some of the stockshots in fact staged?*

—We staged most of it. There are some genuine stockshots in the beginning, but not as many as people think. The autopsy sequence, for example, was all staged except for one very clear shot of Kennedy at the end. You'll see that his face was intact, which is interesting because if he had been shot from behind the face would have been blown away.

■ *The docudrama element—the interlinking of fact and fiction—gives the film its aesthetic impact. But perhaps that mixture raises a moral problem too.*

—I've heard that criticism. My answer is, it's a war. You ripped off this country, you told this story no holds barred, you fought dirty and I'm fighting you the same way, I steal things left, right and centre. Yes, I was militant.

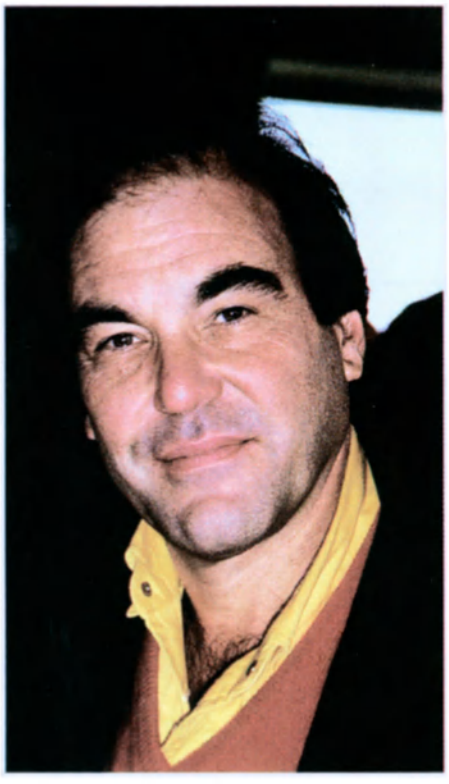
Left, *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), starring Tom Cruise. Opposite page, a scene from *Platoon* (1986).

■ *What difference did the film make?*
—All films find their way into the country's subconscious in the end. I think what it changed was trust in the government. Around twenty million Americans saw it. And I don't think any young kid now will buy the story that Lee Harvey Oswald was a lone gunman. The papers don't say that so much now. They think twice before saying it.

■ *Would it be possible to make a film in the United States now about the American attitude during the Gulf War, with President Bush as hero or anti-hero?*
—That's another Orwellian story. It's not for me, it's for some other moviemaker. Someone said to me that the Gulf War wasn't a war, it was a TV film. Nobody got killed on our side and we didn't even know there were all those people killed on the other side. There were six *Time* magazine cover stories about the situation before the war started, and by the end of it Saddam Hussein looked like Hitler, complete with the moustache. He was demonized in the American consciousness, made out to be a monster. We were ready to go out and kill. It was a horrible time to live through because again you saw the way patriotism came out.

■ *You mention patriotism. In the golden age of cinema, Americans were proud of Hollywood. Now foreigners are buying into Hollywood and maybe in a few years they'll have bought it out. What do you think of this situation?*
—The film business is a land without frontiers. You work for different people in your lifetime, different producers, people you never thought you would team up with. *JFK* was made with French, Israeli, German money. The Italians put up money for *The Doors*, the English for *Salvador* and *Platoon*. That's what's good about the film business. All these international players like to be in on the game.

■ *You approve of that?*
—Of course it's a good thing. How else would movies get made? They need an enormous concentration of capital.



■ *What about creative freedom? Are you allowed it?*

—Only if you can get away with it. If you make a film that makes money, they like you. I just got by by the skin of my teeth. *Salvador* missed out at the box office, but *Platoon* was a hit, and then I got carte blanche for the next couple of films. They were both successful, so then I was able to make *Born on the Fourth of July*, which also did well. That gave me a little more freedom, so then I decided to go for *JFK*. They would never have let me do *JFK* in the beginning, but they did at that point of my career, and it worked.

■ *Why was* Salvador *not a success?*

—Politics. When it came out in early 1986, we were still in the grip of Reaganism. The critics were not very kind. The *New York Times* said it was a typical Costa-Gavras kind of propaganda effort. Yet most everything of that film—including American complicity—has emerged in the last ten years as a truth.

■ *Do you sometimes feel like a latter-day knight errant? Knights were privileged people but they also had duties, they were defending sacred values. Do you feel both this privilege and this duty?*

—That's very true. It's a special situation. You must use your power well to make films that are difficult to get made. Otherwise you'll lose it.

Right now is a good time for me to make difficult movies. I just finished *Heaven and Earth* in Thailand and Viet Nam. It's the story of thirtysome years in the life of a Vietnamese peasant woman. It was not an easy film to make.

■ *Are you working especially for an American audience, or do you feel the world is your audience?*

—Most of my films have made more money abroad than in America. *JFK* made twice as much abroad. The films are going well internationally. I feel I need a world-view to understand my own life better. I always think filmmakers tend to underestimate the power and intelligence of the audience's subconscious mind.

■ *Not only that, maybe. Perhaps people want, at least sometimes, to be stirred by noble causes?*

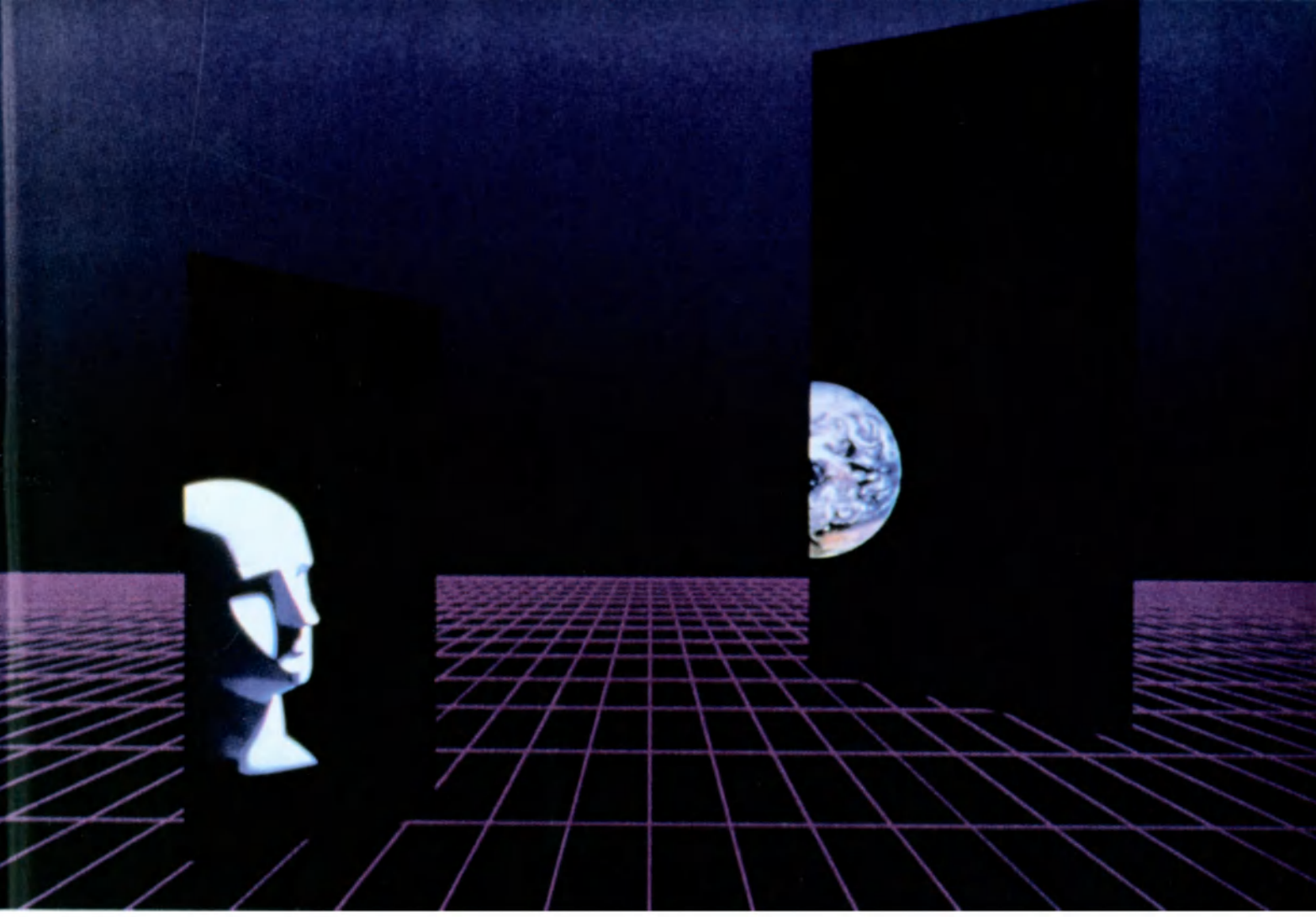
—*JFK* didn't make any commercial sense. It was three hours long, it had lots of dialogue and it was complicated. But I said I'm going to make this movie, it will bomb but I have to make it. I never really thought it would be easily understood by medium range audiences. But they did understand it. It was one of the great experiences of my life. It proves that people are more intelligent than they're given credit for. Even if they don't understand everything at first, they're willing to sit there and see it a second time, on video or something, to fill in the gaps.

■ *How do you explain the worldwide fascination with Hollywood films and with American popular culture in general?*

—The world is a satellite world now, and America is on the cutting edge. People like the music, they buy it; they like the look, they buy the clothes; they like the hamburgers.... Youth wants to be free from the shackles of the adult world and old ways of doing things. It's more fun—F-U-N. And many Hollywood movies evoke the concept of fun. They're light, they're entertaining. I think that's the answer.

■ *But not all Hollywood films have had the same success....*

—Maybe they didn't have the right lightness of being. ■



WHAT IS MODERN?

What do we mean by "modern"? The concept is elusive, ambiguous, ever-changing. It is a paradox, constantly disputed, that refuses to be pinned down by even a tentative definition. That which is modern is that which defies its own definition, or is defined in negative terms, by what it is not.

There are modern things, not only objects but also functions, qualities and forms of behaviour. Compact discs are modern and so are organ transplants and concern for the environment. A taste for superlatives is one feature of modernity, whether applied to the prowess of athletes or the softness of detergents. Extremity of scale is another, one might think—the minuscule in electronics, the gigantic in architecture.

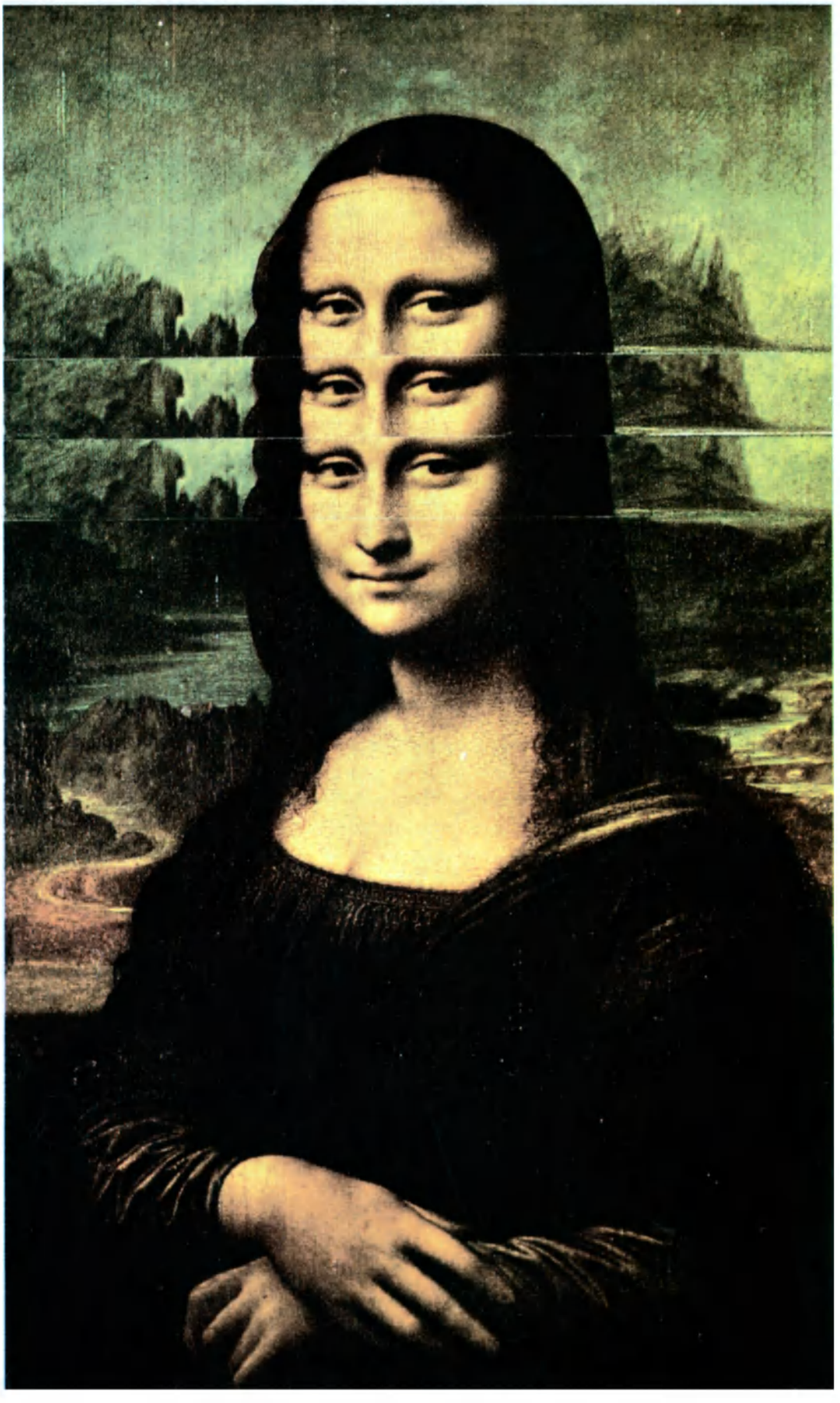
Perhaps the best way to understand "the modern" is to take a cluster of modern phenomena and to see what signs, clues and images they reveal. Acting on this assumption, we asked men and women from different backgrounds, cultures and walks of life—artists, designers, writers, architects, musicians, philosophers, doctors, engineers—to investigate the concept of modernity. To help them on their way we suggested a number of ideas, clues and keywords such as fragmention, the act of seeing, disorder, miniature, new, audio and invisible.

As it happened, some of these clues did not lead far. However, new pointers emerged. Where they led to can be seen on the following pages, in a compilation of images and "signs of the times" that illustrate some of the innumerable manifestations of modernity.

HUGUES DE COINTET

MAKING IT NEW

The quest for the new has become an obsession, and novelty an end in itself. But the ultimate modern trend may lie in discovering new meanings in what already exists, however old it may be.



Modern times, new approaches

by Aya Wassef

Above, at a tribal meeting in Papua New Guinea a participant sports an outfit made of tin cans. Opposite page, *M.L. horizontale V* (1969), a collage by the Polish-born artist Roman Cieslewicz based on Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa.

We are confronted nowadays with an endless stream of new products and ideas—new brands of detergent, new biscuit flavours, the latest issue of the newspaper, new economic and social policies, a new world order—and we might be tempted to think that if something is new then it is by definition modern, that the very word *new* is enough to give the cachet of modernity to anything it is used to describe. Newness today would thus seem to be a kind of short cut to modernity, rather than standing in an obvious or causal relationship to it.

The widespread use of the word *new* is symptomatic of both a state of affairs and a state of mind. New things have always been made, but the emphasis on newness as a selling point has not always existed, still less the craze for new things. Common sense long decreed that a new object was one that had not been tried and tested, that it was not necessarily sound and might even be dangerous.

THE NEW IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE NEW!

Today's perception of newness is very different. A thing must be new in order to be acknowledged as modern. Novelty is the price of modernity—whence the paradox of a so-called "modern" or even "post-modern" society that still seems, through its frantic quest for novelty, to be in search of its own modernity.

The European pioneers of Modernism signalled that they were breaking with tradition by ascribing an intrinsic value to newness. This choice of the new as a symbolic value was an invitation to take a leap in the dark, to run the risk of destabilizing generally accepted ideas, but whereas for these intellectuals and artists modernity signified a break with the past, within our modernized society newness has gone its own way.

Modernity has gone hand in hand with scientific progress and discovery, industrialization, mass production, the consumer society, the growth of the media and their increasing influence on culture. With the development of branches of trade and industry based on new products, newness has come to be accepted as a fact of life. It has lost its originality and its revolutionary connotations as the symbol of a break with tradition, its sense of being ahead of its time. It has lost its modernity. The consumer society demands a rapid turnover of new products, making sure that what's new today is obsolete tomorrow. The opposite of new is no longer old, but old-fashioned, yesterday's novelty that has fallen out of favour. This is an ephemeral form of newness, greeted with fanfares simply

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because for a fleeting moment it is new. The new, the supreme triumph of the present over the past, has become the ultimate expression of a modernity that has reached fever pitch.

A NEW LOOK AT THE OLD

Thus emptied of its substance, the new has become the vector of the dominant values of our societies. Through constant media exposure, it has taken over the media. A new product is *more efficient*, *nouvelle cuisine* is *healthier*, a new computer is *more user-friendly*, a new lifestyle is *more environment-friendly*, new television is *more interactive*. Consumer goods are marketed by associating them with the appeal of qualities such as efficiency, environmental awareness, conviviality and comfort. They offer each individual a slice of modernity and people buy them in order to claim the values enshrined in them—in other words, to be modern.

A value considered modern in a society here and now is not, however, necessarily so regarded elsewhere and at a different time. In a space-time relationship that has been radically affected by faster and ever more sophisticated means of communication, modernity seems to play tricks with history and geography. When something modern originating in the Western industrial nations—the so-called "North"—is exported to the "South" there is a certain time-lag, so that what is modern in the South is a thing of the past in the North.

Conversely, what is traditional in the South is modern in the North. In the "developing" countries, newness and modernity are often associated with the acquisition of objects, of products from the West, which itself went through this phase some time ago. Modernity in the industrialized countries, on the other hand, is often related to a new way of looking at something that already exists; paradoxical as it may seem, "going back to one's roots", rediscovering in the present the values of the past, is thus a modern phenomenon.

Significantly, "naturalness" is one of the key values in a form of modernity that promotes respect for the natural environment, ecology, wellbeing, and the health-giving properties of organically-grown foods and of natural medicine based on ancient traditions. Naturalness as such is not new; it is the appeal that it holds for us today, as a significant new value, that makes it modern.

A worker at a factory producing computer chips in Silicon Valley, California (U.S.A.).

THE LOGIC OF THE NEW

This new approach to what already exists is distinctively modern: it is the logic of the new—the process whereby something new is created from what went before—rather than newness in itself, that is modern.

The artist who synthesizes images out of images of the real world reduced to digital form in a computer, the architect who turns a railway station into a museum, the fashion stylist who borrows sophisticated materials from the space industry to create a garment, the designer who fashions a piece of furniture from recycled material—all these are creating something new by a process of diverting and reshaping, by borrowing, reassembling and changing meanings. These are the defining characteristics of an attitude, today considered modern, in a society that has broken loose from any kind of historical perspective and settled into a continuous present: new things are wrought from old, distant things are brought to our own doorstep, and everything is seen throught the prism of modernity—this is the logic of the new.

The logic of the new is a logic of retrieving and reassembling. It scorns the passage of the years, bringing together in space things that are far apart in time. The logic of the new is indeed distinctively modern. ■

When less means more

by Arik Levy and Pippo Lionni

Above, a miniature robot known as "Monsieur" perches on a leaf.

WHEN people describe their experience of communications technology and rapid intercontinental travel, they often say that we live in a shrinking world. This is an image: the world is not really shrinking. In a more literal sense, however, many of the instruments and appliances we regularly use are, because of technological advances, becoming smaller—so small in many cases that it would be no exaggeration to say that miniaturization is one of the defining—and disconcerting—features of life today.

Miniaturization is a process that gives rise to many questions and very few answers. What *is* miniaturization, exactly? At what point is something miniaturized? Do we have some notion that a manufactured object—a camera or a telephone, say—can have a "right" or optimum size? If so, by what standards is this normal size defined? Now that a pocket-sized electronic device has the capacity to store the contents of a pile of documents on an office table, what is happening to the rules that have traditionally governed our ideas of proportion?

What, furthermore, are the psychological and physiological implications of miniaturization? After all, the shape and size of the objects which surround us inevitably influence the relationship we have with them. In this dynamic interaction between objects and people, the miniaturization of one element in the relationship

implies more than just a reduction in size. A television set reduced to the size of a pack of playing cards is no longer a piece of furniture in the same proportion to a chair, a table or a cupboard, and the moving image on its screen is no longer comparable to the static image of a painting hanging on a wall or a magazine cover. We can pick up a miniature television and carry it around with us. It becomes an extension of our bodies. It is easier to find a place for it in our home. Our reaction to the relative smallness of objects is important because it suggests that there may be a limit to the hitherto seemingly unchecked race towards miniaturization. As things get smaller and smaller, the fingers that manipulate them seem to be getting bigger and bigger. . . .

Miniaturized objects can be seen as "environment friendly" inasmuch as they are designed to take up the least possible space and consume the least possible energy and other resources. At the same time they enable us to free ourselves from the constraints of place and time: one response to the hostile subway environment is to retreat into the auditory isolation of a personal stereo. Of course there may be limits to the user-friendliness provided by miniaturization, which, if taken too far, would literally become a *reductio ad absurdum.* It would, for example, be technically possible to produce an issue of this magazine that would be, say, one-twentieth of its present size, thus saving ink, paper, time, mailing and transport costs. Unfortunately the magazine would have become impossible to read with the naked eye.

Miniaturized consumer products such as microcomputers and digitally-controlled portable telephones are becoming familiar features of everyday life. In Japan a minute robot named "Monsieur" has been developed using wristwatch technology. It is driven by an ultra-small, super-energy-efficient motor with an extremely compact quartz crystal oscillator that enables the micro-robot to make precise, shock-resistant movements over an extended period. "Monsieur" has many potential applications in industry and medicine. Imagine a microrobot being injected into your body and sent crawling around it to carry out a check-up and if necessary perform repairs.

Not all objects seem destined to be shrunk. Furniture, clothes and cooking appliances, for example, will no doubt undergo fundamental changes in the years to come, but though they may become minimal, it is doubtful whether they will become much smaller. ■

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of Israel, works internationally as a freelance designer. He is an assistant with a unit of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Création Industrielle in Paris.

PIPPO LIONNI,
of the United States, is co-director of the Paris design agency "Integral Concept" and a unit director at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Création Industrielle in Paris.

Micro-Mega

by Yves Beauvois and Alexandra Poulain

PARADOXICAL though it may appear, in an age when the characteristic modern trend is towards the gigantic, there is also a trend towards the very small, from Japanese bonsai trees to computer chips. Are they unconnected, or are they two different facets of the same modernizing impulse?

Those who discuss modernity in the present tense must necessarily include themselves in the subject under discussion, for modernity can only be defined in relation to a given moment in time. That moment is thereby defined, either implicitly or explicitly, as a break in the time continuum of a civilization or culture, and no break can be more noticeable or indeed spectacular than one that startles the eye by disproportionately enlarging familiar features of the beholder's environment. This tendency to make things appear new by enlarging them finds expression in the familiar myth of the Tower of Babel, in which the

challenge of monumentality translates the desire to transcend the limits of the human. The urge to build ever bigger would indeed seem to satisfy modern man's need to leave some lasting monument so as to outlive the vagaries of time.

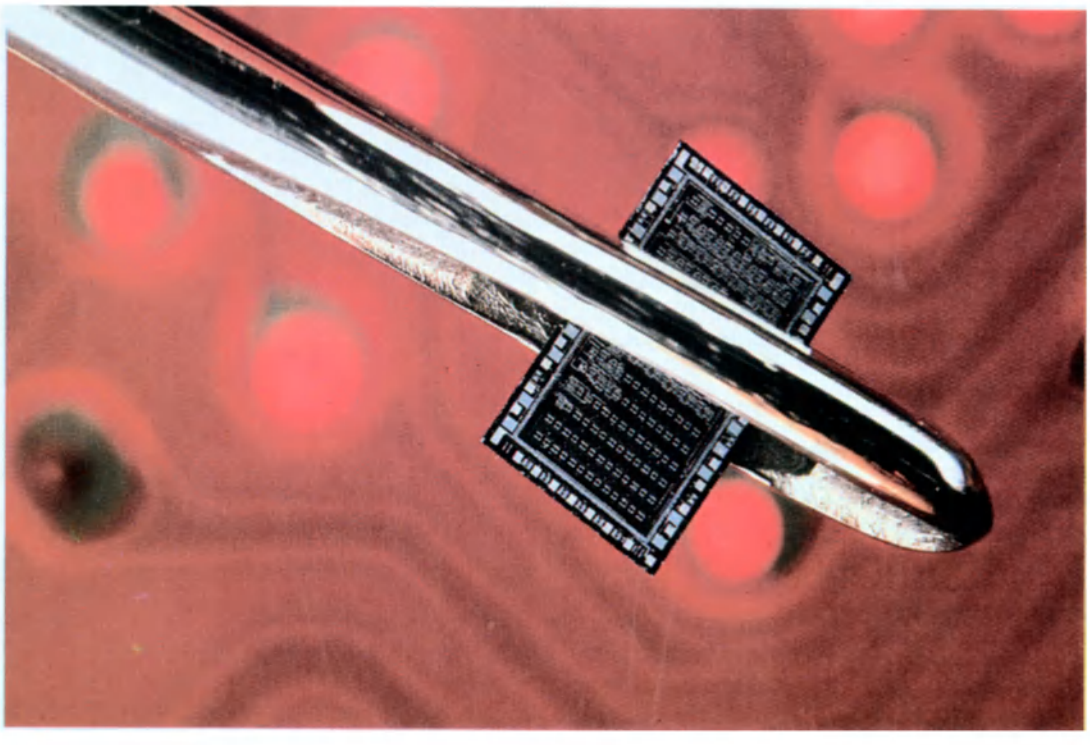
In the nineteenth century this attitude became more systematic and widespread than ever before. The engineering feats of the Industrial Revolution paved the way for an ever-increasing number of colossal construction projects: this was the age of stations built like cathedrals, department stores resembling temples, and factories disguised as castles. The context of daily life was radically altered as urbanization progressed. Cities came to express the all-conquering power of attraction of modernity.

Then space began to grow scarce under the pressure of such overweening ambition. Saturation-point loomed. To survive, modern man invented a new, equal and opposite approach, a steady reduction in the size of objects that were regarded as taking up too much space. "Small is beautiful" could be the motto of twentieth-century technology, for miniaturization has been an overriding concern in the development of electronics, information technology, office and household automation and telecommunications.

Gigantism and miniaturization are two coexisting aspects of the same desire to control space with the aid of increasingly complex technologies. By using intelligence in this way, modernity shows itself to be a manifestation of power. In the all-out search for efficiency, the attraction exercised both by the very large and the very small has pushed aside concern for harmony and its corollary, wisdom. Modernity calls for the inordinate. In some respects this attitude could well be a new form of *hubris*, the concept of impious flouting of the natural order that the ancient Greeks used to describe the condition of barbarity. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the massive and the miniature come together in the atomic bomb, whose vast destructive power is matched by its small size.

Our contemporaries may be barbarians, but they are Titans too, constantly courting danger by daring to shake established norms to their foundations. ■

Left above, the Arche de la Défense in Paris. Below, a microchip in the eye of a needle.



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The sky horizon

by Edmond Petit

IN the beginning was the bird and the bird was in the sky, and earthbound humans sought to imitate it.

In the words of the French poet Saint-John Perse, "The bird . . . by encouraging humans to fly, alone emboldened them afresh."[1]

Once people had worked out how birds flew, they mistakenly believed that they could make wings for themselves and that they would be strong enough to work them.

While waiting for wings that worked—and above all for an engine to power them—the people of Antiquity (which was, after all, modern in its day) first made imaginary beings fly: gods and demi-gods, heroes and spirits. To this we owe the story of Icarus (not forgetting the inventor Daedalus, his father), a recurrent theme in the literature and imagery of every age.

We read of magic carpets, feathered capes, winged horses . . . and of how humankind's first imagined flights were borne on the pinions of griffins, eagles or geese. Before aspiring to take flight unaided, man first acquired experience of falling: one after another, the would-be birdmen of old crashed to the ground.

Then one day a visionary came close to finding the answer. Leonardo da Vinci seems to have foreseen flying machines, helicopters, parachutes. To judge from his notebooks, he may even have experimented with such devices.

Some time later, the French philosopher René Descartes exchanged instructive letters with Père Mersenne on the question of "whether the art of flying is possible . . . and if men can fly as high, as far and as fast as birds. . . ."

The French fantasist Cyrano de Bergerac devised "six ways of violating the virgin skies". The Marquis de Bacqueville donned wings to try to fly across the Seine, and Father Gallien surmised that "the art of aerial navigation" might lie in letting oneself be carried along on "air-rafts" by currents (jet-streams, perhaps?) "at the altitude where hail forms".

INGENIOUS FLYING MACHINES

Oddly enough, all these precursors of flight came up with the same prescription: all that was required was to devise "an ingenious mechanism". The formula crops up again and again, but is never accompanied by further details. As early

EDMOND PETIT, former reconnaissance pilot and a founder member of France's National Air and Space Academy, is the author of many published works, most recently a history of aviation entitled *Nouvelle histoire mondiale de l'aviation* (Paris, 1991).

Above, an effigy of Icarus at the Lemon Festival at Menton on the French Riviera.
Left, a fleet of spaceships as imagined by the science-fiction illustrator Julien Baum.
Below, an illustration from a contemporary French magazine shows America's pioneer aviators, the Wright Brothers, taking flight.

as 1250, the English philosopher Roger Bacon suggested that "Flying machines could be constructed in which men, seated or suspended in the centre, could turn cranks that would operate wings to beat the air."[2]

The project was in the air. . . . Everyone was talking about it except scientists.

In 1782, an influential and respected mathematician and astronomer by the name of Joseph Jérôme de Lalande, a member of the French Academy, affirmed that "if men of learning keep silent, it is not through contempt. Rather it is demonstrably impossible, in every sense, that a man could rise into, or even stay up in, the air. . . . Only an ignoramus would try to do so."

In 1783, Pilâtre de Rozier answered him by taking off on the first balloon flight, accompanied by the Marquis d'Arlandes.

Soon Victor Hugo was enthusing:

And Newton's science flies away
Riding a Pindaric ode![3]

Writers, scientists and engineers such as Nadar, Jules Verne, Mouillard, Cayley, Marey and Lilienthal made calculations, speculations, experiments.

In 1890, Clément Ader became airborne. The aircraft had taken off at last. In their monoplanes and biplanes, pilots were no longer floating but flying. They had been a long time on the drawing board, these flying machines!

One pioneer aviator, the French engineer Gabriel Voisin, pointed out that "heavier-than-air flight does not start with anything as clever as the wheel. Its inspiration is the wing, rather as if, instead of relying on wheels for land transport, we had developed a vehicle with mechanical legs." Jean Cocteau repeated the remark to me, going on to add: "Wings are growing shorter and starting to disappear altogether. They are turning into fins. The bird is becoming a fish." There you have the history of aeronautical engineering in a nutshell!

After the Wright Brothers, the pioneers gave way to the sportsmen. Then it was the warrior's turn. Considerable advances were made in aviation between 1914 and 1918. With the return of peace, further progress was made in exploring the planet. Oceans and mountains were conquered. Records were broken.

A danger remained. As early as 1759, Samuel Johnson had written: "If men were all virtuous . . . I should with great alacrity teach them all to fly." A second world war intervened, crueller, more frightening, more modern than its predecessor. But aircraft are not to blame for all the harm humankind has done with them. Instead, reflect on Charles Lindbergh's words: "Hiroshima was as far from the intention of the pure scientist as the Inquisition was from the Sermon on the Mount".

Progress continued to be made, to the benefit of civil aviation, which became safer. With the first jets, the power of engines increased threefold. It was time to take another step forward and, as the French poet Jules Supervielle put it, "to colonize the stars".

A NEW DIMENSION

Is transient modernity anything more than a matter of scene-shifting? Time has already lost much of its importance and distance is a dated concept. We have conquered a new dimension. Should we not call it a new freedom? As Jules Roy has noted, "the speed a spaceship must attain to escape the Earth's gravity is called escape velocity."[4]

Have we finally escaped, and if so from what? In continuing down the road that has led from the prehistoric age of Gagarin to the glorious present promised for tomorrow, fresh questions arise. Are there boundaries to space? Is the sky the limit?

Here on Earth, there is no cause for alarm as long as speeds can still be measured in relation to the speed of sound. It will be time to start worrying when people start talking about the speed of light. But by then robots may have taken the place of human beings. ■

1. Saint-John Perse, *L'Ordre des Oiseaux,* Gallimard publishers, Paris, 1972.
2. Roger Bacon, *De Operibus Secretis Artis et Naturae,* 1250.
3. Victor Hugo, *La Légende des siècles,* 1883.
4. Edmond Petit, *Le Ciel et ses poètes,* preface by Jules Roy, Le Cherche Midi publishers, Paris, 1992.

Between Leonardo's time and the age of the computer, the nature of the image has profoundly changed. Strange though it may seem, the transition to a world overflowing with electronic images may signal the end of a culture based on the act of seeing.

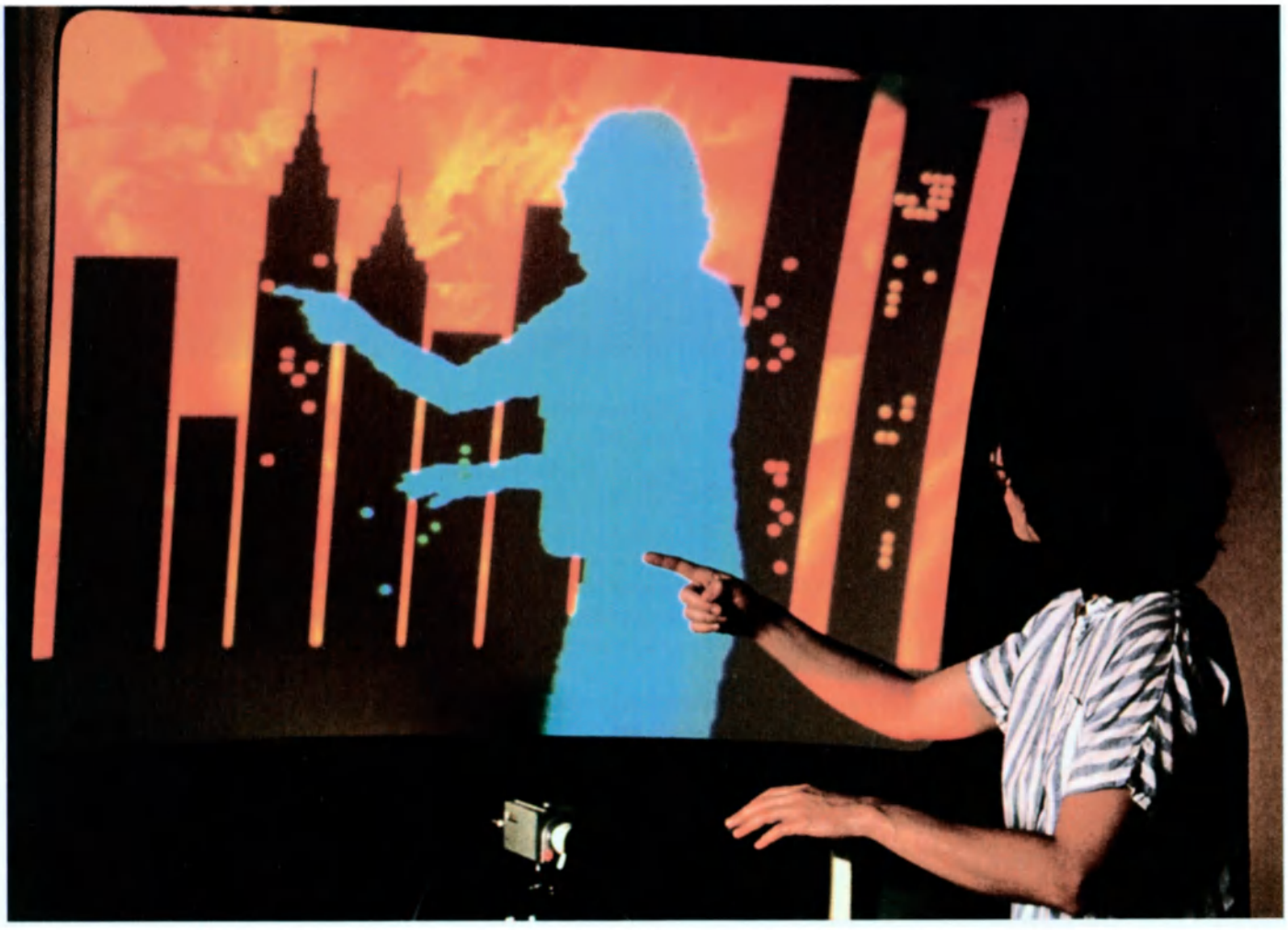
The devalued image

by Sonia Younan

Opposite, a study of drapery Leonardo da Vinci made for his painting *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne*.
Below, in an artificial-reality demonstration, the operative makes lights come on in the windows of skyscrapers by pointing to them on the screen.

In times gone by, images were drawn, engraved or painted on a physical support, in an enclosed space which took on meaning from the projection onto it of the latent physical attributes of the subject depicted. The way in which this space was organized had its roots in a physical, Dionysiac quality which situated it in time and thereby linked it to music, to what Nietzsche called that "total dance whose rhythm stirs the whole body." In *The Birth of Tragedy*, the German philosopher described all the plastic arts as aspiring to the condition of music, which is pure symbolism and is independent of either image or concept. The plastic arts are merely the projection of what he called "sparks of imagery", the draping of the Apollonian veil of beauty around the subject. The Dionysiac principle is one of communion and fusion with the whole universe. The artist must triumph over subjectivity, find deliverance from the self, and become the vector of cosmic energies. It is through this process of "unselving" that the wisdom of art is attained.

The whole of a picture bears the imprint of the body and its mystery. In Leonardo's magnificent draperies, the body is suggested by indentations, its very absence enabling it to orchestrate even more effectively the Apollonian display of draperies and highlights. What is shown is less significant than what is left in shadow. The lines take on meaning only insofar as they condense the temporal nature of the painter's gesture, because they exist as music before being projected into the spatial dimension. In a corresponding fashion, the movement of the viewer's eye as it "browses on the canvas" unlocks many meanings. In his *Theory of Modern Art*, the Swiss painter Paul Klee stresses the idea of the work of art as genesis and describes the trajectory of creation in this way: "The first movement in us, the active, operative movement, directed towards the work of art, and then the transmission to others, to the viewers, of the movement contained in the picture." A snapshot appears to us less truthful than a painting precisely because it



is cut off from this two-way process that takes place over a period of time.

THE AESTHETICS OF BANALITY

What has happened? Apollo has lost touch with Dionysus. Space has become dissociated from the body whence meaning could emerge. Machines have taken over from the eye of the beholder. Disconnected from the ways in which subjects are perceived, images are no longer defined in relation to reality but in relation to one another.

In hyperrealism, painting has found a high-definition style of its own. In the words of one hyperrealist painter, "photography is not the last word in realism"—nor is reality itself, one might add, as the hauntingly accurate detail in this form of painting confirms. Richard Estes' paintings, worked up from dozens of different photographs, recreate urban landscapes caught in the interplay of multiple reflections and frames. They show us what the human eye could never see, such as an image reflected in a shop window and an object inside the window both rendered with the same degree of definition. Hyperrealism, with its sharp focus and flattened perspective, presents a smooth, uniform painted surface that calls for no effort of the imagination. The frontal, rectilinear gaze of the camera lens has taken the place of the eye, with its curving field of vision and its aura of possibilities. By interposing between spectator and subject a series of technological intermediaries, it destroys the original status of the subject, which becomes the mere adjunct of a piece of viewing apparatus. Is it fortuitous that the painter's signature is often reversed, one more

A scene from *Nick's Movie* (1979-1980), the film Wim Wenders made with the American director Nicholas Ray near the end of Ray's life.

reflection among others? The painters of the Renaissance endeavoured to recreate a humane vision of the world, portrayed in depth, where light emerged from shade, a vision in which necessity had its place, a fragile conquest snatched from the jaws of a universally prevalent contingency. Driven by an obsessive desire for transparency, hyperrealism teaches us that there is nothing below the surface, in short that there is nothing to see.

When perception is dissociated from imagination, we are left with banality, tautology, literalism. The psychoanalyst Sami Ali describes banality as "the end of projection", "the disappearance of all emotive assocations", the absence of an inside/outside polarity. "It is a 'reality' that is both immediate and final," he claims, "cut off from the historical process of which it is the culmination and no longer bearing in itself any trace of the labour of negation". When temporality is eclipsed by an absolute positivity, and imagination—the faculty of saying no—is taken away, we are left in a situation where everything is reversible, where copies outrank originals, the virtual is indistinguishable from the actual, and reality is no more than a special effect.

A SURFEIT OF IMAGES

An intricate web of relationships has been woven between the different types of image produced by painting, photography, the cinema, video and computer graphics. This rivalry and this mutual fascination are illustrated in the films of the German director Wim Wenders, for example in the relationship between Jonathan and Ripley in *The American Friend.* Jonathan, a picture framer, lives in a workshop filled with the smells and materials of his craft and in the ambit of the painterly culture, based on the act of seeing. In one scene he is the only person at an auction who spots subtle differences of shades of blue that reveal some of the works to be fakes. He is the embodiment of the Apollonian ideal of the Beautiful, that of the circumscribed, the sober outline, the frame. With Ripley, the American friend of the title, we are taken into the realm of the immaterial, an unchecked flow of symbols, of speculation. A parallel is suggested between money, the generalized form of commodities, and images, the generalized forms of reality. Ripley is defined only through external symbolism, through the objects that surround him. At one point he takes Polaroid photographs of himself lying on a pool table; eventually the proliferating images cover his whole body. The death of the original is consummated in the triumph of the copies. Elsewhere we see him taping himself and later playing back the recording, as though his self-awareness can only be sustained by means of the fragile traces recorded by a machine. Ripley, a postmodern character, finally draws Jonathan into his own ambit, that of the sublime reduced to the level of the quantitative. The turning-point of the film is marked by a shot of Jonathan smashing a picture frame in his workshop. The smashing of the frame symbolizes the relentless onward rush towards the limitless, the sea, death. . . .

Restoring to images their innocence. . . . In his book *The Act of Seeing*, Wim Wenders discovers in seeing the possibility of latent truth that is "obscured by words, by past events, by opinion." This return to true perception, unencumbered by judgements and opinions, is close to the idea, advocated by phenomenology, of getting back to things in themselves. It means learning to see things with the eyes of childhood again. This possibility tends, however, to disappear as the number of images we are exposed to increases. High-definition systems allow images to be reproduced ad infinitum without any loss of clarity and with unlimited possibilities for manipulation. Digitized and insubstantial, the high-definition image does not deteriorate like a film

***Grand Luncheonette* (1969), a painting by the American artist Richard Estes.**

negative. It makes the concept of "originality" entirely meaningless, and the special effects to which it is subjected leave no trace.

Wim Wenders wants to make the cinema a focal point of resistance to this loss of meaning. "The cinema," he writes, "must represent, for each image, a last bastion of this sense of the image." The transition from a pictorial culture to the "era of technical reproduction", to reproductions of works of art, to photography, the cinema and finally the electronic image, has been responsible for an increase in the quantity of images that constitutes "one of the most serious sicknesses of our civilization".

The cinema has a memory of its own, its own highly-developed language. To quote Wenders again, "cinematographic language is a powerful medium that leaves its imprint on everything it produces". Video is easier to handle and more spontaneous but lacks this "capacity for taking shape". Its language is basic: instead of constructing a diachronic development it breaks time down into a succession of instants, and it abandons the cinematic pan shot in favour of the close-up. The relationship between film and video is the same as that between an original and a copy. The proliferation of video images is indeed a disease, a malignant tumour that thrives to the detriment of organic growth. In *Nick's Movie*, Wenders shot the cancer-stricken Nicholas Ray in video because video seemed to him like a cancer within the film itself. Hence, in order to check the progress of a disease that the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard has called "the contamination of things by the virus of images", and their "unlimited pullulation", the video image must be reinserted into the cinematic framework, marked with its imprint, filled out with the organic quality, the meaning and the memory that it presently lacks.

ABSORBED BY THE 'BLOTTING PAPER' OF THE SCREEN

In his critique of Wagner, Nietzsche poured scorn on the signs of a modernity that sought to attain the infinite grandeur of the sublime but only succeeded in achieving the ultimate in triviality, that of sound reduced to its component parts, bereft of all organic linkage. The decline from the sublime to the quantitative is paralleled by the way in which the new technology of the image absorbs us so that image and viewer become one and actually causes our perception to regress by eliminating the distance that is an integral part of our way of seeing.

"We used to stand in front of the image, now we are inside the visual environment." In *Vie et mort de l'image, une histoire du regard en Occident*, Régis Debray stresses the the importance of the element of distance in visual perception. "Seeing," he writes, "means standing back from the thing seen, distancing oneself, cutting oneself off." The perception of sound is more archaic; listener and sound become one. In the world of the audiovisual media, seeing undergoes annexation by listening, "visual noise" is superimposed

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upon audio noise. "The visual environment has virtually become a sound environment." We are caught up in a process of absorption, in what the French critic Paul Virilio has called the "blotting paper" effect of the screen.

The omnipresence of images and the speed with which they are transmitted relieve us of the necessity to imagine an elsewhere, to project our thoughts through time and space. Everything is here and now; everything comes to us without our having to go anywhere. The cult of live transmission, immediacy and the close-up conspire to make us believe we are in direct contact with events; but as Marshall McLuhan has taught us, the medium is the message, events are indissociable from the trace they leave, and the only present is the presence of the image. Removed from the opaque order of visible culture, the image has been subjugated by the strategy of communication and promoted for its own sake, regardless of any meaningful content.

To prevent the imagination from crumpling under the impact of high-speed transmission and to restore to images their lost innocence, we need to disconnect image from sound—which is no longer recorded on separate tracks as in the cinema. We must halt the flow of images, and resist the seductive power of immediacy. If we do, perhaps we shall witness the return of what Wenders calls the truth potential. It takes time for meaning to come across. In Proust's great novel *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the taste of a small cake—a madeleine—brings back buried memories from the past, a past relived as the present. Images only take on meaning again when they are related to our own mental images, integrated into our own time-frame, vibrating in sympathy with our bodies, the storehouse of our memories—the body, what Nietzsche called our "great reason".

THE MYSTERY OF APPEARANCES

In Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow-up*, the plot revolves around a photograph taken in a London park. When the photo is developed it reveals a dead body that Thomas, the photographer, had not noticed when he took it. The eye of the camera captures something that remained invisible to the naked eye. But Thomas then decides to blow the image up bigger and bigger, and again the mystery eludes us. By dint of zooming in closer and closer we are left with the meaningless mosaic of the grain of the film, as meaningless as the grain of Albertine's skin is to the narrator in Proust's novel. The pervasive use of close-ups and the zoom lens drags us down into what Baudrillard calls the "blank obscenity" of a transparent universe. "Where does this crazy idea come from," he asks, "the idea of being able to reveal the secret, to expose the naked substance, to touch the ultimate obscenity? The idea itself is utopian—there is no reality, there never has been; the power to allure lies in realizing this and preserving the mystery."

In order to rediscover the allure of appearances, to guard against "blank obscenity", the mystery of the body needs to be reinvented. In *The Draughtsman's Contract*, by Peter Greenaway, the English film director and painter, the architectural drawings of a country house play a part in the plot, like Leonardo's draperies, giving depth to the cinematographic image. They cannot be deciphered as a poster can; they yield up the memory of past events in minute doses. The murder clues are revealed through a subtle interplay of appearances and disappearances. The time-frame of the film and the logic of its plot are organized around the drawings, and the true mystery is the one played out in the arrangement of lines, values and chiaroscuro. Works of art, as the German philosopher Martin Heidegger says, always hold themselves "in reserve". The painter meets his death perhaps because he discovered the murderer but more certainly because he was unable to preserve the mystery of appearances, the innocence of images.

DIGITAL FEVER

In the beginning was the digit; the Word became software and dwelt among us, to adapt the French writer René Berger's phrase. Video, computer graphics, holograms—the new visual technologies detach themselves from the familiar forms of our perception and hitch themselves to

***Joan of Aragon*, by Raphaël and his studio.**

digits. Computer-generated images usher in the age of simulation, where virtual reality prevails over reality itself.

The relationship between art and these technologies is a problematical one. Whereas the artist's approach sidesteps conceptualizations, digging below the specificities of the real world to capture the totality of experience, digital imaging does the opposite, making the specific a fall-out from the idea of the universal. The artist becomes a computer operator, and the transcendency of the work of art implodes somewhere in the networks. As Michel Jaffrenou has pointed out, "the proliferation of networks, that spider's web that is being spun around the whole world, that fluidity that is seeping into all communication, means that works created on screens can be fed into circuits, circulate through them and return almost immediately to the sender, transformed, interpreted and ready to go out again."

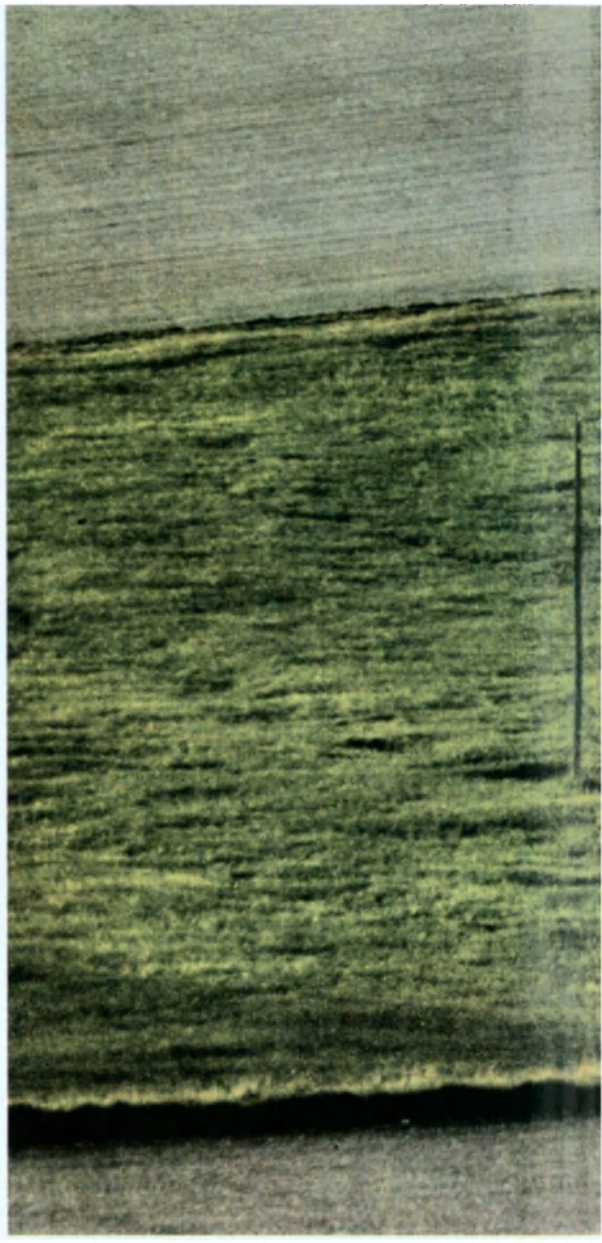
Moving and having their being in an intangible environment, absorbed into the networks, manipulated in the course of interactive communication, produced in real time, images are turning their backs on human beings and looking at one another.

THE WISDOM OF LOVE VERSUS THE WISDOM OF THE IMAGE

Other people reveal themselves to us above all through the expression in their eyes. This does not add any new significance to the image perceived by the senses; indeed, it emerges only if and when that image is destroyed. The endless fascination of the Mona Lisa reminds us how a gaze can convey the mystery of another person—we are so captivated by her gaze that we cannot look at her. The painting itself fades away, disappears, leaving behind the pure presence of another being. Who remembers the colour of the Mona Lisa's eyes?

Another person's gaze is unbearable. The narrator of *A la recherche du temps perdu* not only keeps Albertine prisoner but can only tolerate her when she is asleep, because, as he says, at such times her "personality no longer slipped away all the time, as it did when we were talking, through the channels of unacknowledged thoughts and looks. At such times, she seemed to have called back all that part of herself that was outside; she had taken refuge, enclosed and simplified, within her body." The eyes are the channel through which the personality escapes and through which it must return. "Those closed eyelids," Proust tells us, "laid on her face that perfect continuity unbroken by the eyes."

The proliferation of images is the sign of a civilization that has forgotten how to see, that erases all forms of otherness, a culture "with closed eyelids". Our response to the lure of an act of seeing that kept a distance between perceiver and perceived, to a love directed towards "the mystery of the Other", to the transcendency of an art that preserved the aura of original works, is to rush headlong into the banal strategies of the image. ■



The apple of my eye

by Nissim Merkado

NISSIM MERKADO
is a French artist and art teacher whose work has been exhibited in a number of countries, including France, Belgium and Bulgaria.

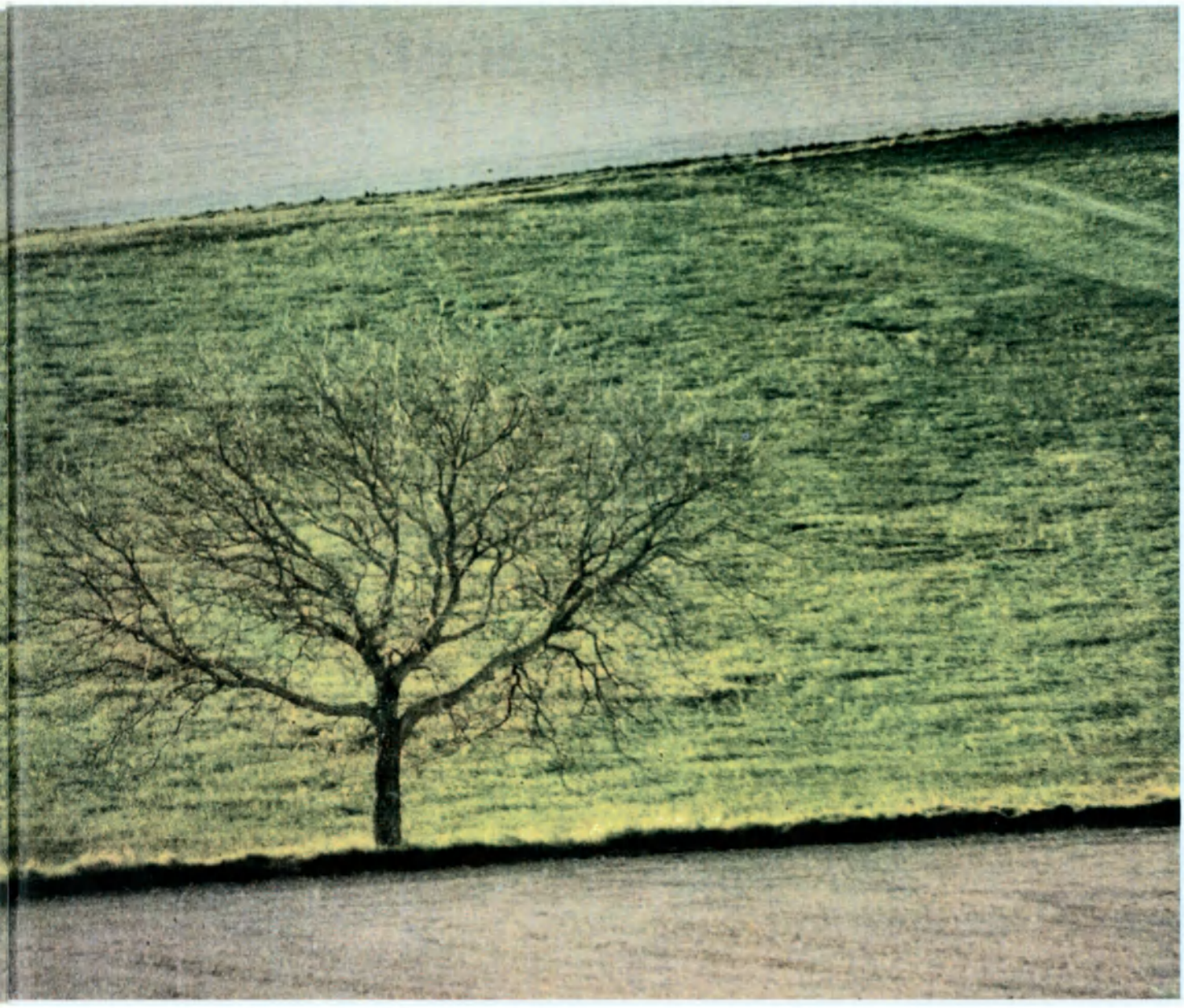


Photo by Pascal Rieu.

APPLES, green, yellow and red. Colours. . . .

I have placed the red apple on the ground to paint it. The ground is ochre, the colour of scorched earth. There is a contrast. Consistent and indelible, oils are best for getting close to nature. Pigments.

The smell of oils is not that of the colour of the apple. Energy of the senses.

"Energy" is a word that crops up often.

Nothing is certain. I went away for a moment, and my absence made itself felt in the silence, a unifying factor: "poly-presence".

Painting, watching colours appear on a flat surface. A black line weaves around the colours, which are obstinately pressed up against one another. Chance.

Everything around gives off vibrations. The apple is fixed in the retina, but its colour vibrates somewhere else.

Watching the silhouette of the main object taking form. The apple is white on a white background. Barely visible. . . .

Apples are eaten. Apples rot.

Cézanne proved that there is more to apples than that: there is beauty in them. The consistency of the colour builds up the object's "unique" form—a kind of magic whose power can be transmitted and can be converted from one material to another.

Physical sensation is consumed, like energy.

A painting, 50.7 x 73.5 centimetres.

Colour has a molecular structure, it reflects light equally for two bodies whose basic identity differs materially. The similarity between the red skin of the apple and the colour of blood is artificial. When removed from any convention relating to form and given its freedom, colour enters the realm of universal abstract thought.

The tree on which the apple grows is empty.

The sun shrinks in volume. Seen through an electron microscope, the pips of an apple contain a sequence of memories that have not been decoded.

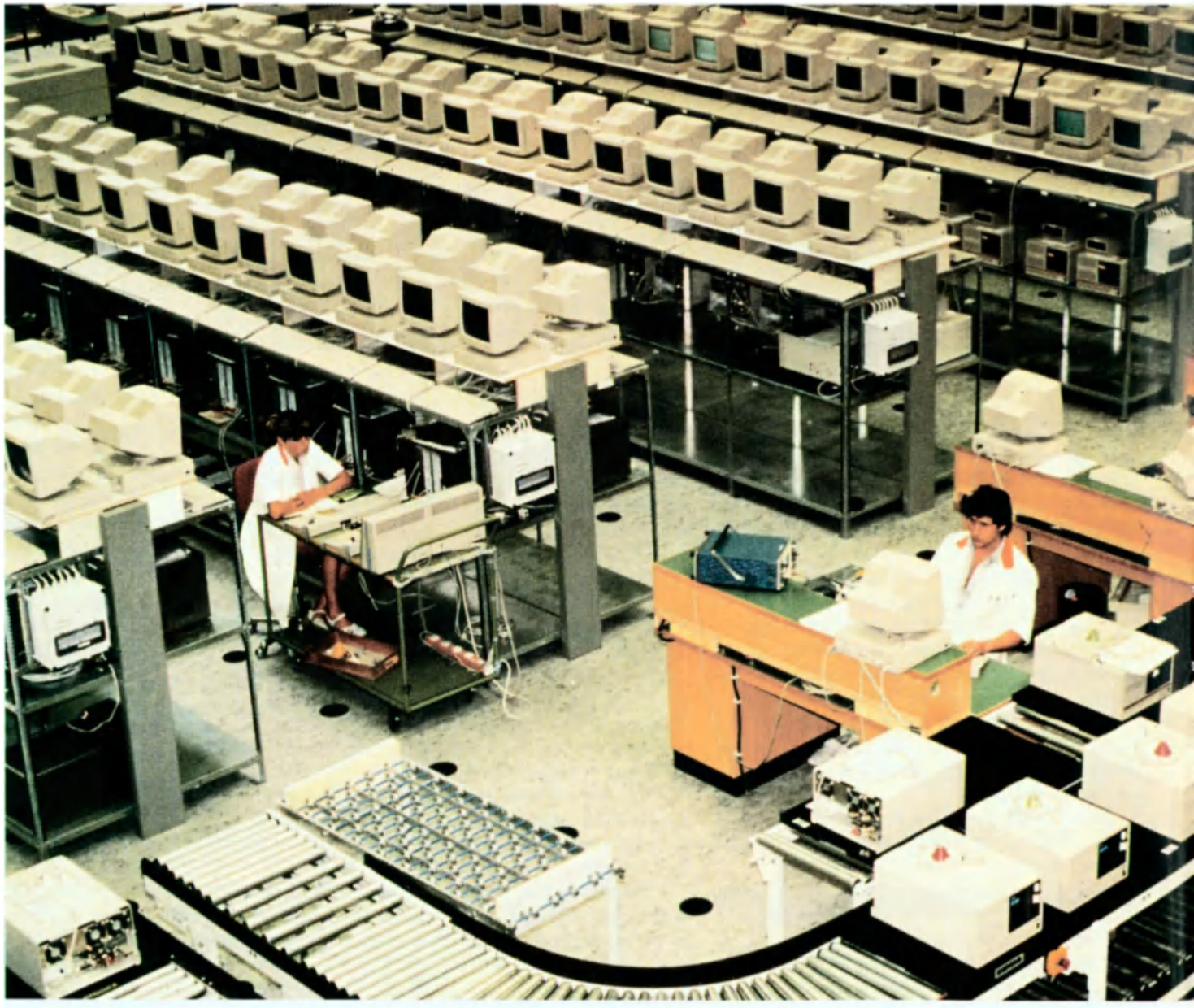
With the aid of X-rays, one can see that the artist sketched and painted in the pips before covering them over with green paint. Memory is something else again.

■

The more generation

by Reginald Fraser Amonoo

THE aims of industry and commerce in today's world are to create more wealth and a wealthier population. Improved means of production have brought about overproduction and fierce international competition. While the mechanization of agriculture, mass production on factory assembly lines, robotization and computerization have increased productivity, they have also saturated markets with surplus products. Europe, floundering in its milk lake, has to sell off its goods at cut price, whilst the United States and Japan are producing too much steel and turning out too many cars. Even the computer industry, following a period of expansion, is marking time. The social costs of overproduction—reduced profits, business failures, factory closures, unemployment, whole sectors of the



Right, an advertising billboard in Lagos (Nigeria).
Below, a computer assembly line in Germany.

economy in disarray, whole regions turned into disaster areas—are considerable. The Third World too is affected, as overproduction results in a disastrous fall in world commodity prices.

The need to find buyers for these superabundant goods accounts for one of the major phenomena of modern times, the power of advertising, now an industry in its own right, buttressed by the growth of the mass media—television, film, video and home teletext terminals as well as press advertisements and billboards. The media dangle before consumers the prospect of an escape from prosaic reality, a different, compensatory view of life. The stars of Hollywood and show business, who with their extravagant life-styles have taken the place of the kings and conquering heroes of times gone by, entice an adoring public with glimpses of a world of dreams and fantasy, where every passion can be satisfied. There is also an infatuation with the extraordinary, which explains the popularity of sports champions, whose feats provide copy for specialized publications and the record-books and who cash in on their achievements by featuring in advertisements.

In a context of overproduction, any means,

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legal or otherwise, must be used to attract potential clients. Anything goes: unfair competition, industrial fraud, infringement of patents, industrial espionage or whatever. Advertising goes all out to whet the consumer's appetite, even resorting to deceit. Every product is presented as the best, the most competitively priced, the most efficient. All kinds of hype are used. Advertisers will stop at nothing to get their message across, including the exploitation of feminine charms. If customers are short of ready cash, they are offered easy terms, at least to start with. They may even be offered a car they can drive away without having to put any money down, with a free tankful of petrol thrown in.

THE LURE OF EASY MONEY

Are the developing countries affected by this phenomenon? I believe they are. There is, for example, nothing new about young Africans' infatuation with imported goods—after all, trade with the early European explorers was based on Africans' taste for luxury goods from abroad. The remarkable thing is the way in which this infatuation has spread to broad sectors of the African population since the Second World War.

Several factors have been at work here. In Ghana, for instance, as air travel became more common in the 1940s and 1950s, the fact of having visited England, London in particular, or having studied in Europe conferred special status on the happy few, in the eyes of the vast majority of their compatriots who had never left the country. They were known as the *been-to*, and with their higher social standing they set the fashion, especially among the young.

To a certain extent, a desire for higher social status and material prosperity also motivated the struggle for political emancipation. What could once only be gained through education—and this was hard to come by—could now be obtained through success in politics, whatever one's educational level. A new kind of politician, brought to power by a succession of coups d'état, appeared on the scene, replacing one privileged class by another.

Lastly, the lure of easy money and an affluent life-style has attracted many young Africans into occasional dealing in imported luxury goods. These small traders who travel backwards and forwards between West Africa on the one hand and Europe and the United States on the other make no appreciable contribution to their countries' economies.

A variety of small-scale drug traffickers follow the same route—there is now an underground market for drugs in Africa. The risks are enormous but the profits to be made are very tempting. The consumers are obviously after bigger kicks than they can get from more innocuous stimulants; in other words they too are out for more. Drug abuse is not necessarily a modern phenomenon, but its spread is something new. The incidents that have occurred in some universities and even some secondary schools, as well as among some of the soldiers involved in military coups, show that drug-taking is starting to spread among the young.

THE HIGH LIFE

In many ways, therefore, a growing number of Africans, traders, traffickers, adventurers—internationalized Africans, so to speak—have an attitude towards the consumer society that scarcely differs from that prevalent in the United States or Europe. The taste for luxuries, for consumer goods—for the high life, in short—evident in the countries of the North has its counterpart in the countries of the South, with this difference, that its consequences, given the deprivation that afflicts most of our fellow-countrymen, are much worse. The spread, in some cases the prevalence, of this constant seeking after more is one of the hallmarks of modern times. ■

A young motorcyclist in a village in Niger.

The spare parts syndrome

by Bernard Teo

Above, a liver transplant operation in a Paris hospital.

ONE of the marvels of modern medicine is its ability to repair people's lost or impaired bodily functions with artificial devices such as the pace-maker, the hearing aid, powered limb prostheses and the dialysis machine. Organ transplantation represents a further step along this ingenious path. For patients suffering from vital organ diseases, organ transplantation may offer the only hope of survival.

The capacity to repair human beings brings out the best in us. Unless we take care, however, it may also bring out the worst—our capacity to fragment ourselves and our communities, and our propensity to exploit and to dehumanize.

Provided that there is a scrupulous regard for ethics in transplantation, the repairable human can be a powerful symbol of our shared humanity, adaptability and global interdependence, for success in organ transplantation would be impossible without national and international co-operation and exchange. To take one example, the development and widespread use of powerful immunosuppressives, which are crucial to the success of any transplant programme, are possible only because of international collaboration and a sense of compassion for the sick.

Organ transplantation differs from other kinds of health care in that it depends upon full participation by the community. A government may legislate ethically sound transplant policies and commit sufficient resources to ensure the success of a transplant programme, but its efforts will be doomed to failure if the public is unwilling to donate organs and provide support.

Many countries have adopted policies to ensure fair public access to donated organs, in recognition of a demand that factors such as ability to pay, race, gender, social status or religious beliefs should not be barriers to anyone who really needs a transplant. If a transplant programme is perceived by the public as denigrating a person's humanity, or as introducing values that divide the

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community, public goodwill and support in the form of donated organs may come to a halt.

However, there is a great danger that transplant technology may encourage the objectivization of the human being into a mere collection of body parts, subject to exploitation for consumerist and utilitarian purposes.

Proposals to allow commerce in human body parts constitute a fundamental attack on human dignity and identity. To turn human body parts into exchangeable commodities is to alienate a person from his or her bodily life and undermine human dignity and identity. The humanitarian and communitarian foundation of organ transplantation would be corrupted by such a consumerist approach.

Trade in human body parts would also fragment the community, since it would transform communal relationships into those of contractual buying and selling; the poor would be exploited while the wealthy would be able to buy their way onto the priority list of transplant candidates. It would also undermine international goodwill. It is well known that wealthy transplant candidates from richer countries are in a position to purchase organs from the poor in poorer countries, often under exploitative conditions, and that the poor are brought to the wealthier countries to complete the commercial transactions. Such practices not only shift the problems of wealthier nations onto poorer ones, but also strip the poor of their dignity by turning them into commodities. There is an urgent need for international co-operation to deal with these problems.

Governments should make policies to control the situation, and impose penalties on their nationals who cross international boundaries to purchase organs from the poor. Those involved in transplant programmes should also screen patients and organ donors more thoroughly before beginning any procedure.

Above all, the repairable human may reflect an extremely myopic view of life: an aggressive preoccupation with the preservation of our bodily life, regardless of the financial and human costs, points to an inability or refusal to confront the reality of human mortality and to address the question of whether the full meaning of human existence may not be more than the preservation of life as we know it. ■

Automating artificial limbs in Haïfa (Israel).

GREENWATCH

THE UNESCO COURIER — JULY/AUGUST 1993

THE WORLD SOLAR SUMMIT

According to forecasts by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), if world energy consumption were to continue at its 1990 level, oil reserves would last 46 years, coal reserves 205 years and natural gas reserves 67 years. In addition, the production and use of these fossil fuels are responsible for a constant increase in water, soil and above all atmospheric pollution by nitrogen oxides, sulphur and methane. The amount of carbon dioxide, which stood at about 6.3 billion tons in 1988, could double by the year 2010. "By the end of the 1980s," writes Mostapha K. Tolba, former Executive Director of UNEP in his book *Saving our Planet* (1992), "it had become clear that current trends in energy consumption—especially of fossil fuels—could lead to increased degradation of the global environment (from, for example, acid rain, urban air pollution and climate change), undermining future development and well-being across the planet."

Presented as a "clean" form of energy, nuclear energy raised high hopes, promising cheap and abundant electricity. But the Chernobyl accident, aging power stations and the build-up of toxic wastes that are difficult to process soon cooled people's enthusiasm. In addition, this form of energy production is far too expensive and technologically too onerous for the developing countries.

Although they are not high on the political or economic agenda, probably because oil is cheap, the so-called renewable energies—solar electricity, biomass, wind energy, ocean energy—have not been as successful as they deserve.

And so Unesco has decided to organize this year an international conference on renewable energy sources, the World Solar Summit. The term *solar* is used symbolically to designate the different renewable sources of energy. The meeting, which will take place at Unesco Headquarters in Paris from 5 to 9 July 1993 in close co-operation with relevant organizations, is designed as a summit of experts.

The logo of the World Solar Summit

THE WORLD SOLAR SUMMIT

A group of high-level specialists will assess solar energy development in the two decades since a conference was last held on the subject by UNESCO in 1973. They will also explore the future of renewable energy resources and will consider the launching of a World Solar Energy Decade (1995-2005). The major objective, however, will be to formulate a World Plan of Action to develop and use renewable energy resources effectively.

The moment has come to assess the state of political and technological progress in this field and to highlight the many advantages renewable energy sources offer for the environment, sustainable development, health, cleaner industry, a higher degree of energy security and self-sufficiency for nations. Research and development must be encouraged without neglecting the socio-cultural and educational aspects of the use of solar energy which could change our way of life. This mission UNESCO, within its fields of competence, is ready to undertake.

F. B. ■

Solar panels provide energy to power a refrigerator at a clinic in Morocco (above) and to pump water in Mali (top). Left, bathers soak in warm water ejected from the geothermal power station at Svartsengi (Iceland). The waste water is reputed to have curative properties, particularly for people suffering from psoriasis, a skin disease.

S.O.S. CLIMATE-BUT DON'T WORRY

BY FRANCE BEQUETTE

JULY 2893. A fleet of boats carrying participants to a climate conference unloads its passengers directly onto the twenty-sixth floor of the United Nations building in New York. The meeting is being held too late. As a result of global warming the polar ice caps have melted and the sea level has risen to the point that the twenty-sixth floor windows are now on the water level. This scene was described some years ago in a United Nations periodical in an attempt to sound the alarm about global warming. Although wildly exaggerated, it is part of a scenario linked to the greenhouse effect which has alarmed not only the inhabitants of low-lying islands such as the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, but also those of the Netherlands, where land reclaimed from the sea is protected by dunes and dikes. The effects of such a scenario would also threaten Bangladesh, the Nile Delta, the east coast of the United States and all flat coastal regions—a particularly serious prospect since 70 per cent of the world's population lives less than 60 km from the sea.

What exactly is the greenhouse effect which has been so much written about in the last few years and has caused such widespread dismay? This is how the problem has been described so far. Radiation from the Sun penetrates the atmosphere and warms the Earth's surface, which then radiates some of the heat it receives back towards space. Some of this heat, which is vital for life on Earth and keeps water from freezing, escapes, but some is trapped—as if by the glass panes of a greenhouse—by gases of which there is an increasing build-up in the atmosphere such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and tropospheric (low-altitude) ozone. Edward Goldsmith, who founded the British magazine *The Ecologist* twenty years ago, believes that atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration has increased by 25 per cent since the beginning of the industrial era, that the methane

Dolphins over New York **(1974), by the Argentine artist Nicolas Uriburu.**

concentration has doubled, and that nitrous oxide and tropospheric ozone concentrations are increasing by 0.5 per cent each year.

In their book *The Earth Report*, Edward Goldsmith and Nicholas Hildyard describe the greenhouse effect as "the most serious environmental problem facing the planet. There is some disagreement whether or not the rise in global temperature of 0.5° Centigrade in the last century is due to global warming caused by human activities or is a natural climatic fluctuation. However, it is almost unanimously agreed among climatologists that immediate action to curb global warming is needed". Goldsmith and Hildyard also quote former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as saying in March 1989 that "major changes in the chemistry of the Earth's atmosphere are taking place, with potentially calamitous effects for mankind." The alarmist remarks of environmentalists have thus been echoed by politicians who in some cases have gone so far as to compare the greenhouse effect with a world nuclear war.

FROM CERTAINTIES TO DOUBTS

But is it possible that the certainties of 1989 have become improbable hypotheses in 1993? Palaeoclimatologists who study ice, sediments, rocks, coral and the trunks of ancient trees, admit that they cannot calculate the temperature of the Earth as it was 2,000 years ago. The planet experiences climatic cycles that are alternately hot and humid and cold and dry. But although a rise of 0.5°C has been recorded in the second half of this century (i.e., since precise temperature measurements began to be made), peaking in the 1980s, no-one today is prepared to state categorically that this provides incontrovertible proof of global warming, or that global warming is due to human activities, since no-one knows what happened before humankind appeared on the scene. Gérard Lambert, a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) set up by the United Nations, says, "We know that the factors encouraging the greenhouse effect are increasing. We can measure the atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and CFCs. We model the rest, but however powerful our computers are, no model is capable of copying nature."

The greenhouse effect.

The Intergovernmental Conference on the World Climate Programme, which was held in Geneva (Switzerland) from 14 to 16 April 1993, also yielded some surprises. The meeting was co-sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO, the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC). Entitled "The Climate Agenda", the meeting reviewed, a year after the Rio Conference, the current situation with regard to the socio-economic impact of climate change resulting from the greenhouse effect. The 400 participants from some 140 countries took note of one obvious point. "Climate prediction," says one of the Conference documents, "is a complex undertaking which is hindered by the gaps in our knowledge. . . . Knowledge of climatic processes must be deepened and we must improve observation of the atmosphere, the oceans, ice and the land areas of the planet." All the speakers insisted on the need to intensify research in these fields.

COULD THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT BE BENEFICIAL?

While the industrialized countries already have satellite, rocket and land-based observation facilities, as well as computerized climate modelling systems, the developing countries generally do not have adequate facilities for observing the local climate and its variations, or for collecting and analysing meteorological data. Consequently an appeal has been launched for the rich countries to participate in the creation of observation centres in the poor countries. A budget has even been drafted, although nothing has been said about where the money would come from. Gunnar Kullenberg, secretary of the IOC at UNESCO, told us he was sorry that no state or individual has really taken a lead on this issue. It seems as if governments are waiting for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be ratified. This Convention, signed by 154 countries in June 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), must be ratified before it can come into force. Its ultimate goal is to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system".

Observers at the Rio and Geneva conferences were very surprised that nothing was said about the need to reduce the production of greenhouse gases by reducing pollution. On the contrary, at a press conference at which FAO was represented by Wim Sombroek, Director of FAO's Land and Water Development Division, and by René Gommes, Secretary of FAO's Interdepartmental Sub-group on Climate Change, we heard that "climate change could also lead to useful modifications from which we should be ready to draw profit: the increase in carbon dioxide concentrations could have a beneficial effect on world food production when world population has doubled". Carbon provides plants with food. Several other beneficial effects of climate change have been identified, including increased potential for bio-fuels and higher temperatures in temperate zones. This revolutionary assertion must have surprised Edward Goldsmith. Should we conclude from it that to have bumper harvests we should step on the accelerator? ■

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MEASURING LEAD LEVELS

Few states publish lead emission figures. However, according to estimates made by UNEP, human activities produce around 332,000 tons of lead annually worldwide, including some 12,000 tons of natural origin (wind-borne volcanic dust). The lead in petrol represents only 10 per cent of all refined lead but is responsible for 60 per cent of emissions caused by human activity. Since it is deposited 100 metres each side of the road, it is not advisable to eat plants and mushrooms which grow in this area. ■

CONTRABAND CROCODILES

In January 1993, information from the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) enabled customs officers in Montevideo (Uruguay) to seize a cargo of 29,000 caiman skins. Loaded into a container in Colombia, they were due to be sent to Singapore via Curaçao and Aruba (dependent territories of the Netherlands but not covered by the Convention). Meanwhile, the authorites in Italy seized 10,000 caiman skins also from Colombia, which had been carried through Curaçao and Colombia respectively. It's not a good idea to be a crocodile in South America. ■

BLUE AND BEAUTIFUL

A remarkable little children's book entitled *Blue and Beautiful: Planet Earth, our Home* was published in 1990 by the United Nations. Its authors, Ruth Rocha and Otavio Roth, explain through short texts illustrated with watercolours why the Earth should be protected. The best reason is that there is only one Earth in the solar system. To obtain the book, which costs $9.95, please write to Clara Flores, United Nations Publications Sales Section, Room DC2-0853, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A. ■

FIRE OR FLOOD

For years the rice-growers of California's Sacramento Valley set fire to their fields after the harvest to burn off the remaining straw. Smoke blanketed the valley, adding an estimated one million tons of pollution to the atmosphere annually. In 1992, environmentalists suggested that they should flood the fields instead of burning them. Last December, 6,000 hectares of rice were flooded. These wetlands have become a paradise for wintering waterfowl. In spring the water is drained into the Sacramento River, aiding the seaward migration of young salmon. ■

BOTANIC GARDENS AND BIODIVERSITY

Around half of the world's 1,600 botanic gardens are active in conservation, maintaining facilities ranging from seed banks containing samples of hundreds of species to small conservation collections kept in public gardens or greenhouses. Unfortunately, these gardens are badly distributed. Most of them are in the world's temperate zones, where plant diversity is less rich. Europe has 532 gardens and about 12,000 species; North America has 265 gardens and 20,000 species, whereas in South America, with an estimated flora of 80,000 species, there are only 66. ■

LUCKY STARS?

Asterias forbesi, the common starfish, is unpopular with fishermen. A powerful carnivore, it feasts on mussels, periwinkles, snails, scallops and oysters. But researchers love it, since its method of feeding is unique in the animal world—it pushes its stomach out through its mouth and envelops its prey. If one of its arms is wounded it casts it off and grows another. It has 5 eyes, one at the end of each arm. Another amazing characteristic is its ability to change sex—experiments have shown that sex reversal from male to female occurs in adult specimens when there is a shortage of females. Perhaps such a wonder of nature deserves some of our shellfish. ■

A NEW LAW FOR LAKE BAIKAL

In September 1992, Russian and German experts took part in a consultation on draft legislation for Lake Baikal, threatened by pollution from cellulose factories at its southern extremity. According to the representative of the World Conservation Union who took part in the consultation, the law would establish the lake as a core protected zone surrounded by a buffer area. Lake Baikal, which is 634 km long, from 25 to 79 km wide (the surface area of Belgium) and 1,637 metres deep, contains one-fifth of the planet's fresh water. When I visited it, I found there was a difference of opinion between Grigori Galazy, the former director of the Irkutsk Institute of Limnology, and his successor, Mikhail Grachev. Galazy believes that the lake is dying as a result of pollution, whereas Grachev, who would like it to be included on UNESCO's World Heritage List, is convinced that the lake's water is pure, a point of view confirmed by American scientists whom I met on the spot. After exploring the icy waters of the lake in a pocket submarine, they told me: "The lake is magnificent. The purest in the world!" Let's hope that the law protecting this vast water reserve will be adopted. ■

INITIATIVES

"Initiatives" is a feature designed to highlight examples of environmental action in different parts of the world. We invite readers to send us details of their own experiences in this field for possible publication in the column.

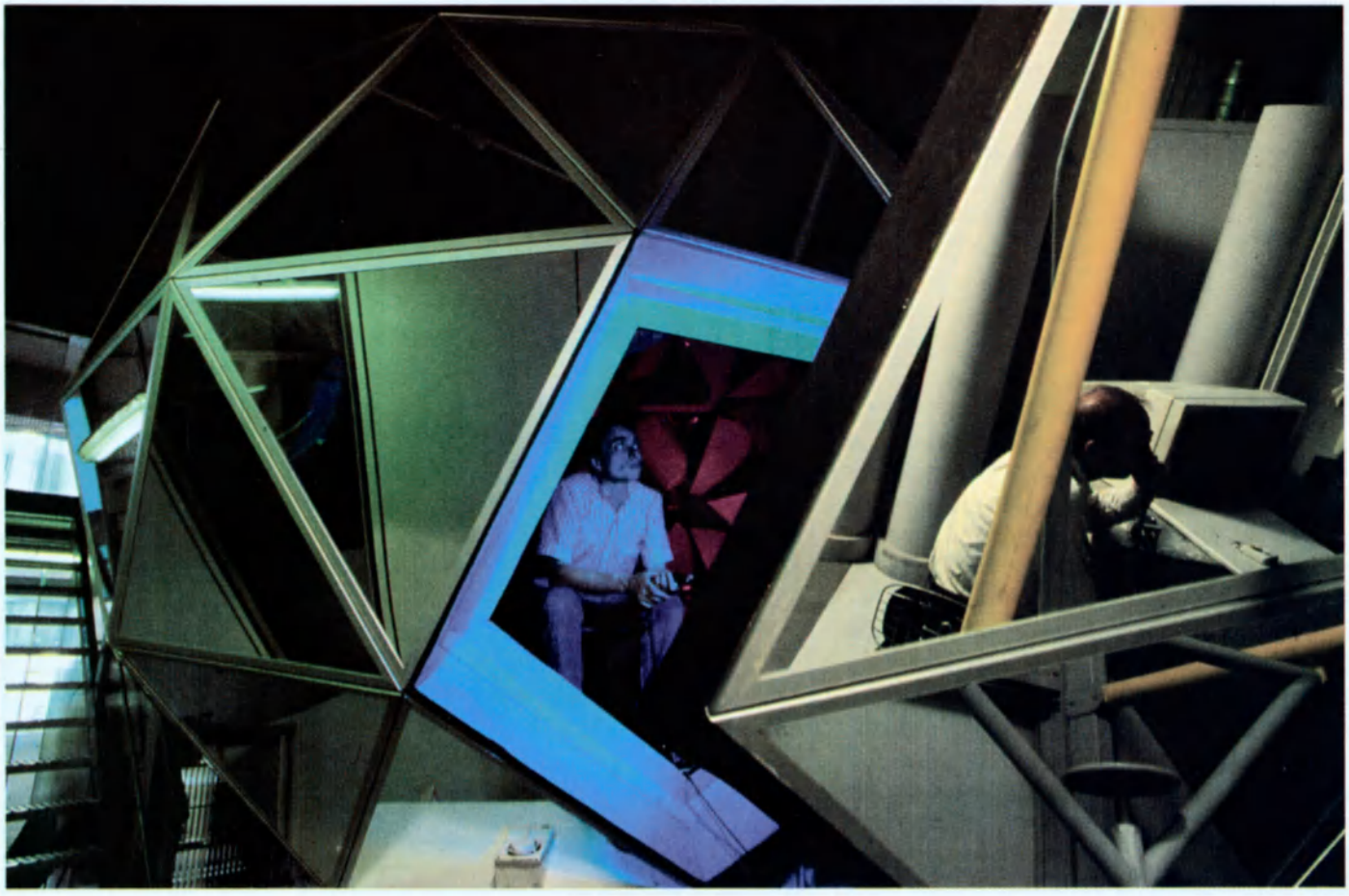
Gendarmes on an environmental mission at a disused factory (France).

GREEN GENDARMES

In France the gendarmerie is going green. In October 1992, Captain Emmanuel Bartier was appointed chief of a new environmental section. He claims, however, that there is nothing new about his mission, pointing out that "The gendarmerie policed nature in the countryside as early as 1903." Certainly the gendarmerie—a military body—has always been more firmly established in the countryside than in the towns. Although 80 per cent of its environmental work is preventive, the number of prosecutions has also considerably increased. Whereas 30,000 offences involving a fine and 2,800 crimes punishable by prison and/or a fine were recorded in 1980, the figures had risen to 62,000 and 5,500 respectively by 1992. In 1987 the gendarmerie distributed a memorandum on nature and the environment to its staff of 90,000. This 700-page "green book" covers such subjects as air and water pollution, nuclear energy, control of chemicals, waste, poaching of plant and animal life and the protection of parks, and explains what action should be taken in each case. A training session has been arranged to inform noncommissioned officers and teach them how to use sampling equipment. Captain Bartier, who has been travelling to meet his opposite numbers elsewhere in Europe, notes that so far there is no inter-state co-ordination despite the fact that police forces are increasingly concerned with environmental issues. He cites as examples Italy, which has created a specialized unit of 70 *carabinieri*, and Spain, where units of the *Guardia Civil* have been specially trained and equipped—not surprisingly since protection of the environment is written into the Spanish constitution. This October, representatives from different national police forces will hold their first joint meeting at Interpol Headquarters in Lyons (France). International co-operation should make Europe cleaner, though the task of harmonizing legislation will still remain.

■

The glass and concrete environment of modern cities sets up barriers between inside and outside, cutting people off from each other and from themselves.



Developed in France, this "audiosphere" is used to simulate street noise. New sounds can be added to study the effect they would have on the urban soundscape.

Sound barriers

by R. Murray Schafer

In the Tunisian restaurant in Montreal, the proprietor and his wife share a carafe of wine fitted with a spout from which they pour the wine directly into their mouths by raising and tipping it, in exactly the way the old wineskin would have worked. The sensation of drinking is entirely different when the liquid is squirted into the mouth rather than sipped out of a glass or sucked through a straw, and so are the accompanying sounds, on this occasion a bright burbling as the air seeks to replace the liquid through the twisted thin spout. Nothing touches the mouth but the liquid. It is probably the purest way to drink, yet it has been replaced by the glass as individual proprietorship has replaced tribal sharing. The glass, replacing more tuneful receptacles, is raised and chimed at the beginning of the meal, partly in compensation for mute consumption, an exercise denied its successor the plastic cup.

The soundscape of every society is conditioned by the predominant materials from which it is constructed. Thus we may speak of bamboo, wood, metal, glass or plastic cultures, meaning that these materials produce a repertoire of sounds of specific resonance when touched by active

agents. Europe was a stone culture and to a large extent still is, particularly in its smaller, less-touched communities. North America was originally a wood culture, passing, like modern Europe, to cement and glass during the twentieth century.

The glazed window was an invention of great importance for the soundscape, framing external events in an unnatural, phantom-like "silence". The diminution of sound transmission, while not immediate and occurring only gradually with the thickening of glazing, not only created the notion of a "here" and a "there" or a "beyond", but also introduced a fission of the senses. Today one can look at one's environment, while hearing another, with a durable film separating the two. Plate glass shattered the sensorium, replacing it with contradictory visual and aural impressions.

In a study of fairy tales, Marie-Louise von Franz points out that glass "cuts you off, as far as your animal activity is concerned. . . . People very often say. 'It feels as if there were a glass wall . . . between me and my surroundings.' That means: 'I see perfectly well what is going on, I can talk to people, but the animal and feeling contact, the warmth contact is cut off by a glass wall. . . .' "[1] The world of sounds and textures, the palpitating, kinetic world, is zoned out; we still watch it move, but from our (generally seated) position indoors our physical contact with it has ceased. The physical world is "there"; the world of reflection and speculation is "here".

When the space within is totally insulated it craves reorchestration: this is the era of background music and of the radio, a form of interior decoration, designed or absent-mindedly introduced to re-energize the space and render it more sensorially complete. Now the interior and exterior can become totally contradictory. The world seen through the window is like the world of a movie set with the radio as soundtrack. I recall travelling in the dome car of a train passing through the Rocky Mountains with schmaltzy music on the public address system and thinking: this is a travelogue movie about the Rocky Mountains—we are not here at all.

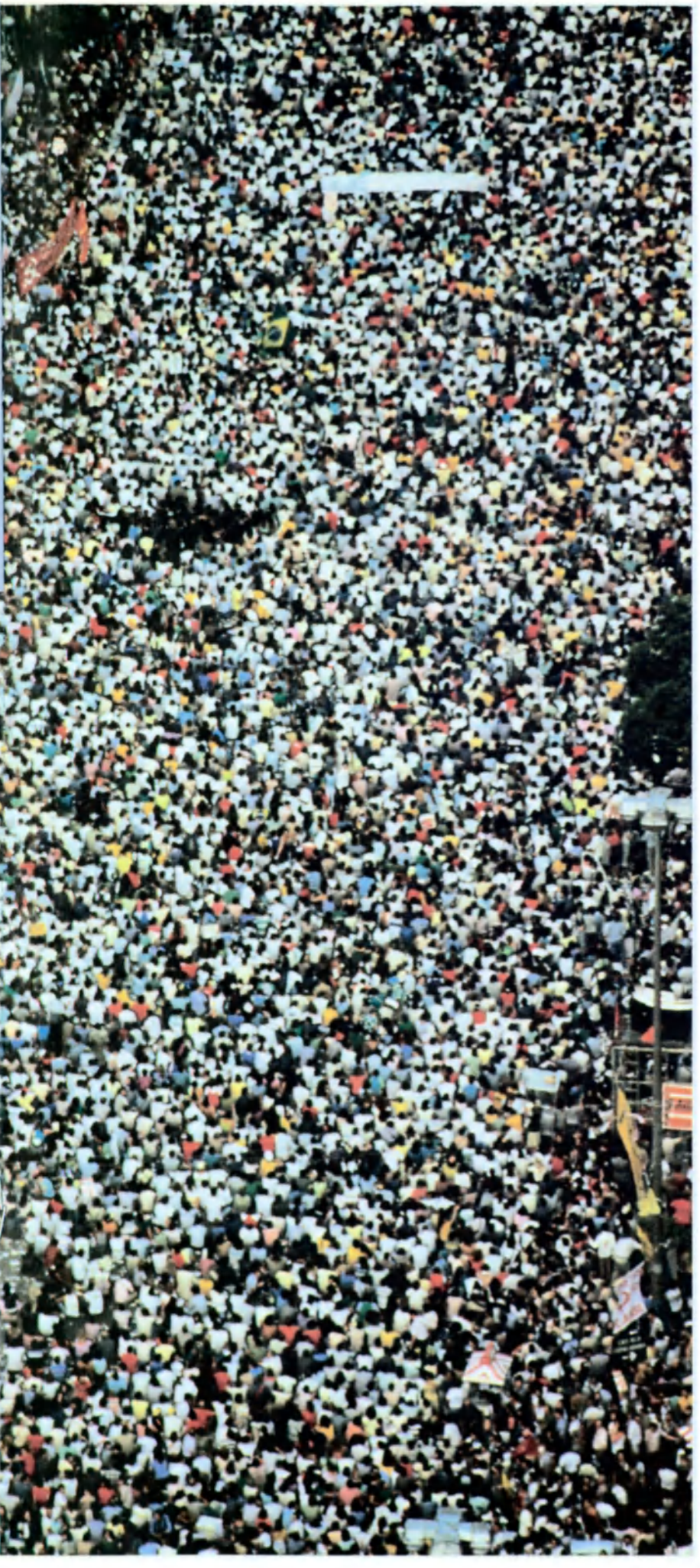
When the division between "here" and "there" is complete, the glass wall will become as impenetrable as the stone wall. Even thieves will respect it. Shattered glass is a trauma everyone is anxious to avoid. "He shall rule them with a rod of iron: as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers" is a potent acoustic image in the Bible (*Revelation* 2:27). A keynote of the Middle-Eastern soundscape under normal circumstances, crockery became a violent signal when broken. For us the same is true of glass. And yet one cannot help feeling that the mind-body split of the Western world will only be healed when some of the glass in which we have sheathed our lives is shattered, allowing us again to inhabit a world in which all the senses interact instead of being ranked in opposition.

ACOUSTIC TRADEMARKS AND SYMBOLIC SOUNDS

It is unnatural for our senses to be forcibly choked off, and when they are, they often reopen with a vengeance. One could study the suppression of the different senses in terms of the great culture revolutions in history. Right now we are being overwhelmed by the audio-visual media, which exclude other sensory stimulations. A measure of their inadequacy: everyone feels the compulsion to eat while watching movies.

Little by little the whole world is becoming mediatized, that is to say, it is driven by sound objects designed to manipulate or persuade. In this way it is different from the natural world we have left behind in which sounds stimulated us but rarely tried to control our behaviour. Think about this: there is scarcely a sound in modern life that has not been manufactured and is not owned by someone. The music we listen to is copyright-protected and licensed. Carhorns are the

The one and the many. A lone boatman on Lake Dal in India (left) and a Brazilian crowd (right).



property of car drivers and often blowing them is the only conversation drivers make as they pass through the city streets.

Almost all the noises of the modern city—police sirens, jet noise, construction noise—are designed to fortify some special-interest group. Thus, many sounds have become symbols for social classes. A ghetto blaster says: "I'm talking, you listen!" A portable telephone (silent in cars, audible in restaurants or on trains) says: "I'm a very successful person. I'm important." The ubiquitous cash registers of shops and restaurants proclaim: "Listen to how much business we do here!" An alarm-bell system screams: "Hands off!" Even the owner of a growling dog on a leash is silently saying: "Meet my friend. He protects me."

Much of this sound is pugilistic. Is this inevitable? Is it the result of overcrowding in the modern world or a means of dividing the rich from the poor, the winners from the losers? Poverty is quiet. It is affluence that has become noisy. With the acquisition of more and newer gadgets with impressive acoustic trademarks, successful groups stencil their identities into the contemporary soundscape and attempt to influence social behaviour to their own advantage.

THE VOICE OF THE CROWD

The only means available to the poor or disenfranchised to make their presence known is the rioting crowd. Certainly crowds are a feature of modern life and will undoubtedly become increasingly significant in the decades to come. Elias Canetti analyses the crowd question in his book *Crowds and Power,* and emphasizes the importance of touching in dense assemblies of people. "It is only in a crowd," he writes, "that man can become free of his fear of being touched. This is the only situation in which the fear changes into its opposite. The crowd he needs is the dense crowd, in which body is pressed to body; a

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crowd, too, whose physical constitution is also dense, or compact, so that he no longer notices who it is that presses against him."

Touch and sound are intimately connected. In the lower frequencies tactility and sounding meet as the pedal tone breaks into a vibrating pulse. This intimacy encourages the densely-packed crowd to invoke sound as its most potent weapon. In every other way it is vulnerable to penetration and disunification by better-armed opponents who seek to neutralize it. The crowd remains outside the towers of glass in which the elite have imprisoned themselves. It is primarily with its voice that it defends itself and seeks to remain invincible. The crowd roars, the crowd chants, the crowd screams—you don't count the voices; there is only one voice. If it contains within it individuals who have not entirely surrendered to its purpose by the encouragement of touching, sound will reinforce the dedication of the wavering. There is a passage in St. Augustine's *Confessions* in which the fate of a man who had forsworn gladiatorial shows is sealed after he had re-entered the maelstrom of a crowd. "If only he could have stopped his ears!" cries St. Augustine despairingly.

There are many ways of characterizing a crowd—by its purpose, its credo or its numbers. This is what the explainers, the media men and the politicians try to do. But vocally the crowd is beyond all understanding. How many nuances are detectable in its bawling? Joy . . . anger . . . exasperation . . . derision . . . rudimentary emotions, at times chaotic but more often unified rhythmically in the repetition of slogans, for unless the crowd speaks with rhythmic incisiveness it can be fractured, set upon itself internally and be routed.

By the early twentieth century, urban noise had increased to a point where it began to affect writers in a similar way, and among the first were the Futurists, led by F.T. Marinetti. "Through a disjointed, feverish and posturing language Marinetti was able to capture something of the mood of a human crowd in motion. . . . " This is Istvan Anhalt commenting on Marinetti's rhetoric in a book in which he shows parallel developments in twentieth-century music. Marinetti's prose is "the text of a poster, a proclamation, or a series of headlines. It is a throbbing, aggressive, insistent language, brooking no dissent, dismissing the need for reflection, intolerant and destructive."[2] In his *Futurist Manifesto* Marinetti had proclaimed: "We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure and by riot; we will sing of the multicoloured, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals."[3]

The influence of these crowd-choirs is con-

Skyscrapers in Denver (U.S.A.).

spicuous in much contemporary music, first of all in the bloated orchestras of Berg and Schoenberg, then later in the statistical organization of Xenakis' works, as well as in the cluster and aggregate effects of Ligeti and the "mob" vocal outbursts of Lutoslawski and other members of the Polish school. Crowd power is everywhere present in rock music, which could not exist without it. "No-one goes to a rock concert unless they're stoned or stupid," a teenager tells me, and yet almost everyone has been there. And the music ricochets from car radios and ghetto blasters, through the streets, over the back yard fences, and dribbles out of the Walkman of the passenger next to you on the bus, where no-one speaks. It is almost as if music is haemorrhaging all around us, exploding out of its containers; and suddenly you realize that music is the glue of the modern multiracial, multilinguistic city, holding it together more effectively than any political or social system, and you allow yourself to hope that it will continue to do so, fearing the consequences if it fails. We know that there are more violent forms of intolerance than the tyranny of the loudspeaker.

RITUALS OF TRANQUILLITY

When modern humanity gave up life in the country for life in the city, when it deserted open spaces for the dense packing of the metropolis, when the alarm clock replaced the sunrise and factory noise obliterated wind, rain and the birds, when the drowsiness of natural life was surrendered to the mad dash to get ahead, the frictions of increased human contact, the hell of other people, as Sartre put it, replaced the great geobotanic garden that had been the scene of past existence and the quiet life it promoted. Has it been extinguished from memory or can a new ecological awareness help to recover it?

What we seem to need are rituals of tranquillity in which large assemblies of people could feel the serenity of a shared experience without the desire to proclaim their emotions in destructive or disfiguring action. In this sense we might again study the model of the Western concert audience to determine whether it might have wider or evolving significance. When we think about it, how astonishing is the concert audience, quietly sitting before the music, scarcely breathing, engulfed by the mysterious vibrations in the air about them. I suppose every piece of music longs to be worshipped in silence, but few achieve such a distinction, and some achieve it only by the authority of habit rather than the privilege of beauty. I have often wondered whether the ritual of the concert could not be transposed to other environments and transformed into a collective contemplation of a bird dawn chorus, a summer solstice or an Earth Day celebration.

Mourners from among Indonesia's Toradja people carry drink to a funeral in bamboo poles.

If the future of the planet is destined to embrace increasing numbers of people, it is absolutely vital that we discover means of taming the noises that are threatening to tear us to pieces. Noise pollution is a world-wide problem but its solution does not lie in increased legislation and enforced prohibition. It rests with a regaining of the still centre, a discovery that there is a time for everyone to speak and a time for each of us to listen. This is the "great open secret" of the natural soundscape where all sounds have their place but none attempts to dominate or smother all others into submission. There are simply no sounds in nature that are a threat to our hearing. As reports of an alarming increase in deafness accumulate from some of the most developed nations of the world, we realize that humanity is the exclusive architect of sounds that kill. Either we will voluntarily reduce the sound sewage now threatening whole populations or we will all become deaf. In either case the world will be quieter. ■

1. Marie-Louise Von Franz, *Individuation in Fairy Tales*, (Boston and London, 1990).
2. *Alternative Voices* (Toronto, 1984).
3. F.T. Marinetti: *Selected Writings*, ed. R.W. Flint (London, 1972).

Architects of disorder

by Fernando and Diego Montes

Apartment blocks on the outskirts of a French city.

RECENTLY-BUILT public housing estates cannot by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as examples of haphazard design. On the contrary, they suffer from an excessive enthusiasm for order on the part of their planners. The order that reigns in them is so oppressive and simplified that it distracts attention from the shape of the buildings. It is the expression of an earthbound conceptual art that pays too little attention to the estate-dweller's desire for a genuine urban environment.

This discrepancy has always existed and has never been resolved. Art is not, in this case, ahead of its time but off on a side-track strewn with history's bright but mistaken ideas, ideas that should perhaps have been looked into cautiously before large-scale building operations began. As it is, the frustration of estate-dwellers, provided with a roof over their heads but deprived of an urban environment, is one of the discontents of modern times.

The situation varies little from one country to another. The rows of dreary blocks lining the broad, empty avenues of the Moscow suburbs are variations on a town-planning theme that recurs in Barcelona, Santiago, Milan, Essen and the Paris working-class suburb of La Courneuve. With a few allowances for climatic differences, the picture is the same everywhere: long, narrow horizontal slabs, the same back and front, or "high-rises", multistorey flats reaching up into the power lines rather than into the clouds.

The only thing not in order about these endless vistas, these repetitious excrescences that bear so little resemblance to real buildings, these unfinished but already run-down blocks, was the decision to build them in the first place. Ever since, it has been one long tale of false reasoning, miscalculation and mistaken designations immediately shown up for what they are: "green spaces" can never take the place of natural greenery, and the "amenities" provided scarcely qualify as public buildings.

IMPROVISED ARCHITECTURE

Let us now look at the *favelas, cases, villas-miserias, barriadas* and other shantytowns that have mushroomed around nearly all major agglomerations, from Lima to Lagos and from Cairo to Mexico City. These indescribable encrustations are archetypes of a modern urban and architectural phenomenon. Once peripheral, like the ring of shacks that used to occupy the "zone" just outside the former fortifications of Paris, this type of habitat has become commonplace, perhaps even the commonest type—it would, incidentally, be interesting to compare the area covered, respectively, by shantytowns and by conventional types of habitat in a Third World conurbation.

Slums, run-down or derelict dwellings—the traditional answers to the demand for urban housing—are no longer sufficient to accommodate the masses of people moving in from rural areas that can no longer feed them. The drift from the land is not an organized movement of population; it just happens. The cities, the first places the migrants from the countryside head for, have done nothing to cater for the newcomers, perhaps because there was nothing they could do.

It took Paris fifteen hundred years to reach a population of a million. How long will it take to reach ten million? As for Mexico City, it is heading for a population of twenty million.

A city is a cumbersome structure and its growth is hard to control. An overnight decision to triple its area and population, extend its highways and its water-supply and sewage systems, or increase the capacity of its public transport and schools, would set a technically and physically impossible task.

Shantytowns are therefore improvised structures, created out of anything that comes to hand and by definition haphazard. It goes without saying that planners and architects have had nothing to do with them, nor do they meet normal town-planning standards. But which of these, strictly laid-out housing estates or higgledy-piggledy shantytowns, are the more representative of the spirit of modern architecture?

In the late 1960s, John Turner, a British-born architect who teaches at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, emerged as a passionate advocate of the architectural merits of shantytowns. His message, relayed through the world's leading schools of architecture and avant-garde publications, is that there is much to be learned from this architecture without architects, an architecture dictated by need and urgency, which he sees as being richly imaginative. This form of self-built housing is extremely well adapted to the requirements of the inhabitants, who do not receive welfare handouts but are the protagonists in a tragedy they are obliged to act out in order to survive.

At the other extreme, large-scale housing projects planned, built and managed by a centralized institution are the outcome of a ruthless rationalization of social needs. The context of their construction and of the decision-making processes on which they depend is more often than not a bureaucratic one, even in the most free-market-oriented countries.

Turner's point of departure is the idea that, in

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the conditions of extreme deprivation that prevail in shantytowns, the mode of production takes precedence over technical or aesthetic considerations. Basically, he believes that architecture, as usually practised, is either a luxury reserved for developed societies or an art that is out of place outside a stable social context: it requires, if not order, at least a certain degree of methodical organization. The new urban society of the shantytowns, however, is a prime example of a social body in the throes of change.

Do shantytowns open new horizons or do they point up the need to rethink the hierarchies, values and methods of architecture?

As a good dialectician of social progress, Turner plays on the inseparability of the two possibilities. According to him, it should be possible to reconcile modern architecture with disorder and foresight with spontaneity and achieve a kind of hybrid form, something like jazz or the music of Stravinsky or Gershwin, a mixture of improvisation and highly complex orchestration. But Turner has so far failed to carry opinion with him, and modern architecture has still to find its philosopher's stone.

A FRUITFUL ECLECTICISM

Fifty years earlier, Picasso, with his usual perspicacity, had also put his finger on this dilemma. In the middle of his cubist period, he said that, after Van Gogh, everything had become possible (disorder), but that what had been gained in freedom had been lost in self-confidence.

History does not move forward in a straight line but follows a strange kind of trajectory, swinging one way then back again, leaping forward, stopping and accelerating. The innocent observer might think that it never points the way clearly, that it is constantly correcting its course and changing tack.

The twentieth century, which got off to a flying start in architecture only to finish in low gear, has seen the pendulum swing time and again and has had its share of skids and knocks as well, but it may well have made an original contribution to the history of art in that it has been a time of greater eclecticism and diversity than ever before. This characteristic feature of the times is perhaps linked with the development of the communication media and data-storage facilities, which enables the particular and the universal to coexist in the spirit of the global village, combining the parochial with the planet-wide.

For centuries, the memory of humanity was oral, written or pictorial. As its storage capacity was very limited, its contents had constantly to be weeded out. Thanks to chemical and electronic devices, the storage capacity has increased immeasurably. We no longer need to discard whatever is out of date or offbeat to make room for mainstream ideas. The two can exist side by side, just below the surface of our memories, waiting for the moment to re-emerge. That moment may come quite soon: the wheel of history, we are told, is turning faster and faster. ■

An Indonesian shantytown.

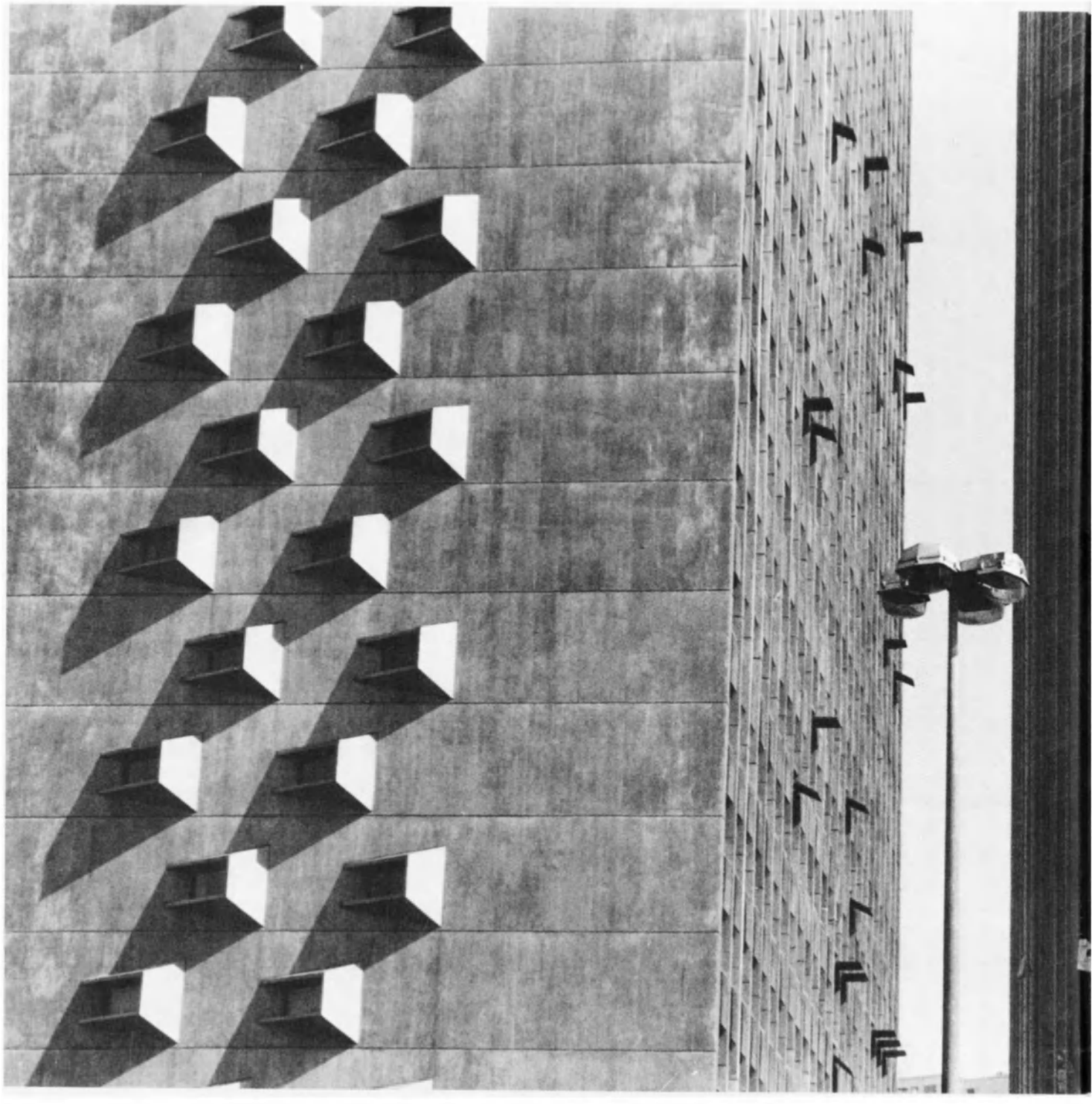
The third bank of the river

by Roberto DaMatta

Above, a participant in the Parintins carnival (Brazil).

To reflect on modernity is necessarily to deconstruct a myth. But what are myths? It took us a long time to see them as anything other than the irrational outgrowth of primitive minds, but we now realize that they provide a framework within which societies define their values, that they are devices for taking control of time, time that bears within itself the seeds of death and oblivion. Myths, then, are stories that seek to escape the grip of time. That is why mythologies are disturbing. When, therefore, the heralds of post-modernity proclaim that the age of great stories is over, they do so in order that they can themselves construct the great (and true) story of all times ...

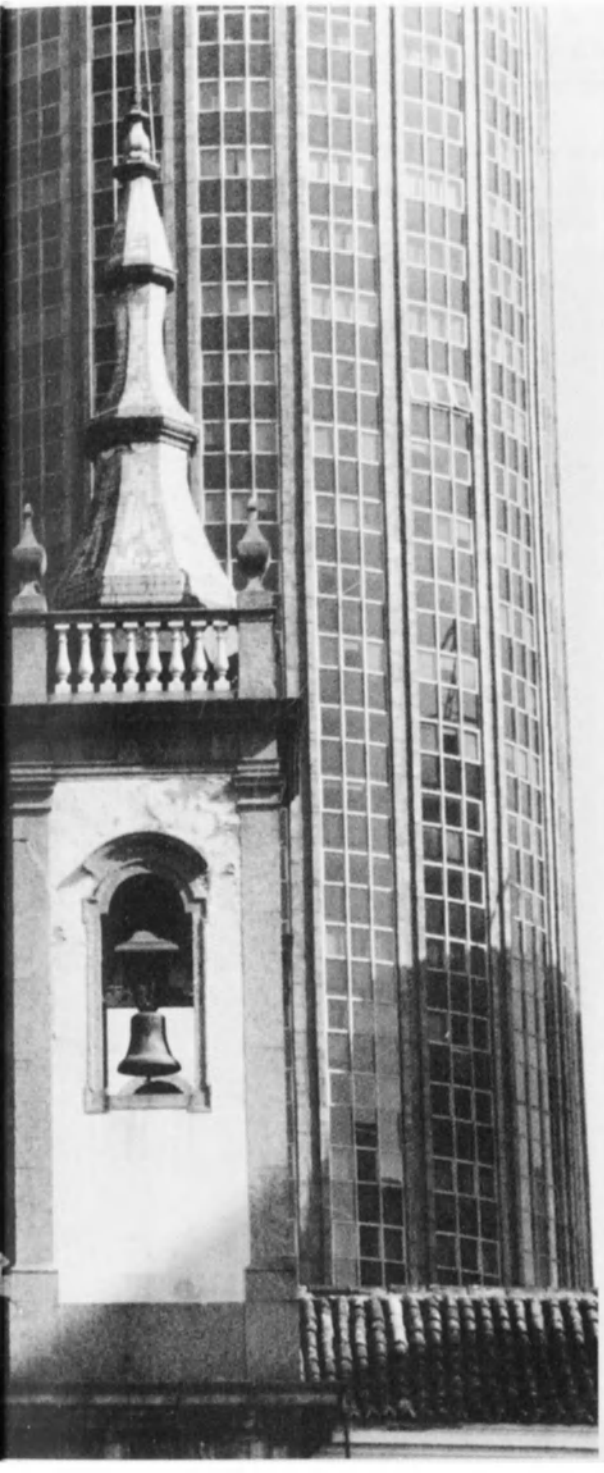
Ultimately this is the dilemma that lies at the root of our civilization: how to find stable values in a world that chooses to be unstable, how to reconcile individuals who regard themselves as the repositories of rights, desires and



subjective feelings with collective institutions that have to be stable and objective, that require duties to be performed and that guarantee the existence of individual choice?

If myths are stories that reject the linear chronology of cumulative history, how can they be reconciled with a civilization that claims to have invented modernity and defines itself as the product of a history that continually transforms people and institutions?

To answer this question is to recognize that there is no such thing as a society exclusively based on the future or on movement. Modernity may have exorcised many myths, but it has not abolished myth-making. Repressed and re-labelled (with that all-purpose prefix *post-*), myths constantly reappear—above all when the death of God or, worse, the end of humankind, is announced. For myths, like dreams, signal unresolved problems. The generous Western ideals of social justice, individual freedom and political equality for all are clearly based on a mythology, and this mythology, even in the developed countries, is still grappling with many deviant phenomena—racism, anti-semitism, political and economic marginalization—that haunt or challenge it. Thus, alongside the egalitarian credo that underlies the ideology of professional success in modern Western society, counter-mythologies have emerged to denounce the advantages



Modern Rio.

conferred by graduating from a great university, by speaking English or French and, last but not least, by being white!

Confronted with an enlightened, rationalist and bourgeois West whose concept of time is dominated by the idea of progress, other parts of the world are obliged to make a synthesis between the modern idea of a universal history centred on utilitarian individualism and their own traditional values, which hinge on personal loyalties to the gods and to ancestors, families and friends. In many parts of the world, and particularly in so-called marginal or peripheral regions, a rapprochement is taking place between bourgeois mythology on the one hand, which refers to a system in which the individual is the moral and political centre of the universe, and, on the other hand, stories based on very different premises. The societies that survive this process are those that invent mythologies combining these two value-systems, previously regarded as incompatible. This path has been followed by Japan and by Asia in general, and, on an equally significant scale, by Latin America and particularly Brazil.

EQUAL YET UNEQUAL

I have written that Brazilian society is struggling to combine two mythologies. The first, taking its inspiration from the modern tradition, considers the individual as an autonomous moral entity endowed with inalienable rights such as freedom and equality. The second is based on a world-view that denies individualism, distrusts progress and rejects formal political equality. Whereas the first of these mythologies leads to the modern concept of representative democracy, the second reflects a way of life in which personal relationships are stronger than political institutions. Some see in this way of life the imprint of an Iberian counter-reformism which (by virtue of its myths, its heroes and its forms of civilization) is a kind of counterpoint in carnival dress to liberal individualism, above all that form which flourishes in the United States, which—with its media, fast food, tragic solitude and insurmountable ethnic, sexual, age and occupation barriers—is the paradigm of modernity.

This convergence of mythologies clearly creates a dilemma to which the Brazilian—and, more generally, Latin American—solution lies in a tendency to see all people as politically and economically unequal but as morally of equal worth. In this world we may be masters or slaves, bosses or underlings; but face-to-face with death we are all equal. This paradoxical solution is an attempt to reconcile modern egalitarianism with the inequality ingrained in traditional ways of thought by recourse to an ethic of ambiguity.

Latin American mythologies adopt equality as the framework of the legal and political system and competition as the basis of the economic system, without abandoning or curbing traditional social practices based on inequality and personal relations. As a result, the legal and political systems always seem to be either far ahead or far behind what is really happening in society. Here we have a process of modernization imposed from above by the state, which attempts thereby to substitute itself for the creative forces that gave the original system its spontaneity.

While modernity is based, socially and epistemologically, on the triumph of the individual, it is also rooted in a system of rigid procedures, valid for everyone, everywhere and in all

circumstances—as if we were all really born equal, as if we were all exempt from social obligations and competed in reasonable conditions of equality. Equality before the law conceals inequality of social conditions. The so-called "post-modern" mythology that relativizes and fragments, reducing everything to the yuppy nihilism of certain circles in Paris or in Berkeley, can only function if certain conditions are met, above all if a common denominator is attained, the common denominator in question being an almost blind obedience to the basic principles of a universalist rationalism that structures the whole system. But how can an egalitarian rationalism of this sort be applied to traditionalist societies based on the concept of difference?

A CAPRICIOUS LIBERALISM

The result, in many cases, is a mythology that believes in miracles, spirits and messiahs, that invents a capricious and particularist liberalism in which the laws of the market only work for the powerful, and in which egalitarianism has been wedded first to slavery, then to servility and a system of patronage. From this arises a state that is simultaneously large and small, strong and weak, whose resources and spoils are diverted to make sure that the poor are kept in their place, and above all to increase the wealth of the rich. It is a mythology that has reinvented Carnival, the festival in which social roles are reversed without the system being changed, and that has encouraged delinquency founded on the morality of profit-seeking, disculpating people and opening the way to irresponsibility.

Here we have a collection of myths produced from a kind of moral tinkering, a Frankensteinian hotchpotch of institutions and practices taken from here, there and everywhere, of moral rules grouped under a double (or triple) ethic which declares that everyone is equal before the law, except for one's relatives and friends. Any reference to universality in this context is made in order to legitimize the market and profit, not to protect the most fundamental rights.

But we must not disregard the generous and constructive side of these trans-modern mythologies, the side that wants everyone to be equal but rejects the post-utilitarian equation between equality and consumption, that wants freedom, but not just to make money or to exploit the masses marginalized by the media. In Brazil this takes the form of a shrewd resistance to market economics through the myth of a popular hero, the brigand Pedro Malasarte. The stories featuring this emblematic figure show how it is possible to play the market against big money, and how the rule of law that legitimizes exploitation of the workforce can be turned against the boss. In these trans-modern mythologies, morality is on the side of a form of delinquency that compensates for the inequalities resulting from the pressures of the international market and of social elites.

Right and opposite page above, the adventures of Pedro Malasarte, as pictured by the illustrator Teixeira Mendes. Centre, labourers head for work on a dam in Ceará state (Brazil).

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But the process of acculturation between the modern and the traditional also has perverse effects. In this twofold ethic, the possibility of appealing alternatively to one system or the other makes it difficult for individuals to know where they stand. What I cannot do as a citizen I may be able to do as a friend of the governor or a relative of someone in authority. This is the dilemma faced by communities in which the modern nation-state is subjected to all kinds of external and internal pressures and is confronted by social expectations that have no outlet.

The mythologies of peripheral societies have grown out of this dilemma. Hence our difficulties with classic bourgeois heroes, those judicious individuals who are always serious and who know how to say yes or no. . . . Presented with a choice but unable or unwilling to decide between the two courses available to us, we prefer triangular situations which blur distinctions and harmonize different interests. This is why our mythology contains a certain number of truly trans-modern characters such as Jorge Amado's Doña Flor, who chooses not to choose, or one of the heroes of João Guimaraes Rosa, who decides to live on a magical "third bank of the river" somewhere on the edge of consciousness, from which he can always see the other two banks and can appreciate the point of view of everyone else, of all those who are paralyzed by their tragic, yet nonetheless rich and resilient, uncertainty.

HEARING NEW VOICES

Rejecting conventional aesthetics, modern artists, musicians and writers have made freedom of invention the only rule.

Dans le gris (1914), oil on canvas by Wassily Kandinsky.

A world steeped in music

by Isabelle Leymarie

'MODERNITY', in the most usual sense of the word, encompasses the world of today. It conjures up a picture of a perpetually moving technological universe stemming from the Industrial Revolution, in which humanity is a slave to machinery and feels anxious and cut off from Nature and its own roots. W.H. Auden emphasized a more positive aspect of the modern age when he defined it as born of "the transformation of a closed society of tradition and inheritance into an open society of fashion and choice".

In this modern world, which is both unstable and alienating and makes a multitude of demands, there is more music about than ever before. In the street, in buses and on trains, more and more people are wearing headsets to enjoy their favourite type of music, turned in on themselves and announcing their refusal to communicate with others. A non-stop flow of music pours from radio and television stations, and can be heard in restaurants, supermarkets, airports, hairdressers' and other shops, dentists' waiting rooms and post offices. Music is a component part of films; concerts and music festivals are proliferating internationally; and now some bars in the West are starting to import *karaoke* from Japan—a device which enables the man in the street to sing familiar songs to a pre-recorded backing while the lyrics appear on a screen.

Thus music is ubiquitous, and listening to it in its most varied forms is continually on the increase. "Early music and non-European music have never been so widespread," writes Paul-Louis Simon. "Guillaume de Machaut, Mozart and Ravi Shankar fill our auditory world; our ears are flooded with jazz, pop, disco music and all kinds of songs; all these art forms are there for us to choose from, and form an integral part of the art of our time."

The musicologist Jean-Paul Holstein points out that music today is characterized by high technology, internationalism and democratization. High technology in this context means that composers use more and more complex forms of expression, that instrumentalists display increasing virtuosity, and that people listen to music through the intermediary of more and more sophisticated technology. Modern techniques such as mixing, dubbing, playback and electronic distortion in the form of wawa, reverb, fuzz and echoplex open the way to new sound possibilities, but however advanced they may be, they eliminate contact with the original acoustic sound. Doris Rossiaud, a fine pianist who performed with the Orchestre Suisse Romande, refused to make recordings because she regarded all the ways of correcting errors in the studio with multiple takes and mixing as forms of trickery.

As for Holstein's other two points, internationalism here refers to the proliferation of means of transport and communication, and to the creation of new professions, especially in the media, publishing and advertising, aimed at publicizing and promoting various kinds of music. Democratization is linked to popularization, the market economy, the emergence of a wide audience and the requirements of hit-parades.

CROSS-FERTILIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION

On the current music scene two trends are asserting themselves in tandem: on the one hand an urge to merge with and communicate with other cultures, apparent in "world music", a mélange of musics from different countries, and on the other the increasing standardization of commercial music, dominated by American and English pop. As non-Western musics are absorbed by Western culture, the exotic becomes commonplace and loses its character, and opportunities for escape become more limited. The various "ethnic" musics get cut off from their social and religious context and become dehumanized by excessive use of synthesizers (which reproduce the sound of certain traditional instruments, but do not capture their subtleties) and electronic "drum machines".

Mechanized and rendered insipid, the Japanese *shamisen* and the Mandingo *balafon* now serve only to add a semblance of tone

colour to these new mixes. Then there is "flamenco rock", an unholy mixture of guitar and rhythm section, robbed of all *duende*, the passion that gives Gypsy music its harsh beauty. North African *rai* merges into reggae, reggae into rap, and rap itself, with the "sampling" technique made popular by young black American disc-jockeys, which involves borrowing a fragment from one piece and inserting it, collage-style, into another, leads to mangling and the production of rag-bag medleys. Musical hybridization is more fashionable than ever, and the media are all too ready to propagate it.

But while musical mixtures, like all contacts between cultures, are positive, rewarding and even essential for cultural growth, they can only work for mutually compatible musics. A particularly successful example is Latin jazz, a blend of American jazz and Afro-Latin rhythm and percussion that is flourishing in the United States. It works because jazz and the black musics of Latin America and the West Indies have the same European and African roots. Furthermore, for osmosis to take place between two or more musical traditions, a long ripening process is usually required, such as the "creolization" that, beginning in the West Indies, Latin America and New Orleans in the early seventeenth century, gave rise to such original styles as jazz, rumba, mambo, calypso, the beguine, samba and bossa nova, each with its own rules and instrumentation.

The abandonment of tradition and the cultural legacy gives rise to continual changes and inventions. Creativity may thereby be stimulated, but most commonly, where pop music is concerned (now "popular" in name only, since it is no longer rooted in a real tradition), the consumer society requires the continual production of novelties which at once become outdated and the frantic race to make "hits". These factors disturb less commercially successful artists unable to swim against the tide of fashion, and also subject listeners to the diktats of the record companies, for which sales considerations often take precedence over quality.

The continual broadcasting of music as a consumer product also leads to listener laziness. Listening becomes passive rather than active, and background music can even bring on nervous fatigue. We are reduced to hearing instead of listening. Many employees working in premises where the radio is always on end up by simply blanking out the background noise in order to escape the assault on their ears.

Pop music, now a common denominator for the young, has nevertheless (despite its close links with the consumer society) often been bitterly critical of the violence and excesses of the modern world. "You've never done nothing

Recording a work for clarinet and tape recorder at the Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique-Musique (IRCAM) in Paris. New computer technology adjusts the sound of the recorded track to the instrumentalist's tone and phrasing as he plays.

A karaoke session in Tokyo.

but build to destroy," proclaimed Bob Dylan in "Masters of War". Jamaican reggae condemns "Babylon" as the emblem of the decadent modern city, in which hatred and corruption are rife; and Michael Jackson, the very symbol of commercial success, took on a redemptive mission by proclaiming himself the messenger of divine love.

MODERNITY AND CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

It is interesting to note that though we speak of modern art, modern architecture and modern furniture, we say contemporary music. The latter uses a wide variety of musical techniques: modal, serial, contingent, polytonal and atonal languages, the use of stridency and of apparently non-musical noises (pioneered by Eric Satie's *Parade*), of unconventional and increasingly graphic systems of notation, and of computers and other electro-acoustic equipment (IRCAM—the Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique-Musique—in France and the music departments of Columbia and Princeton universities in the United States are specialists in this field). Contemporary music uses acoustic instruments to provide a repertoire of unusual sound effects (for instance, John Cage's prepared piano,[1] Vinko Globokar's trombone pieces, flautists singing into their instruments, violins slapped and scraped, and the ways in which the human voice is used in the work of Giacinto Scelsi). So-called "happenings" such as Cage's *Silence* also enrich the world of sound.

Contemporary music is still regarded by many as "experimental", and people sometimes find it confusing, but it has not yet been going long enough to allow the necessary perspective view. Moreover, now that patronage has ended, present-day composers are increasingly isolated and find themselves in a precarious position. Few of their works now are commissioned pieces with a specific social function, written for the church, the court, ballet, opera or as pure *divertissement*, or governed by a cosmogonic or philosophical system. At the same time composers enjoy greater freedom and independence now that they are no longer subject to the whims of a patron.

Far from being popular, contemporary music still attracts only a limited audience. But the European tradition makes a hierarchical distinction (often artificial and pernicious) between so-called "art music", which is placed on a pedestal, and other types of music. This is not the case elsewhere. In Cuba, for instance, the various musical genres are closely linked—a phenomenon that predates the rise of Fidel Castro—

thus vitalizing music in general. It is not unusual for a member of a symphony orchestra to play in an Afro-Cuban group in the evening and then go on to improvise late at night with a jazz outfit—without doing any harm to his reputation, rather the contrary. Several Cuban composers, such as Ernesto Lecuona, Gilberto Valdés, Gonzalo Roig and Emilio Grenet have written many works for the popular repertoire and have taken legitimate pride in them.

THE QUEST FOR AN AESTHETIC

In the field of aesthetics the idea of modernity means something different. By and large, for most people, it suggests skyscrapers and concrete buildings, the advent of black cars, the pure lines of 1920s dress fashions, rectilinear furniture, Picasso. This aesthetic, perceived as the obverse of classicism, romanticism, the ancient world and other canons, is entirely relative. Indeed, it has had its day. In the visual arts people now talk about "post-modernism", and in the world of jazz, following the excesses of 1960s free jazz, about "neo-classicism"—exemplified by musicians such as Wynton Marsalis, the Harper brothers and Terence Blanchard. Some architects like Philip Johnson, Gwathmey & Siegel and Mario Buotta are now opting for softer, rounder shapes. Fashions in dress are also reverting to earlier styles.

The idea of modernity is far from being contemporary. Some composers in the early decades of this century, such as Charles Ives, Henry Cowell, Edgard Varèse, Carl Ruggles, Dane Rudhyar, Ruth Crawford and Adolph Weiss, were termed "ultra-modern" in the United States in their day.

It is interesting to note that for these composers being modern meant, in music, following only one's imperious inner drives, not outdated canons. "Music written in the manner of another century," said Varèse, "is the result of culture, and desirable and comfortable as culture may be, an artist should not lie down in it." He added: "I don't care about reaching the public as much as I care about reaching certain musical-acoustical phenomena, in other words, to disturb the atmosphere—because, after all, sound *is* only an atmospheric disturbance!" Whereas until the romantic period music was regarded as the manifestation of divine order, it later became the expression of the composer's emotions and inner life. The composer would break free, gain his independence and impose his own laws, but at the same time he would cut himself off from the organic world to which he belonged.

In literature, the idea of modernity made its appearance with Baudelaire, who in his essay on the painter in the modern world exhorted critics and art-lovers to discover the beauty of things that possess "the essential quality of being the present", and by due appreciation of that beauty to renew their links with the universal. In painting, it coincides with Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, exhibited at the Salon des Refusés in 1863. With this work Manet claimed the painter's prerogative of painting a picture for his own aesthetic delectation, without bothering about representation or allegory but only following his own personal urges, in other words of producing "art for art's sake". In this sense Kandinsky's credo could be that of many twentieth-century musicians: "The artist must be blind to 'recognized' shape, just as he must be deaf to the teachings and desires of his age. His eye must be open upon his own inner life, and his ear always pricked for the voice of inner necessity. Then he will be able to use all methods with impunity, even those which are forbidden."

Schoenberg, the precursor of contemporary music, also had a mystical approach. Beauty, according to him, stems from the search for truth, but a truth linked both to aesthetic absolutes and to the composer's inner temperament: "Beauty begins to appear when the non-creator becomes aware of its absence. It does not exist before, because the artist has no need of it: for him the truth is enough. . . . And yet beauty

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A concert by the rock group Genesis in New York in 1986.

gives itself to the artist even though he has not sought it, having endeavoured only to find the truth."

Some years later Elliott Carter opened up new horizons for American music, and his experimentation foreshadowed that of present-day composers. His work, wrote Martin Boykan, "is of importance to the postwar generation not only because of its artistic power, but also because it provides a moral lesson, because it reminds the composer that it is his task—painful, perhaps, but inescapable—to *choose* his language freshly for each work, and to choose from the whole range of musical possibilities."

Though fashion imposes new benchmarks and new conventions, fashion and modernity are ultimately opposed, and modernity (in the artistic sense of the term) runs counter to fashion. Being modern means freeing onself from codes and conventions, whilst remaining fully of one's time, from which there is no escape. As Elliott Carter said, it means "choosing one's language freshly for each work." As regards music, "modern" composers must turn away from traditional artistic categories and find their own voice; and "modern" listeners should stop making judgements on the basis of outdated criteria and should greet new work with flexibility.

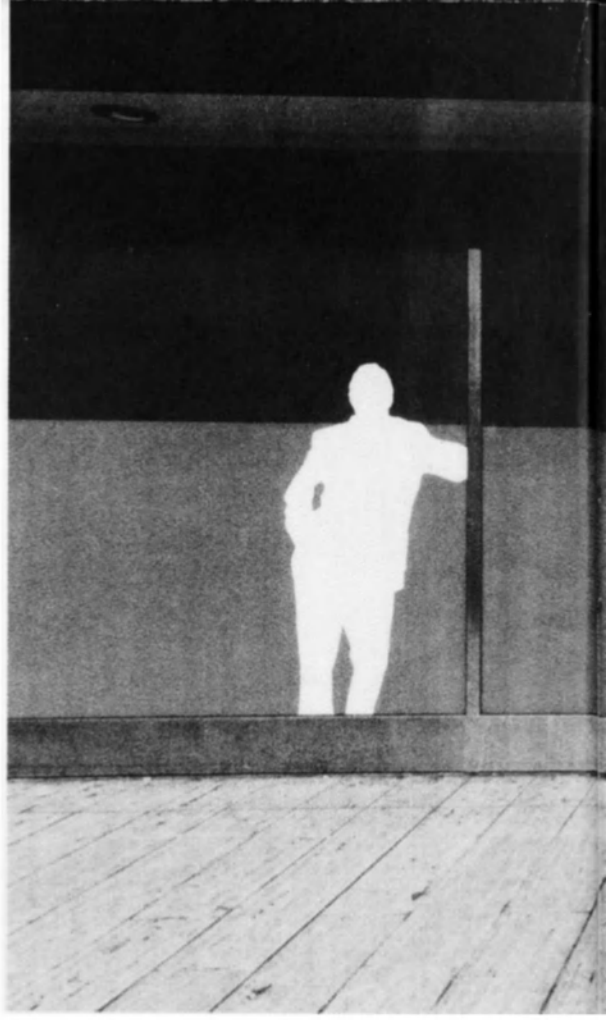
As the ear becomes more receptive, perception becomes more acute and differing degrees of listening develop. As with painting, about which no-one talks more understandingly than painters, so the professional musician, attuned to harmonic niceties, counterpoint and phrasing and the subtleties of rhythm, appreciates music more profoundly than the amateur whose instinctive understanding, however intense and sensuous, operates at a more impressionistic and superficial level.

So many different types of music can be heard today that each of us must create our own way of listening. This profusion makes life particularly hard for the composer, who sometimes gets lost in a maze of styles and methods. But in the modern world, saturated as it is with sound, the pleasure of a true musical discovery is all the more wonderful in that it is getting rare. "I love what never was," cried Odilon Redon, inviting us with this piece of wordplay to continue exploring the byways of discovery. ■

1. *A piano transformed into a percussion instrument by the insertion of various objects between the strings.* Editor

Me and my shadow

by Simon Lane



No modern story can be read in any order. I have written a story which is loose-leafed and can be shuffled, like a deck of cards, to prove that I am not modern. Being modern is not particularly agreeable. You cannot move forwards. And you cannot move backwards. Stories have to move forwards and backwards, otherwise they get stuck, like porridge. Being modern is like looking at a photograph of yourself and saying, "Yes! I am living now! I mean just now!" But "now" happens so fast that, by the time you have said it, a whole crowd of "nows" has passed by, leaving you behind, wondering where they all went.

Today, which is a day that never ends, I invented Mason Line. Mason Line is a thirty-five-year-old Englishman. I see him within the confines of a hotel room somewhere, waiting for something to happen, the perfect *reductio ad absurdum* of Modern Man. He is, in fact, its antithesis, an anachronistic object trapped in time and space, a hapless collection of ideas and emotions kept, for the moment, in a state of suspension. Did God create Man, or did Man create God? And why is it that people always want their fiction disguised as fact?

I am enjoying today's incarnation. Being Mason Line provides a welcome break from yesterday, or the day before that (when I was obliged to perform an heroic act, saving the life of a Japanese tourist who had slipped on the steps of the Eiffel Tower). Yes, today is a good day, comparatively speaking. Something must have happened to Simon Lane for him to have turned me into this mild-mannered person, currently relaxing on a hotel bed somewhere in Paris.

It says in my dictionary that the derivation of the word "modern" is "modo", for which the definition "just now" is offered. Just now I am writing. Just now I am smoking a cigarette. Just now I can see a snow flake falling onto someone's head. There is a "now" and there is a "just now", which is "now's" closest relative. What happens to all the "just nows"? Where do they all go? Do they fall into the wake which each of us makes when we move forwards, pacing one tired foot ahead of another and never daring to look back? Or are they just the incidental litter of literature, life's punctuation marks, the commas, colons and full stops which so clearly define our movements?

I can see Mason Line getting out of the bath and rubbing a towel across his body, the shadow of the towel drying the walls of the bathroom. Mason looks at the bath water as it disappears down the plug hole, taking the shadow that was him when he was in the bath along with it, and, as he does so, he imagines his slippery alter ego passing through the sewers of Paris and out into the Seine River, fighting against the current as it is dragged out to sea.

Mason Line has been in the bathroom for fifteen minutes, which is exactly one ninety-sixth of his existence, a small enough fraction, but still a long time to spend in the bathroom. His shadow gets up from the bed and slips under the door in order to see what he is up to. Hello, Mason! Are you ready to come back into the bedroom and resume your existence as a fictional character? Or would you like another five minutes? Mason Line is lying in the bath, thinking of nothing in particular. He does not respond to this questioning, so his shadow rejoins him, attaching itself to the nape of his neck so that its head falls, like a sheet of water, over the edge of the bath, its hand moving, transparently, over the soap dish and onto the linoleum floor. Now it can hear Mason's thoughts. "I will simply think, and my thoughts will be recorded for the benefit of all, proof of the independence of the spirit!"

The shadow of Mason Line differs from all other shadows, just as Mason Line differs from all other people. Yes, even in relation to shadows, it is different, for sometimes, when the mood takes it, or when, perhaps, it becomes disinterested in Mason's behaviour or actions, it detaches itself from him. A few minutes ago, for example, Mason elected to go to the bathroom, so the shadow stayed where it was, lying prone on the bed, its limbs foreshortened and multiplied by the conflicting beams of light cast within the room. Even fictional characters, like fictional shadows, have a right to a little privacy, I suppose. In many ways, they live charmed lives: they are perfect lovers, they are rarely short of money (always in possession of exactly the right change upon exiting taxi cabs) and they have bladders of Herculean retentive power. But who knows what goes on inside their heads, what it is that actually drives them when alone, separated from those who created them?

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is a British writer whose novel *Still Life with Books* will be published later this year by Bridge Works Publishing, New York. His first novel was published in French translation as *Le Veilleur* (Christian Bourgois, Paris, 1992).

Anything written which is not modern should be done in any order. This is what I have decided, so that there will be no ambiguity. I have not yet written this story, but I am now imagining that I have written it. I have finished the story, corrected its mistakes and am just about to send it off to UNESCO. Before I do so, I turn the story into the deck of cards I mentioned "just now" and shuffle the deck thoroughly. Then I put the deck of stories into an envelope, step out into the street and drop the envelope into a letter box. Even as I do so, I imagine the order of the cards changing, so that within a matter of moments my story has changed into something quite different.

It is quite possible, mused Mason Line, for an object to be imbued with magic: a fountain pen, empty of ink and useless to the hand, exquisite to the eye; a book, a thin volume, its pages still uncut, virgin thoughts awaiting the reader's knife; or even my shadow, lying beside me on this foreign bed. The book contains no words, but if I hold it up to the light, I can see something inside, a voice silenced with time, the distant sadness of some forlorn hero. The pen is not empty, after all, its barrel is filled, it is just that the ink is invisible; and only by speaking the language of negatives can one hope to understand its message.

The room in which Mason Line is seated is, of course, one of a chain of rooms, in a row of hotels dotted like stars in the universe, light years from one another, yet quite close from a distance, so that if one were to place one's index finger in front of one's eye and close the other tightly, one would be able, quite easily, to block out a dozen or so of them. Mason checks into the hotel at midnight, into the room I have reserved for him. He will leave the following midnight, as somebody else, another character from another story I have yet to invent. Some people will think of him as an imposter, a spy or an actor, perhaps, rehearsing some future impersonation. Others, especially the man at reception, will assume he is simply disguising himself so as to avoid paying the bill.

At other times, should I have got out of bed on the wrong side, I might be more circumspect, investing my diurnal incarnations with qualities designed to deliberately hinder them through life's progress, which is to say that microcosmic span of existence corresponding to the passage of the sun from east to west, or from one side of the hotel (Mason's side) to the other. I am not a moralist, I care not one whit for conventional notions of good or bad, I just have my own way of doing things, an incontrovertible logic, which would shatter into a thousand pieces if I ever tried to understand it.

I am an imposter, thought Mason, a reincarnation, the ninth life, or the nine-hundredth. I know I am different from everyone else. The mere fact that I am me sets me apart. I am like my shadow, I can do magical things: I can slip through space, I can be an inch thick or a mile long. When the sun moves towards the horizon, everyone can see me, I am stretched along the quai, squashed and trampled upon by passing tourists. At other times, in the quiet stillness of night, I become invisible, I can go wheresoever I wish, unnoticed, ignored. It is then that I feel my vocation, for I know that I can see without being seen. But I must be careful! Should there be a full moon, it may well be that I become conspicuous again!

I am an object, a magical object, a cipher, thought Mason. I will not write, tap words on a screen, as I would were I my author, Simon Lane. Instead, I will simply think, and my thoughts will be recorded for the benefit of all, proof of the independence of the spirit. I do not necessarily resent being a fictional character, the figment of an alien imagination, subject to the whims and fancies of an inebriate scribbler from Albion, but I feel I should set some form of example for the others, for that cowering multitude, immortalized, frozen within the pulp of literature.

I can invent and dispose of characters with great alacrity. It is, after all, my profession, or hobby, rather, for I see myself as an amateur, nothing more, nothing less. Sometimes, I am generous, I permit my creations to live in luxury, so that they never have to work. I give them credit cards, I allow them to sit quietly in a state of indolence, fed on a perpetual diet of Belon oysters and Burgundy wine. I only do this, however, if they succeed in evolving from the potentialities with which I first endow them.

Today, which is the day that never ends, I invent Mason Line. Mason Line is a non-descript character with a tendency towards introspection. As a fictional character, he is capable of thinking in a linear fashion. I like Mason. I have created him so that I can write about him and, by writing about him, find out who he is. We have never met, but we have a relationship which is little short of perfect. I know everything there is to know about him and he knows absolutely nothing whatsoever about me. We never argue. We keep ourselves to ourselves. Familiarity, which we know to cause contempt, has never reared its ugly head.

Because I am a reincarnation, because I am different, I can see into the lives of others, those who start out by being strangers but who might, eventually, become me. Yesterday, I was the protagonist in a sordid fable, inserted into the pages of a paperback hidden under the bed of a hotel room. Today, I am Mason Line, one of a pair of twins, the other half of which is a mischievous shadow. And tomorrow? Tomorrow rarely comes, but if it does, perhaps I shall be an old man, eighty-five instead of thirty-five, I shall feel pain in my limbs and lead in my heart. I shall move more slowly then and my thoughts will move in sympathy.

The sun is setting. The day, which is Mason's life, is nearly over; and the person who checked into the hotel has vanished. Within the room, there is no sign of his passing. Perhaps the man never existed at all, perhaps it was just me? But who am I, if Simon Lane is someone else? I put a cigarette to my mouth and light its tip with a match held shakily in my fingers. Is that really my hand, the same one which, but a moment ago, grasped the fountain pen, filled with invisible ink? I turn my hand over and inspect its palm. I cannot now make out the lines of destiny printed upon it. So I cannot tell whether or not it really is my hand. As opposed to someone else's, that is.

Somewhere, behind the screen of my consciousness, lies a tale, infamous and exotic. But all I have to go on so far are a few, unrelated clues. I have Mason Line in the hotel room. And I have his shadow, taking a bath with him. Two men in a bath. What else? Well, there's nothing in the room, no luggage, no trivia, no revelatory knick-knacks, just me, the third man, watching and waiting for something to happen. I am the observer, the invisible element. Where, then, is Simon Lane, if I have become the narrator of this tale?

Pieces of music, music of pieces

by Leon Milo

ACCORDING to contemporary scientific theory, a "Big Bang" originating from an infinitesimally small and dense object projected countless atomic particles into space, and these fragments, regrouping into an abundance of elements and matter, make up the expanding and, perhaps, eventually contracting universe.

In 1941, the composer Arnold Schoenberg viewed "the Beginning" as a vision which only an omniscient force could embrace and realize. "To understand the nature of creation," he wrote, "one must acknowledge that there was no light before the Lord said: 'Let there be light. . . .' 'There was Light' at once and in its ultimate perfection. . . . Alas, human creators, if they be granted a vision, must travel a long path between vision and accomplishment . . . painstakingly connecting details until they fuse into a kind of organism."

To transform a vision into an object, in this case via musical composition, is a step-by-step operation. Using an enormous vocabulary of symbols, a composer communicates detailed musical instructions to the performer while constantly keeping in mind the desired shape of the final work.

A vision of the "whole" does not, of course, always appear to the artist as a flash of lightning suddenly illuminating a landscape that needs only to be transcribed onto canvas, paper or audio tape. Even if a piece of music (oddly, the word "piece" is used to describe an entire musical composition) has been inspired by a non-musical object or event that suggests a musical point of departure, a "Big Bang" for example, it still remains for the composer to organize, manipulate and develop purely musical fragments into a form which will be comprehensible to listeners.

"Object" and "fragment": are these modern concepts? Do they have a relevance to our daily lives that is specifically modern? Let us take the dictionary definition of an object as "anything that is visible or tangible and is relatively stable in form." It may also be something that "can be apprehended intellectually", and in this sense could be applicable to a musical performance. A fragment is "a part broken off or detached", something that is by definition "incomplete" or "unfinished".

One composes music by combining sound elements to create a musical structure: a continuum of sounds. Listening to music, one relies on memory to retain the succession of sounds that identifies the composition as an entity. If a listener is preoccupied with other matters or momentarily nods off during the performance, the continuity is lost and he or she may wake up during the last movement completely confused by the sounds coming from the stage. Even if one is awake throughout the performance, has one witnessed a "relatively stable" musical object?

By modifying the elements which make up the object, conductors, performers and acoustic conditions all influence the outcome of the composer's vision and the reality that the listener experiences. If a musical performance were completely stable we would not have a multitude of recordings of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. One would suffice.

FROM STABILITY TO FRAGMENTATION

The composer's job is to build unity within a composition so as to ensure that it is comprehensible to the listener. This will hopefully outweigh the various chance factors that occur during performance.

Before the twentieth century, certain conventions of form developed that brought a degree of stability and comprehensibility to musical compositions. Before hearing the first performance of a piano concerto in the eighteenth century, an educated listener already knew many things about it. The concerto would probably have three movements—medium fast, slow, and fast—with a solo cadenza section leading up to the final chords, or coda. This cadenza was intended to offer the soloist some freedom of expression, imposing a minimum of constraints and enabling him to show musicianship and virtuosity. As time went by, even this "unstable" section of the piece became more controlled, until finally the cadenzas were entirely written out by the composer. So much "stability" and "built-in memory" were present in music by the end of the nineteenth century that composers could not find

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The Man from Vienna **(1990), acrylic on canvas by Valerio Adami.**

their own form of self-expression within these accepted conventions.

The stability factor had to be "rethought" to achieve an expression that reflected the times. Twentieth-century artists sought ways of making their creations multi-dimensional, fluid and less stable. The objects were broken down and the fragments took on a new importance when regrouped to create timbres of extreme purity and complexity, rhythms of clarity and confusion, and musical forms that were less predictable and conventional.

By the beginning of this century, a break with conventions was evident in all the artistic disciplines. Fragmentation was the underlying theme. To see this in painting one need only compare the work of Manet and Courbet with that of Picasso and Klee, and more recently with that of artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Valerio Adami (see illustration).

In architecture, this "deconstructionist" approach finds an echo in the work of Bernard Tschumi, who describes his designs as "discontinuous" structures that explore concepts of

"superimposition" and "dissociation". He describes his work in social terms, calling it "post-humanist" architecture that disperses the "force of social regulation".

In literature, compare the novels of Henry James with the "stream of consciousness" writing of James Joyce, or the poetry of Wordsworth with the fragmented style of e.e. cummings, which obliges the reader to reconstruct the dispersed letters, words and ideas on the page. The cubist painter Georges Braque concisely made the point when he said: "I do not believe in things but in relations between things."

VOYAGING INSIDE SOUNDS

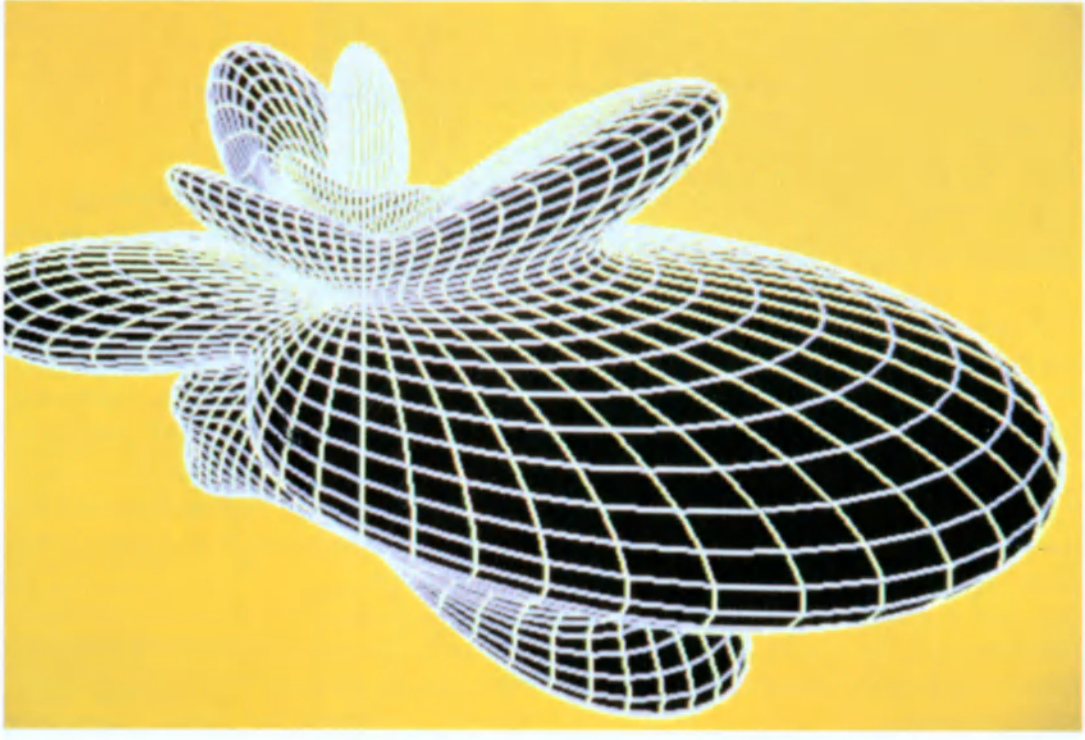
Each artist now finds his or her own underlying system. Each work must find its own comprehensible form and create its own universe. Michel Zbar's *Contacts* for trombone (1973) is an example of how the composer can "liberate" the performer. The form of the piece is almost entirely decided by the trombonist, following his own routes while choosing pitches, rhythms and dynamics from the pallets of musical fragments provided within each stopping-off point. Visually this resembles the screen image from the computer music program MAX, which allows a composer or performer to enter sounds via microphone or electronic keyboard and transform them in countless ways when routed to various "object" boxes that he or she controls via computer.

Tristan Murail, one of the founders of "spectral" music in France, is a composer whose choices of basic musical materials and method of construction draw on the laws of natural science. With the aid of computers and techniques developed at the Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique-Musique (IRCAM) in Paris, Murail analyses the harmonic spectrum or overtone series present when specific tones are produced on various instruments.

Overtones are frequencies higher than the fundamental pitch which occur whenever a note is sounded. The presence or absence of overtones and their balance in relation to the fundamental determine the "timbre" or "tone colour" of a sound. This explains why we can discern the difference between an identical pitch played on a flute and an oboe. In his composition *Désintégrations*, for seventeen instruments and electronic tape, it is as if Murail took a magnifying glass to view the minute details of the sounds which make up the raw material of the piece. The title refers to the composer's process of "voyaging inside the sounds". The sounds are broken down and fragmented to display their constituent parts. In one part of the work, "the brilliant clouds of high chimes are derived from the disintegration of the timbres (overtones) of flute, clarinet and muted trombone."

The contemporary German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen devises specific methods of working, new underlying principles and constraints for each new composition. His pieces have often been criticized on their first performance but have later come to be regarded as accomplished works which shed light on new techniques of construction and new modes of comprehension.

"I build a whole tree of different generations of inter-relating moments. . . . I control how much they have in common," Stockhausen has written about his work *Momente* (1961) for four choirs and thirteen instrumentalists. "Instead of starting with something very homogeneous and

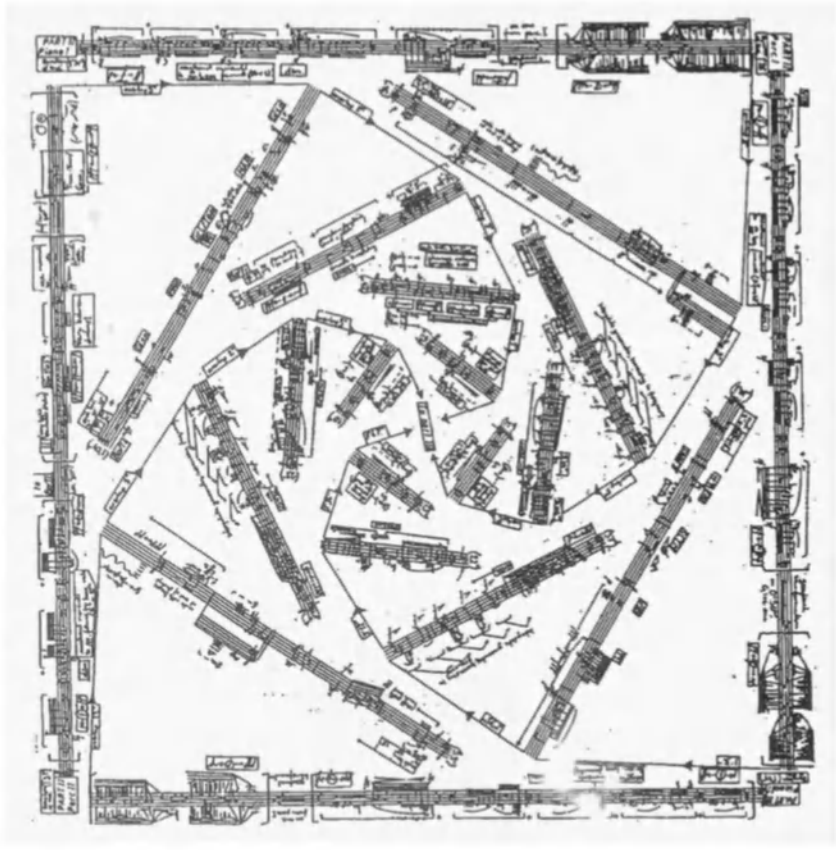


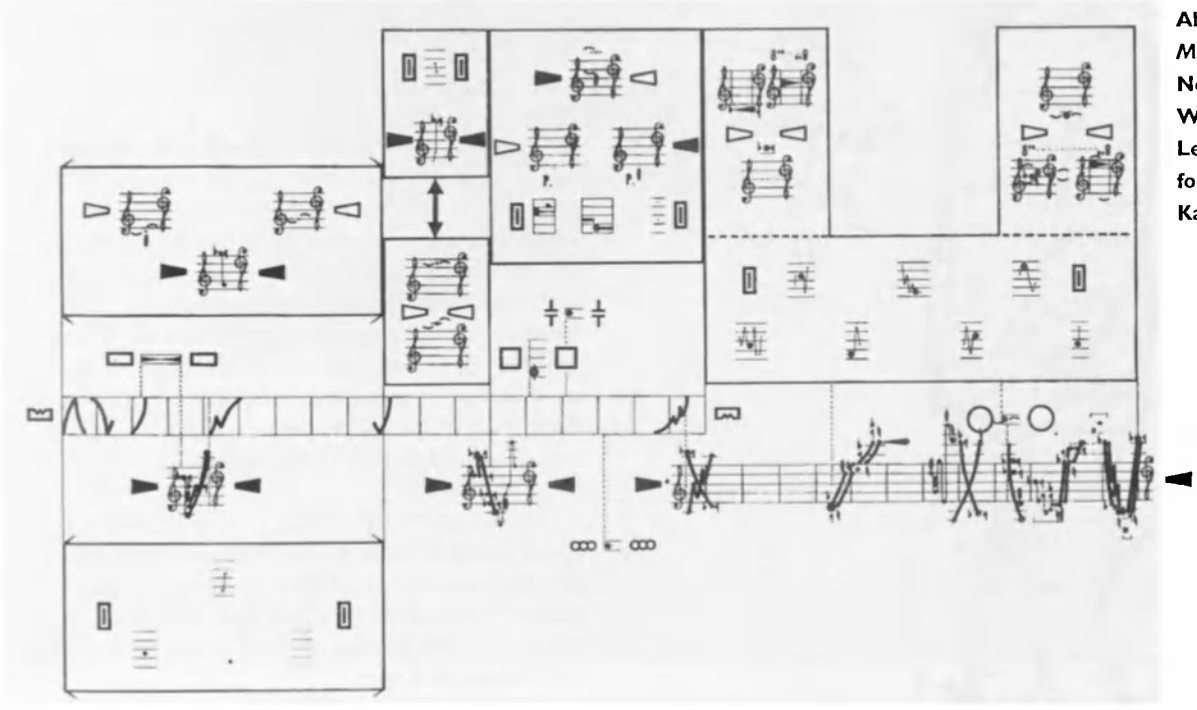
A computerized image of a sound.

then breaking the homogeneity . . . the traditional concept of building a musical continuum . . . I start with completely separate instants." These "moments" are fragments of musical material, each exhibiting a unique character (melodic, chordal or even rhythmic) and obeying a set of rules that determines how often they appear and how much they have in common.

In the language of the French composer Pierre Boulez the term "object" takes on a special meaning in relation to music. For Boulez, a piece of musical material is not regarded as being "unfinished" or a "broken off" fragment, but rather as a potential musical object which is the starting point or model for a "structure". It is an entity whose possibilities for being transformed into a musical object depend on the way in which its potentialities are unlocked and on its behaviour in relation to other potential musical objects.

Let us take, for example, a chord played on the piano in the low register comprised of five notes. This *objet unitaire* or solitary object is the point of departure. It has certain characteristics which, when exploited and put into a context, could define it as part of a musical form. If this five-note





Above, the score of *Mandala* (1985), by the Norwegian composer Rolf Wallin.
Left, *Zyklus* (1961), a work for solo percussion by Karlheinz Stockhausen.

chord is followed by a chord of three notes in the middle register, certain relationships begin to become comprehensible.

A "structure" is created in which the two objects are linked to each other and can have a relationship with other objects and structures that follow. As the American composer John Cage has shown, even musically "foreign" objects such as car horns or tin cans become musical objects when put into a suitable context. Objects create structures and form is created by the "structuring" of these local structures in their turn.

The terms that I have attempted to define have become somewhat "less stable" as this article has progressed. The fragment in "modern" musical terms and in Boulez' definition becomes more and more difficult to find. The moment it becomes detached from the larger structure it can be regarded as a new entity, an object made up of its own unique possibilities of transformation.

But this takes us back to the "Big Bang": there too one fragmented object brought forth numerous independent and interdependent objects harmonizing with each other to create a large object, in that case the universe. ■

Rimbaud's quest

by Sami Naïr

RIMBAUD's quest, which he described as a "fabulous opera", radicalized and transformed the great modernist anguish which originated with Baudelaire. In Rimbaud and Baudelaire modernity found its most illustrious representatives and perhaps its harshest critics. Through their deliberate efforts to transcend themselves, they both experienced the feeling of time's fundamental newness, of its endless acceleration and of the wounds it inflicts—and through the brilliant success of their testimony they also demonstrated time's ambiguity.

What else do they have in common? Both felt that the modern age fundamentally shifts the boundaries of the sacred. What Baudelaire complained of was the disappearance of *aura*—the halo of spirituality that hovered over human beings and objects—beneath the weight of a growing materialism and dehumanization of the relations between peoples, the spirit of calculation, and the horrifying philosophy of positivism—the iron heel crushing fragile humanity. As for Rimbaud, he dreamed even in youth of escape from tedium—the anonymity and tedium of an age in which everything was reduced to statistics. Escape from his home town of Charleville to Paris, from Paris to the Orient, from the Orient to Nothingness.

At the very start of his quest he called for revolt in the name of art and defined creation as the profanation of all the modern age holds sacred. "One must be absolutely modern," he wrote in the collection of prose-poems entitled *Une Saison en Enfer.*

Absolutely modern! Whatever can this mean? Not simply—this is the poet's cry, let's not forget—desanctifying all kinds of knowledge, power and belief. But also, and especially, life itself:

Seen enough. The vision has been
encountered in every air.
Had enough. The noise of towns. . . .
Known enough. The halts of life. . . .
("Départ", *Illuminations*)

The problem of modernity is thus revealed: it paralyzes itself with its own complacency. All too often are we reminded, as though his youthful flashes of genius had been nothing but a kind of bolt from the blue, that Rimbaud was terribly afflicted by the evil genius of time. But by

Left, *Etude pour Rimbaud* (1978), ballpoint pen heightened with gouache by Ernest Pignon Ernest, after a painting by Henri Fantin-Latour. Opposite page, Rimbaud as sketched by the French poet Paul Verlaine in 1872.

choosing flight and renouncing art, was he not simply, in an all-too-human fashion, running away from the vast abyss his vision had opened up before him?

For even as a youth, already in flight "from every moral law", he grasped with disconcerting lucidity the poetic revolution he bore within himself. In his famous letter to Paul Demeny in May 1871, returning to a theme that he had already raised in his correspondence with Georges Izambard, he wrote:

I say you have to be a visionary, *make yourself a* visionary.

A poet makes himself a visionary *through a long, boundless and systematized* disorganization *of* all the senses. *All forms of love, of suffering, of madness. . . . Unspeakable torment. . . , where he becomes among all men the great invalid, the great criminal, the great accursed—and the supreme Scientist!—For he attains the* unknown! *. . . and if, demented, he finally loses the understanding of his visions, he will at least have seen them! So what if he is destroyed on his ecstatic flight through things unheard-of, unnameable. . .*

By disorganization of the senses, Rimbaud means neither decadent behaviour nor degenerate values. He wants to go further: to set aside standards and conventions in order to perceive the Unknown. To penetrate the Unknown is to become Wise, to discover the duality of Being, the

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is a French philosopher who is professor of political science at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland). Among his published works are an essay on immigration in France, *Le Regard des vainqueurs. Essai sur les enjeux français de l'immigration* (Paris, 1992).

principle of Good and Evil, of their felicitous and infinite combination.

This passage to the other side of existence, the other side of a self-satisfied modernity, is made at the cost of a true cathartic experience governed by madness and disease, sacrilege and malediction. The poet perceives what the run-of-the-mill imagination cannot conceive of: "If," writes Rimbaud, "what he brings from *down there* has form, he gives it form; if it is formless, he makes it formless." Here we see the poet both as a "stealer of fire" and as the creator of a new "language". Art must overturn and transcend the boundaries of the known, the familiar, the visible—of possession and power. "The poet," Rimbaud adds, "should define the amount of unknown awakening in his time in the universal soul. . . ."

The poet, then, is on the other side of Time. He is not within Time, he is ahead of it. To be absolutely modern is to see the world's time from ahead. Poets are citizens of this new time; they dwell in it in their innermost selves because they are bringers of fire—the fire that consumes what exists. The poet seeks, not to annihilate, but to become that "not too discontented citizen of a metropolis considered modern because every known taste has been avoided. . . ." ("Ville", *Illuminations*)

While Baudelaire takes his contemporaries' anguish as a starting-point the better to immure himself within it, Rimbaud attacks the surfeit oozing from every pore of society. He is on the side of a "ferocious philosophy" which says "let the rest of the world go to hell". It is hardly surprising that the surrealists found in him a kindred spirit. What if one aspect of modernity should be the overthrow of the modern, the rejection of what exists at a given moment? What if being modern entails making a virtue of Negation, as the Stoics did of pain? Steering a course for the *unknown*, attempting the leap to the other side of the precipice:

I am an inventor of very different merit from all those who have preceded me. . . . I am dedicated to a new confusion. . . . I expect to turn into a very troublesome madman.

("Vies", *Illuminations*)

This may sound pretentious. But what should we expect poets to do? Recite the litany of our mediocrity, to glorify it? Turn their attention from the present towards the past? This is Heidegger's thesis: that poets, discoverers of Being, and therefore of the very Source, make an inquiry into the deepest resources of language, and hence that their attention is fixed on the past.

This may well be true for the German romantic poets like Hölderlin, and perhaps even for the nineteenth-century French romantics who regarded the return to the source—the journey to the Orient—as an initiation test for the conquest of Truth and Beauty. But nothing of this sort applies to Rimbaud. His revolutionary modernity is entirely directed towards the future: he challenges romanticism in the name of a radically individualist libertarianism. This modernity of Rimbaud's is no acquiescent passivity before the disruptive force of science and technology, but rather a quality of soul, a state of subjectivity, a kind of spirituality, what is meant by the German word *Stimmung*. Even more, it is opening towards the elsewhere, getting an edge on the sacred, greeting the breath of genius: "Let us know how to hail him and see him, . . . follow his vision, his breath, his body, his light." ("Génie", *Illuminations*)

Perhaps we are incapable of greeting in this way; perhaps we are too cautious to understand the poet's fire. But the artist, in moments of happiness—which is to say in the states of rapture which accompany true creation—greets the Unknown and presents it to us as an offering. The face of the young Rimbaud is emblematic of this experience. That is why it is so unforgettably, outrageously beautiful.

There is a contemporary artist with the Biblical name of Luc Simon whose entire work is a testimony to this Rimbaldian beauty. Rimbaud on the walls of Paris in 1968, or astride the ruins of another wall, now happily destroyed, in Berlin in 1989—Rimbaud the poet of our hopes and our suffering, as youthful as adolescence, novelty, Rimbaud eternally seeking "truth in a soul and a body". ("Adieu", *Une Saison en Enfer*). ■

***Une Saison en Enfer* (1989), a 2.5-metre-high wooden sculpture by Luc Simon.**

SCARVES FOR THE SILK ROADS

A fabric design competition on the theme of the Silk Road has been organized by France's Association Nationale pour la Promotion des Arts Décoratifs de Tissus (ANPADT, Paris), in collaboration with UNESCO's ten-year "Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue" project (1987-1997). The five prize-winners were presented with certificates during an exhibition held at UNESCO's Paris Headquarters from 22 to 30 June. A limited number of the winning entries—each one a silk scarf, numbered and bearing the words "UNESCO, Routes de la soie"—will go on sale at a price of FF1,200 ($218). Proceeds from the sale will go to the Silk Roads project. Order forms may be obtained from ANPADT, 17, Rue de Cléry, 75002 Paris, France, tel. (33-1) 42-36-59-10.

A FRIEND IN NEED

To improve water management in Africa's arid Sahel region, a new network, known as FRIEND, has been set up under the auspices of UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme. An acronym for Flow Regimes from International and Network Data Sets, FRIEND will collect and centralize hydrological data from nine countries of central and west Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali and Chad. Most of the region's drainage basins extend across national boundaries, so the information available within individual countries is usually not complete. Compiling the data will help the countries plan their water use, dams and irrigation schemes on a more rational basis.

SAVING THE CHILDREN

On 1 April, the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, presented the Organization's gold medal of Dubrovnik to Helmut Thoma, Director-General of RTL, Germany's largest private television station. The award honoured Thoma's contribution to the success of "Children in Need", a fund-raising campaign launched in Germany by UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador Ure Ohoven in October 1992. More than $1.6 million have been raised, most of which will go to Bosnian refugee children. The rest will help fund educational resource centres in Somalia and basic education programmes for street children in Viet Nam, Mexico and Romania.

NEWS OF THE WORLD HERITAGE

In February, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre published the first issue of the *World Heritage Newsletter*, a 16-page

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periodical which will appear three times a year in French and English and will provide information on activities and developments affecting sites around the world. The first issue reveals that the criteria for selecting World Heritage Sites are to be revised to enable cultural landscapes—described as representing "the combined works of nature and man"—to be entered on the World Heritage List, and notes that a database on the World Heritage, incorporating reports and photographs, is to be established. Known as "Heritage 2001", the archive will store material relating to some 200 sites and other properties such as ancient manuscripts and museum exhibits. The *World Heritage Newsletter* is available on request from the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France.

FROM THE DOUBLE HELIX TO THE HUMAN GENOME

Nearly 300 scientists, including 14 Nobel Prize-winners, gathered at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in April for a symposium to mark the 40th anniversary of the discovery of the double helix. Among those present were Francis Crick and James Watson, who in 1953 made the discovery of the helical (spiral-ladder-shaped) structure of the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) molecule which carries our genetic information, thereby opening the way for a new branch of science, molecular genetics. Discussions at the 3-day symposium focussed on the "state of the art" in molecular genetics and the directions it is taking. More than fifty papers were presented, notably on the organization of the human genome, genetic diseases, and the ethical and legal issues raised by genetic experimentation.

PEOPLE AND PLANTS

To further the conservation of plant species and knowledge of their use, UNESCO, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (UK) have launched a project entitled "People and Plants: Ethnobotany and the Sustainable Use of Plant Resources". The aim of the project is to bring ethnobotanists and local people together in order to study traditional ways of using plant resources, with a view to improving the life of rural populations in developing countries. Five manuals will be produced, first in English and then in Spanish and possibly in other languages later. The subjects chosen are: invasive plants; ethnobotany and conservation; priority sites for plant conservation; the sustainable use of wild plants; and plant conservation databases. For further information, please contact UNESCO, Division of Ecological Sciences, Man and the Biosphere Programme, 1 Rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15, France.

Listing Pagan's monuments

Pagan (in what is now Myanmar) became capital of the first unified Burmese kingdom (1044-1287) during the reign of King Anoratha. Today there are more than 2,000 monuments at Pagan—about half the number recorded in an inventory ordered by King Mohnyin in the 15th century. Earthquakes have since taken a heavy toll, but the site remains one of the world's most spectacular Buddhist sites.

The Burmese, an animist people originally from central Asia, were converted to Buddhism by King Anoratha (1044-1077), a great military leader who also built many temples, monasteries and stupas as well as a *Pitakat Taik* (library) for the *Pitaka*, or scriptures, he had had brought from Thatön, capital of the vanquished Môn people. These religious edifices were constructed of brick rather than the wood and bamboo used for domestic purposes. Among Anoratha's most remarkable constructions were the temple of Ananda, the magnificent Shwe-Hsan-Daw stupa (built to house a hair of the Buddha), and the Shwezigon stupa, completed in the reign of his successor King Kyanzittha, which Marco Polo was to call the "Golden Pagoda".

In the wake of a devastating earthquake that struck Pagan on 8 July 1975, a decision was taken to make, with UNESCO's participation, a systematic inventory of the monuments of Pagan. Started in 1982, the "Inventory Project" has collected data for 2,260 monuments, each one of which will be featured, complete with line drawings, photographs and descriptive notes, in a nine-volume *Inventory of Monuments at Pagan* by Pierre Pichard. The first volume (ISBN 1 870838 01 7), published jointly by Kiscadale Ltd., the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) and UNESCO, is now available, price $145 or £75. For further information, please contact UNESCO Publishing, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France. Tel. (33-1) 45-68-22-22; Fax (33-1) 42-73-30-07.

Françoise Legendre ■

COMMENTARY by Federico Mayor

This article is one of a series in which the Director-General of UNESCO sets out his thinking on matters of current concern

'They could have done so much, but dared to do so little...'

I am convinced that in the years ahead it is going to be essential to be able to train fully-fledged citizens, who will feel that unless they are participating in the life of their community they do not exist. And in order to exist, in order to exercise their responsibilities as citizens, they will need access to knowledge. Education is not only instilling knowledge, but awakening the immense creative potential that lies within each of us, enabling all of us to develop our capacities to the full, the better to contribute to the societies in which we live.

With regard to the dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge, it is borne in on me every day how sadly scientific information is lacking in the decision-making process. Far too many decisions with far-reaching consequences—in the domains of energy and the environment, for example—are influenced by the emotions. It is our responsibility to provide decision-makers with absolutely reliable data enabling them to reach objective conclusions.

I also feel that there are two ideas that we should push as hard as we can to have accepted and applied. The first is linked to lifelong education: the educational process can no longer be defined as the acquisition of knowledge which precedes entry into the working world. It is—and will of necessity become increasingly—a protean process extending over an entire lifetime and covering a variety of activities.

The second concept is that of educational partnership. When we think of education, we think of the state. However, the responsibility for education is not the state's alone; it is incumbent upon civil society at all its levels and in all its structures. For it is only by making the whole of society aware of its duty to take up the challenge of education that we will be able to lay a firm foundation for the training of fully-fledged citizens.

At this point, a word about higher education. To my mind, this level of education has too long been considered a luxury, and thus passed over by the developing countries in favour of basic education, which has attracted all the attention. It is true that higher education is only available to a privileged group of young people: 92 per cent of the world's eighteen- to twenty-three-year-olds do not have access to it. All the more reason to be extremely demanding of those who do! Society should make these young elites realize that they are already part of the social fabric, and have responsibilities to shoulder. At university, they must learn to take the initiative, and begin to place their imaginations and energies in the service of the transformations that this new era is demanding of all members of the community.

Finally, I should like to underscore the importance of education in enhancing mutual understanding and promoting co-operation between peoples. In a world where distances are shrinking and differences abound, there is nothing to be gained by locking the door and withdrawing into oneself. The best way to survive, and at the same time add a new dimension to one's life, is to learn to live with others, and to listen to what they have to say. Tolerance does not mean "tolerating" others, but getting to know, understand, respect, and—why not?—admire them.

What is needed most today, what young people—and particularly teenagers who are about to complete their secondary studies—are demanding of us more or less explicitly, is guidance to help them chart their course. Unless we supply them with this without delay, we risk witnessing major social upheavals. We must take action, even at the risk of making mistakes. The worst of all would be to do nothing in the face of the intolerable.

We are not prepared to rise to all the challenges of the future—poverty, population, the environment, ethnic coexistence—because we are still working with the tools of the past. We must remedy this situation as quickly as possible, so that our grandchildren will not speak of us with Camus' terrible words: "They could have done so much, but dared to do so little...." ■

Santísima Trinidad, memories of slavery and sugar

by Edouard Bailby

THREE hundred and eighty kilometres south-east of Havana on Cuba's southern coast, a jewel of colonial architecture lies far from the bustle of the modern world. Backing onto the El Escambray massif, whose foothills, the Guamuhaya, take their name from the region's former indigenous people, the town of Santísima Trinidad has not many more than 30,000 inhabitants. Its narrow cobbled streets are flanked by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century churches and palaces, and by houses adorned with wooden-railed balconies and wrought-iron grilles through which magnificent, Andalusian-style garden courtyards can be glimpsed. Every now and then a horse-drawn cart with squeaking wheels emerges from a side-street. Further on a mule laden with jars of drinking water ambles along. No cars or motorcycles disturb the town's timeless peace.

Memories of the past of Santísima Trinidad, which was included on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1988, are concentrated around the Plaza Mayor. Here, giant palm-trees adorn the square-shaped central garden where young and old come to sit as evening falls. Overlooking the Plaza are the Convent of San Francisco, the church of the Santísima Trinidad and a number of noble houses.

The most imposing of these houses is that which once belonged to Nicolás de La Cruz y Brunet, the owner of sugar plantations and hundreds of slaves, who in 1836 was made a count by the King of Spain. The ochre-walled palace was built between 1740 and 1808. Its ground floor gives onto an inner patio considered to be one of the most beautiful of its kind in Cuba. The first floor, which now houses the Romantic Museum, has a cedarwood ceiling and furniture of precious local wood. Chandeliers of Bohemian glass, Sèvres vases, Spanish and Dutch porcelain and French clocks decorate the boudoirs and salons. There is even a marble bath and two splendid spittoons that were imported from England. The Brunet Palace, which was restored a few years ago, is a monument to the wealth of the great families of Trinidad in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

AN ARISTOCRACY OF SUGAR

Trinidad is the third oldest town in Cuba. It was founded in 1514 by Diego Velázquez, who had just completed the conquest of the island, the Caribbean's largest. He knew that there were gold mines in a nearby valley, and as a result built a small fort and half a dozen houses a few kilometres from the coast. Fifty metres from the Plaza Mayor stands the *jigüe*, a great tree planted the day the city was founded, on the spot where the first Mass was celebrated. A commemorative plaque honours the memory of Bartolomé de Las Casas, an ardent champion of the indigenous inhabitants who were massacred or reduced to slavery by the conquistadors.

After suffering on several occasions from

the depredations of the pirates and corsairs who scoured the Caribbean, Trinidad relapsed into tropical languor. Far from Havana, the seat of the island's governors and the crossroads of the main lines of communication, it turned away from the outside world and lived for two and a half centuries on its sparse crops and the valuable timber grown nearby. In August 1762, it was abruptly awakened from its torpor when, after a two-month siege, the British seized the port of Havana, imposing on Cuba free trade with the rest of the world. In the eleven months during which the island was occupied, a thousand ships unloaded tons of merchandise and hundreds of African slaves.

After the British withdrew (accepting Florida in exchange), the Creoles—Spaniards born in Cuba—soon realized that free trade favoured their interests against those of the government in Madrid. The successful sugar-cane producers extended their estates beyond the provinces of Havana and Matanzas, forming the nucleus of the *sacarocracia*, the sugar aristocracy whose influence was to be crucial in shaping the island's history. Their ambitions were furthered by the arrival in 1791 of large numbers of refugees from Haiti, where plantations and refineries had been burned down by thousands of slaves under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture. This unexpected influx of labour at Cuba's eastern tip and in the Trinidad region gave a boost to the economy.

Determined to win from the British and French colonies the monopoly of sugar exports to Europe, the owners of the Cuban plantations began to organize themselves. Five leading planters, who between them owned dozens of refineries, took control of the slave trade, thereby enabling themselves to increase production. The slaves led a wretched life on the *ingenios*, vast estates that gradually spread over the island at the expense of the forests and their rare species of trees. They worked sixteen hours a day, with only one small meal around midday. The day began and ended with prayers signalled by the plantation bell, which was also used to sound the alarm if a slave escaped or a fire broke out. The forty-five-metre-high Iznaga Tower, the only surviving monument from this era, still marks the entrance to one of the great plantations of the San Luís Valley, outside Trinidad. It has been completely restored and is now topped by an observation post and a belfry with fluted columns.

On the estate known as the Santísima Trinidad—most Cuban *ingenios* had names associated with the Christian religion—Estebán José Santa Cruz de Oviedo prided himself on possessing the largest *criadero de criollos* (literally, "negro stock-farm"). There, penned like cattle, the children of slaves were prepared for the work they would have to start at the age of twelve. Their mothers were only allowed to see them once every ten days. Don Estebán exchanged or sold them at will. His wife was sterile, but he had twenty-six mulatto children. As a good father, he sent his offspring to study in New York. The six best students were rewarded with a trip to Paris.

AN ILLUSTRIOUS GUEST

By the end of the eighteenth century, the wealth of the plantations enabled Trinidad's planters to build themselves magnificent homes. The Padrón family residence, at the corner of Desengaño Street, today houses a Museum of Archaeology, and the Municipal History Museum occupies the former home of the Justo German Cantero family. Trinidad's patrician families have left traces of their grandeur all over the town. Devoutly Catholic, they contributed generously to the building of churches and convents. In the convent of St. Francis of Assisi, an unusual museum recalls memories of bandit-hunting and the struggle waged by the people of Trinidad against both internal and external enemies.

Trinidad is proud to count among its guests Alexander von Humboldt, the celebrated German naturalist and explorer, who spent forty-eight hours there on his first visit to Cuba, between December 1800 and March 1801. After leaving the port of Batabano, on the south coast, the boat in which he was travelling was forced to put in at the mouth of the River Guaurabo, half a dozen kilometres from Trinidad, in order to take on drinking water. The governor of the region, a nephew of the astronomer Antonio Ulloa, welcomed Humboldt with all the respect due to such a distinguished figure, and the rich planter Antonio Padrón gave a reception in his honour that was attended by Trinidad high society. Humboldt gives a detailed account of his stay in his correspondence, notably describing an ascent of Popa hill, where an eighteenth-century church still stands, in order to calculate its height with surveying instruments.

Impressed by the welcome he received from the leading families of Trinidad—and this despite his well-known distaste for slavery—Humboldt resumed his sea-journey on the night of 15 March 1801. As he left, a local priest and occasional poet declaimed a sonnet from the quayside in honour of the Orinoco delta, where the illustrious scholar—who recorded the anecdote in his "Political Essay on the Island of Cuba", republished in Havana in 1960—had first set foot on American soil. Cubans, or at least the inhabitants of Trinidad, regard him as the second *descubridor* (discoverer) of the island, after Christopher Columbus. ■

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Opposite page, the Plaza Mayor, Trinidad (Cuba).
Below left, a paved street in the Old Town.
Below, the Brunet Palace.

EDOUARD BAILBY is a French journalist who has been a correspondent with the weekly *L'Express* and a press officer in UNESCO's Office of Public Information. He is the author of a guide to Cuba (*Guide de Cuba*, Arthaud, Paris, 6th edition, 1993) and a study on Oscar Niemeyer scheduled for publication later this year.

Traditions for Tomorrow

by Diego Gradis

TRADITIONS for Tomorrow is a non-governmental organization which is active in most parts of Central and South America, where it supports the struggle of the descendants of the pre-Columbian peoples to preserve their cultural identity. It was founded in 1986, and has had an official working relationship with UNESCO since 1992.

Traditions for Tomorrow does not try to persuade the groups with which it works to return to their traditional ways but rather to take their traditions into account when building their future. The support that it is asked to provide is always the result of a spontaneous initiative from a local community and is designed to increase that community's awareness of the value of a traditional form of cultural expression in such fields as language, ritual, medicine, handicrafts, dance, music or education.

Traditions for Tomorrow uses the word culture in its widest possible sense as the expression of a way of life. The type of back-up the organization provides is designed to supplement aid available from other bodies working in the fields of health care and material welfare.

Our relations with those with whom we work—people such as the Maya peasants of the Guatemala highlands, the Cuna fishermen who live on the San Blas Islands off the coast of Panama, the Aymara shepherds of the shores of Lake Titicaca—are based on mutual respect. Each side makes a contribution of equal value. The financial support we provide is neither more nor less indispensable to a given project than the expertise and motivation of our partners on the spot. A preliminary encounter takes place in the field before any commitment is made. This is an opportunity for us to listen, to look, and to take stock of the situation, not an attempt to impose or even to suggest a specific course of action. The main goal of Traditions for Tomorrow is to help people to realize that cultural identity is an asset that can serve development. How can there be any development if people do not assume responsibility for their own lives? Our work provides its beneficiaries with their first opportunity to take full charge of the administration of a project.

A sense of community is one of the main factors favouring the survival of minority groups in Latin America. However, as a result of various religious, administrative, educational and economic factors, the cement that binds communities together has been gradually eroded. In addition, many forms of aid sidetrack the sense of community and associate it with imported modes of organization that are often ill-adapted to the local situation. The projects supported by Traditions for Tomorrow seek to strengthen traditional community structures within the framework of activities which have always been associated with the community in question.

Three specific experiences, in Panama, Ecuador and Chile respectively, provide a good illustration of the organization's work.

A CULTURAL CONGRESS IN THE SAN BLAS ISLANDS

In recent decades the 40,000 Cuna Indians who live in the San Blas archipelago off the Caribbean coast of Panama have assimilated the Western-type structures of mainland Panamanian society. Because space is limited many of the islanders have migrated to Panama City, but these migrants have, in spite of being uprooted, succeeded in maintaining close links with their homeland, "Cuna Yala".

The Cuna have won an international reputation for having preserved a large degree of autonomy. However, frequent contact with Panamanian society has begun a process of acculturation, above all among young people, especially where religion and spiritual life are concerned. To halt this erosion, which they regard as a threat to their internal cohesion and to their eventual survival as a people, the Cuna created in 1972 a "General Congress of Cuna Culture" which meets for four or five days several times a year, each time in a different place, and is attended by all their religious leaders, who are the guardians of tradition. These meetings, with their prayers, festivities, dances and the commemoration of Cuna heroes, bring together people from nearby islands and create a bond between the Cuna people.

The Cuna have asked Traditions for Tomorrow to help them to buy two motor boats to enable representatives of different communities to attend meetings of the Congress. They have also asked us for help in acquiring technical and office equipment that the young people will need to carry out, under the auspices of the Congress, an in-depth survey on the history and use of medicinal plants. The results of the survey will be published.

These Afro-Ecuadorian children in San Lorenzo (Ecuador) meet every day for traditional dancing.

IDENTITY AND SCHOOLING

For some time the Saraguro Indians of the Tenta region of Ecuador have been unhappy about the schooling that the Quito-based educational system imposed on their children. From the age of four, their children had to leave behind in the school cloakroom not only their traditional clothing, but their language (Quechua), the knowledge they had received from their parents, and their specific ways of thinking. What they learned from their teachers, most of whom did

Members of a Quechua community in the Cuzco department of Peru gather for a meeting with Traditions for Tomorrow.

not speak Quechua, was remote from their way of life and pushed them to become school dropouts.

In reaction to this, in the late 1980s the people of Tenta used local construction methods to build their own education centre where they could teach a syllabus, devised by themselves, which consists of adapted forms of the subjects taught at the state schools and is complemented by initiation in manual, cultural and productive activities. The five teachers are members of the community and were chosen by it. Their teaching calls for close collaboration with the local people. The results obtained since 1988 have been so satisfactory that the school has been given official status by the government. Today some of its pupils have finished their primary schooling, and for the first time children from Tenta are going to be enrolled at the secondary school in the nearby town.

Traditions for Tomorrow responded favourably to a request to help the school obtain equipment. The money has been used to improve the building and to buy equipment such as a loom, printing machinery, farm and woodworking tools, sewing machines, clothes and musical instruments.

ANDEAN CARNIVAL

In the last fifteen years, drought, mine closures and overcrowding in the outskirts of La Paz (Bolivia), have driven the Aymara and Quechua Indians down from the Chilean and Bolivian altiplano to the fertile valleys of the Arica region in northern Chile. From a way of life centred on the village, traditional customs and the family unit, hundreds of families suddenly found themselves in a state of economic dependence in a land that was not their own. The newcomers found that Chilean society was often difficult for them to enter. The younger generation, which has no experience of its Andean origins and which feels rejected by the majority society, is giving way to delinquency (drugs, alcohol, prostitution), thereby making the gulf between the two societies even wider.

During carnival week, the Indians of the Arica region have tried in recent years to recreate in the Azapa valley an event that would rekindle the spirit of the Andean tradition and reunite this exiled population. First spontaneously, then in a more organized fashion, the "carnaval Andino" ("Andean carnival") of San Miguel has gradually become for the Quechua and Aymara a meeting point between past and future, an annual break during which young and old alike return to their roots and renew the links that traditionally bound their community together.

Since the return of democracy, those involved with the carnival have created an association which, with the support of Traditions for Tomorrow, is now working to build a headquarters where meetings and cultural events can be held. Traditions for Tomorrow has also assembled a stock of costumes and traditional Andean musical instruments for the carnival. The organization has received official recognition from the government of Chile for this project, which in 1992 was also recognized by UNESCO's World Decade for Cultural Development. ■

DIEGO GRADIS is a Franco-Swiss international lawyer who has published many articles on Amerindian problems and environmental issues. He is the founder-president of Traditions for Tomorrow (France. Switzerland, U.S.A.).

Mahmoud Mokhtar
(1891-1934)

by Magdi Youssef

At the beginning of the Muslim era in Egypt, the art of statuary, which had flourished to an outstanding degree during Antiquity, went into a long decline as a result of Islam's rejection of representations of the human figure on the grounds that they were an insult to the divine privilege of creation. Bowing to this interdict, Muslim artists turned to experimentation with "abstract" forms that were simultaneously real and visionary, as can be seen in calligraphy, the arabesque and Arab-Islamic architecture.

Egypt's contacts with Europe during the Enlightenment, culminating in the invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte at the end of the eighteenth century, led to a change of attitude towards the "modern" plastic arts. However it was not until 1908 that Cairo followed the example of Western cities and acquired a school of fine arts and that young people began to show enthusiasm for sculpture as a creative discipline.

One student who enrolled at the school in the year it opened was eighteen-year-old Mahmoud Mokhtar. He distinguished himself as a sculptor, and in 1911 won a scholarship to study in Paris, where Rodin and Maillol reigned as the undisputed masters.

At this period, Egyptian society was seeking to define a modern frame of reference for its cultural identity, as a platform for national and political demands. Mokhtar was still living in Paris when the Egyptian revolution of 1919 broke out.

With the clamour of Egyptian crowds echoing in his mind, Mokhtar conceived his most important work, *The Renaissance of Egypt*. He exhibited a scale model of it and dreamed of returning to Cairo to continue his work there.

Like his predecessors in ancient Egypt, Mokhtar wanted his statue to live for ever. He decided to execute the monumental work in Aswan granite, the stone that Egyptian sculptors had used at the time of the Pharaohs. The costs of his project were more than the government could afford, however, and so a subscription was launched. Completed in 1928, the statue became a cultural landmark, inspiring a number of poets and writers, including Tewfik el-Hakim.

The Renaissance of Egypt, which is four metres long and three metres high, depicts a lion with a man's head (an allusion to the Sphinx of Giza) beside which stands a proud peasant woman, one of whose hands is placed on the lion's head as though she is holding the animal back; with the other she draws aside the veil that covers her face. Both figures are looking in the same direction, perhaps towards a new dawn, towards the rising sun, symbol of resurrection for the ancient Egyptians.

In addition to this masterpiece and a number of monuments that adorn the squares of Cairo and Alexandria, Mahmoud Mokhtar executed a large number of sculptures, which can be seen today in the museum—recently restored by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture—that bears his name. They depict peasant men and women at work and display a masterly power of execution and a perfect balance of planes and volumes. At the entrance to the museum stands one of Mokhtar's major works, *The Keeper of the Secret* (1926), which has the mysterious density of ancient statuary.

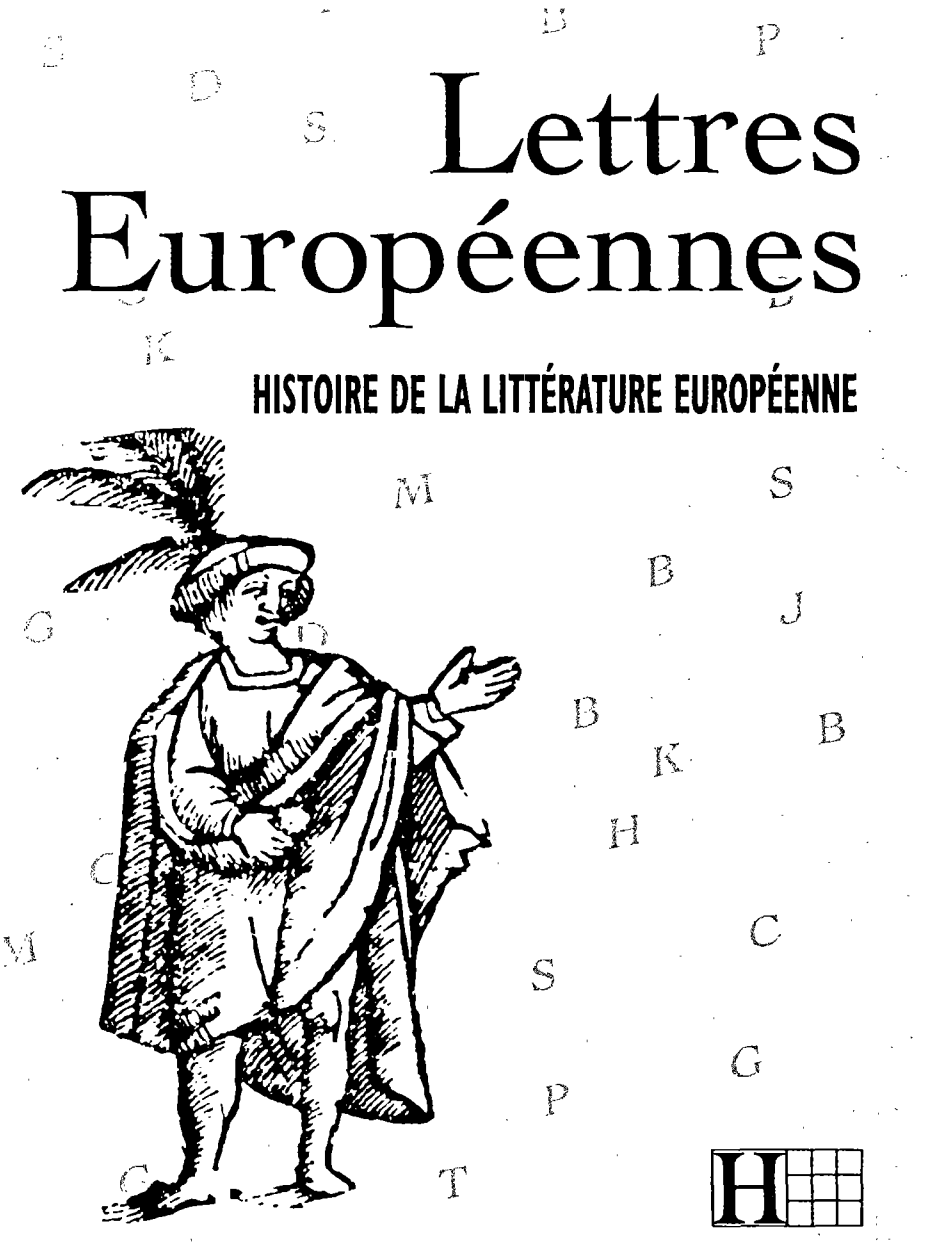
Mahmoud Mokhtar is a perfect example of creative fertility shaped by training in Western techniques and used to serve an inspiration that was authentically Egyptian. ■

The Renaissance of Egypt **(1928), a granite sculpture (3 x 4 m.) by Mahmoud Mokhtar that stands in front of the University of Cairo.**

MAGDI YOUSSEF
is an Egyptian writer who is vice-president of the International Association of Intercultural Studies.

A voyage through European literature

by Edgar Reichmann



THE recent publication of a 1,025-page illustrated *Histoire de la littérature européenne* ("History of European Literature") is an event that marks the conclusion of an ambitious enterprise. The editors and contributors faced a threefold challenge—to avoid becoming the prisoners of a reductive Eurocentrism and neglecting to take account of what Europe has inherited from other parts of the world; to prevent their work from becoming a vast catalogue in which European literature is compartmentalized into linguistic and national traditions; and to identify, on the threshold of the third millennium, and after the failure of the great ideologies that have marked our century, any new trends that may be developing to fill the void these ideologies have left behind.

A MANY-FACETED LITERATURE

The History is the work of a team of 150 university teachers from all over Europe. It shows that, while Europe has many different literary traditions, there is nevertheless a single European literature. The editors, literary historians Annick Benoit-Dusausoy and Guy Fontaine, describe the contacts between Europe and the rest of the world that encouraged the circulation of people and ideas and the movements of peoples over the centuries. They rightly remind us that Asia and the Mediterranean coast of Africa, the cradles of our civilization, have, together with the early Greek myths, left an indelible imprint on European literature past and present.

Via Spain, Arab poets influenced the troubadours of Provence, while Asia bequeathed to Europe a spirit of oriental refinement. In the inter-war years Africa south of the Sahara contributed to the discovery by European avant-gardes of a new view of reality. India and China, the Malay archipelago and Oceania, mysterious islands and deserts of fire and ice, all exercised their fascination on writers as varied as Kipling, Rimbaud, Malraux, Daniel Defoe, Jules Verne and the Polish-born English novelist Joseph Conrad. More recently such important figures as the Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor, the West Indian René Depestre, Trinidad-born V.S. Naipaul, the South African André Brink, Alejo Carpentier of Cuba, Tahar Ben Jalloun from North Africa, Argentina's Jorge Luis Borges and Isaac Bashevis Singer, an American of Jewish extraction, have all helped renew the European heritage without turning their back on their own traditions. By its very conception, the work avoids the trap of isolationism.

A WORK OF CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

The authors also deserve praise for having produced both a reference book and an exercise in cultural synthesis. Authors and their works are not listed alphabetically according to their geographical affiliations. Instead the reader can trace the development and mutual influence of the Graeco-Latin, Judaeo-Christian, Byzantine and Nordic minds as expressed in literature, up to the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the collapse of the ideologies that have stained our century with blood. While exploring the principal literary genres and trends, the reader covers a vertiginous range of thought and creativity.

The scholars who have told this fascinating story also set themselves the

Histoire de la littérature européenne **("History of European Literature"), edited by Annick Benoit-Dusausoy and Guy Fontaine, published by Hachette-Éducation, Paris, 1,025 pp., complete with index and bibliography.**

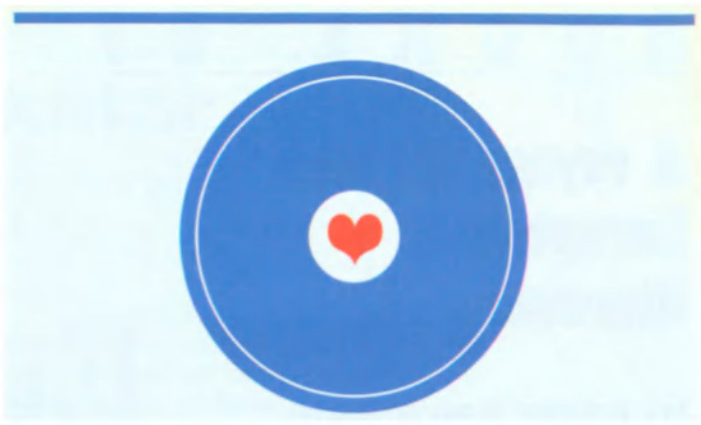
daunting task of relating important European authors to other cultures, in some cases geographically and chronologically remote.

While Swift, Rabelais, Molière, Racine, Cervantes, Chekhov, Proust and Kafka are known all over the world, authors writing in less widely-used languages are much less familiar. It is true that good translations of the Albanian Ismail Kadaré, the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa and the Czech novelist Milan Kundera have made these authors well-known, and the essayist E.M. Cioran and the dramatist Eugène Ionesco, Romanians who have long written in French, are equally celebrated. But the fine Greek poet Constantine Cavafy, the Polish novelist Tadeusz Konwicki, who draws his inspiration from his Lithuanian ancestors, or the late Danilo Kis, a Montenegrin Jew who wrote in Serbian and described metaphorically the similarity of all forms of totalitarianism, are little-read by speakers of the world's main languages. The extraordinary diversity of these literatures still remains largely unrecognized, as are their points of convergence amid the infinite reflections of a unique, multi-faceted reality. The authors of this splendid work have brilliantly reconstructed the harmonious links between different literatures as revealed in unexpected and hidden convergences.

UNVEILING NEW TRENDS

What of the future of European literature? The debate about post-modernism opened in France by Jean-François Lyotard's work *La Condition post-moderne* ("The Post-Modern Condition", 1979) is still continuing in the universities. But the avant-garde and the *nouveau roman* have run out of steam, socialist realism is long dead, and those works that expressed opposition to dictatorial regimes have lost their *raison d'être* with the collapse of the dictatorships, which has also put paid to the old "official" literatures. Meanwhile, the freedom suddenly accorded authors of the former Eastern bloc to write what they want has left them shell-shocked.

In the West narrative seems to be coming back into vogue, and with it a renewal of the attractions of classic story-telling, blending realism, magical realism, folk-tale and myth. Historical novels and works that dramatize real-life events are both making something of a comeback. Meanwhile, poetry refuses to fit into any fixed category and goes its own way. Poets cannot breathe when confronted by tyrants' rules and regulations; they can only flourish when they can get to grips with words in an atmosphere of creative freedom. However, it remains to be seen which of today's movements and trends posterity will remember. ■



RECENT RECORDS

by Isabelle Leymarie

TRADITIONAL MUSIC

SWITZERLAND.
Zäuerli, Yodel of Appenzell
Musics and Musicians of the World
Unesco Collection/Audivis
CD D 8026

Ethnomusicologist Hugo Zemp is a specialist in yodelling and also, oddly enough, in the music of the Solomon Islands. On this compact disc he presents some surprising examples of *zäuerli* yodelling from the Swiss canton of Appenzell, performed not as folklore but in a workaday context by mountain people while milking cows or leading them to pasture. These polyphonic yodels have little in common with the usual tourist fare. The sometimes untempered singing, with notes often reached by glissandi, in some ways recalls Mongol music,

and the cowbells in the background contribute to the oriental effect, like gongs in a Chinese or Korean opera.

GUINEA.
The Nyamakalas from Futa Jalon
Music from the World
CD Buda 92530-2

Once considered as miscreants by the fervent Peul

Muslims of Futa Jalon because of their love of dance, music and song, the Nyamakalas have inherited a long musical tradition. The group on this record, however, was formed relatively recently, following the establishment of the Second Republic of Guinea. The singers are accompanied by various stringed instruments including the *nhènhèru*, a sort of violin consisting of a large hollow calabash with a neck attached; the *bolon*, similar to the *nhènhèru* but plucked rather

than bowed; the *kèrôna*, a small four-stringed guitar rather like the Wolof *khalam*, and various flutes, drums and castanettes. The group performs delightful, lively melodies and songs full of aphorisms, such as "When the left hand sins, the right hand is not guilty" and "Life is all change, you win it little by little".

JAPAN.
The Spirit of Silence
Yoshikazu Iwamoto (shakuhachi flute)
Music from the World
CD Buda 92543-2

The *shakuhachi*, a bamboo flute, is linked to Zen and to the Japanese aesthetic of silence, the void, the concealed, the unadorned. It has a limited range and a misty sound, and its music, in which the spaces between notes are as important as the notes themselves, brings to mind the dreamlike atmosphere of Japanese films such as *Kwaidan* and *Onibaba* and certain works by Mizoguchi and Kurosawa. Iwamoto, a virtuoso of the instrument, modulates the different tonal elements with great refinement, and does full justice to the poetry of the titles of the pieces he plays on this CD: "Moon of the Heart", "Deep Night", "Wind through Pine Trees".

JAZZ

CHARLIE SEPULVEDA.
Algo Nuestro: "Our Thing"
Sepulveda (trumpet), David Sanchez (tenor and soprano sax), Edward Simon (piano), Andy Gonzalez (bass), Adam Cruz (drums), Richie Flores (congas and bongos)
CD Antilles 314512 768-2

Latin Jazz has been bubbling in New York for the last ten years, and this new disc by the young, Bronx-born, Puerto-Rican trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda shows how mature the music has now become. *Algo Nuestro* is a marvel. It introduces two musicians surely soon to be stars on the international stage: Ed Simon, a Venezuelan pianist still not as well known as he deserves to be despite having played at various European festivals, and David Sanchez, who combines an expressive saxophone style with a strong and subtle sense of rhythm. Guest musicians also lend a hand on some tracks. Sepulveda and his companions constantly spring surprises on the listener, swinging on the upbeat numbers, playing the ballads poetically, and sounding almost bucolic on other tracks with a Puerto Rican flavour. This is a group to watch.

AHMAD JAMAL.
Live in Paris 92
Jamal (piano), James Cammack (bass), David Bowler (drums).
CD Birdology 849 408-2

This record is another triumph for Jamal. The old master of harmony, who often starts his numbers with seemingly interminable solo preludes in which he lets his imagination run free, toys with the piano with disconcerting ease. His music is full of superb chord progressions, dizzying runs that never seem out of

place, abrupt rhythmic breaks and an astonishing sense of phrasing. Jamal is one of those great jazz stylists who impress their personality on everything they play, and who can restructure and rework material apparently endlessly.

FRANK FOSTER AND THE LOUD MINORITY.
Shiny Stockings
CD Denon DC-8545

This disc contains a series of Foster compositions (the exception being the beautiful, traditional "Hills of the North Rejoice") that were recorded by the saxophonist in 1977 and 1978 with some of the most reliable and innovative—though not necessarily the best-known—New York jazz musicians of the era. They include the saxophonist Bill Cody, who was tragically to be killed by white racists, the trumpeter Virgil Jones, the drummer Charlie Persip, the pianist Mickey Tucker and the guitarist Ted Dunbar. Among the vibrant, well-orchestrated tracks is an inventive version of "Shiny Stockings", named in honour of the legwear of Frank's wife Cecilia. Currently the director of the Count Basie orchestra, Foster is an outstanding instrumentalist and, with Quincy Jones and Slide Hampton, one of the best arrangers in contemporary jazz.

CLASSICAL

BEETHOVEN.
Missa Solemnis
Arnold Schoenberg Chor. The Chamber Orchestra of Europe, conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt
CD Teldec 9031-74884-2

"The entire Mass is an appeal for peace," claims conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt. The *Missa Solemnis* powerfully evokes the horrors of war through cries, anguished recitatives, clashing cymbals, trumpet calls and one passage on the strings that Harnoncourt aptly describes as "gooseflesh set to music". It is a big, majestic, lyrical work, occasionally riven by what the conductor calls "absolutely stark passages", and the musicians, soloists and chorus on this recording perfectly capture its sombre and moving tone.

HENRYK GORECKI.
Symphony No.3, "Symphony of Sorrowful Songs"
London Sinfonietta, conducted by David Zinman, with Dawn Upshaw (soprano)
CD Elektra Nonesuch 7559-79282-2

Composed in Katowice (Poland) in 1976, this religious symphony is elegiac in tone, unfurling its great waves of sound at a captivating and almost imperceptibly slow pace. The first movement incorporates a fifteenth-century Polish prayer, the "Lamentation of the Holy Cross Monastery". The sweep of the work gradually carries the listener away amid a rising musical tension that culminates in the *lento—cantabile-semplice* of the third movement. This is a beautiful work, more directly accessible than Górecki's earlier compositions. ■

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHILDREN OF THE WORLD UNITE

Last year, world leaders met in Rio de Janeiro to discuss global issues concerning pollution, to no avail. We face two choices: either to carry on regardless, or to try to find a solution to the problem of pollution. Do we want destruction or the continuity of life on Earth? Above all, we must not forget the children who live on our planet, for surely they embody the balance needed for Earth's survival. Children are prisoners of world decisions out of their control. It is high time that we listened to their views concerning the survival of Mother Earth. They hold the key to the future.

MARGARET ELIZABETH PERKINS
BROUGHTON (ENGLAND)

A TIME TO CARE

For the impressive panel of intellectuals who contributed to your April issue ("A Time to Love . . ."), the sole interpretation given to the much-misused word "love" was that of (hetero)sexual love, romantic love if you prefer, confusing "loving" (durable) and "being in love" (all too often transient). Not one of your authors used the word in what seems to me its essential sense, that of *caring*. This led to the absurd situation in which half a page of the magazine was devoted to Don Juan, whereas Mother Teresa did not get a mention. Nor was parental love given the pride of place it should have had, or the love of ordinary folk for their friends, or the unquestioning trust of children, or the touching bond that sometimes develops between a human being and an animal. Yet it is that kind of quiet affection that "makes the world go round", not the glamorous Hollywood stuff.

H. TIMSARI
VILLE-LA-GRANDE, FRANCE

LOVE WITH A CAPITAL L

Do you think it is easy for a fifteen-year-old to read an issue of the *UNESCO Courier* on Love? At an age when we often suffer from what has been called "the lobster complex", we need above all, amid so many uncertainties, to have a sound definition of Love. The posters of stars like Marilyn Monroe, James Dean and Ava Gardner on my bedroom wall are images of Fullness and Emptiness—the fullness written in the faces, the emptiness of what one expects to receive from them. At our age we still attach faces to our adolescent illusions; at forty it is too late. For already the realization is dawning that life is not eternal and that all these faces are interchangeable.

This evening I have realized that interchangeability is inevitable if one loves Love and not "being in love". I shall continue to scatter myself to the winds, but I shall know that it will be for the sake of an absolute, Love with a capital L.

CLAIRE TANCONS
BOISRIPEAUX (GUADELOUPE)

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO DUTY?

I note that one feature of the world in which we live is the growing number of rights—the rights of the child, minority rights, the right to work, to health, to freedom of speech, etc. But what about those who are not covered by any of these headings? Why such a diversity of rights, such a profusion of categories? Are there so many gaps in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Are its provisions unsatisfactorily applied?

What about duty, the opposite pole to rights, and one from which they are in a sense indissociable? No-one talks about duty any more. The very word is no longer part of our vocabulary. Why is this? Is it because we now only possess rights and not duties? What can happen to a society that insists only on rights? What is life without a sense of duty?

Why not devote an issue of the *UNESCO Courier* to the notion of duty as it has appeared in different peoples and civilizations down the ages—spiritual, religious, moral, and civic duty, duty to oneself and to others, individual, collective and professional duties? Is this concept specific to human beings and if so what happens when it is neglected?

MARCELLE ACHARD
VERSAILLES (FRANCE)

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