

PLAGIARISM

Art as Commodity and Strategies for its Negation



edited by
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Plagiarism: art as commodity and strategies

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INTRODUCTION

THIS is a pamphlet intended to accompany the debate that surrounds "The Festival Of Plagiarism", but it may also be read and used separately from any specific event. It should not be viewed as a catalogue for the festival, as it contains opinions that bear no relation to those of a number of people participating in the event.

Presented here are a number of divergent views on the subjects of plagiarism, art and culture. One of the problems inherent in left opposition to dominant culture is that there is no agreement on the use of specific terms. Thus while some of the 'essays' contained here are antagonistic towards the concept of art — defined in terms of the culture of the ruling elite — others use the term in a less specific sense and are consequently less critical of it. Since the term 'art' is popularly associated with cults of 'genius' it would seem expedient to stick to the term 'culture' — in a non-elitist sense — when describing our own endeavours. Although culture as a category appears to be a 'universal' experience, none of its individual expressions meet such a criteria. This is the basis of our principle objection to art — it claims to be 'universal' when it is very clearly class based.

Hopefully this pamphlet, and the festival itself, will go some way towards demonstrating that there has been an opposition to art since the term took on its modern meaning in the eighteenth century.

Stewart Home.

THE FESTIVAL OF PLAGIARISM - EVENTS

January 7th to January 23rd: "Hoardings" an installation by Ed Baxter, Simon Dickason & Andy Hopton at Bedford Hill Gallery, 50 Bedford Hill, Balham, London SW12 9RH.

January 9th: mystery events on the circle line of the London Underground system. Guerilla performances all day. Catch them if you can!

January 13th, 7.00pm: Slides Ac a talk by Ed Baxter, followed by discussion, Bedford Hill Gallery, Balham, London SW12 9RH.

January 15th to January 28th: "Iconoclasm" - installations by Malcolm Dickson, Gordon Muir and Billy Clark at the Crypt, St.Georges Church, Bloomsbury Way, London WC1.

January 16, 17, 23 & 24: "Xerography And Other Ephemera From The Eternal Network" an installation by Mielck And 6t Elizabeth Was, plus a group show, at Reality Studios, 34 Cotesbach Road, Clapton, London E5.

January 21st, 7.00pm: Slides & talk by Ed Baxter, Stewart Home; performance by John Berndt. Slide/tape presentation of Alessandro Aiello's 'Recycled Arts' (1986).

January 28th to February 28th: "Karen Eliot - Apocrypha" a group show by various people all using the name 'Karen Eliot', at Community Copy Art, Culross Buildings, Battle Bridge Road, Kings Cross, London NW1.

January 30th: National Home Taping Day - help kill the music industry by making a cassette of far out sounds for a friend.

February 4th to February 12th: "Plagiarism - Sweet Revulsion" an exhibition by Jeni Briggs, Anni Munday, Karen Strang, Gabriel & others at The Gallery, St.James's Church, Piccadilly, London W1.

February 4th to February 28th: "There Is No Natural Religion" images by Graham Harwood and Graham Tansley, Wren Cafe, St.James's Church, Piccadilly, London W1.

February 4th: "Radio Plagiarism", KPFA 94.1 FM, San Francisco, Midnight to 3 am: 'Over The Edge plays host to the Festival of Plagiarism'.

February 5, 6 & 7: Feb.5th 8pm through to Feb.7th 10pm, continuous polymedia celebration of plagiarism at Artist's Television Access, 992 Valencia Street, San Francisco. Among the participants: Minette Lehmann, Michael Peppe, Barrett Watten, Marshall Weber, Steve Benson, Eilee Corder, Amy Elliott, Carla Harryman, Clifford Hunt, Janet Janet, Scott MacLeod, Steve Perkins, Hugh Pocock, Nick Robinson, Harvey Stein, 6c Marshall Weber.

February 7th at noon: Performance by Shaun Caton at an abandoned petrol station opposite Lambeth North tube station.

February 9th to March 1st: "Work" by Krystyna Borkowska & Andrzej Borkowski at the Escape Gallery & Coffee House, 141-143 Greenwich South Street, Greenwich, London SE10.

February 9th to February 20th - "Routine Art Co: Retroactive", work by Stefan Szczelkun at M&B Motors, 33 Lewisham Way, New Cross SE14. 'Maximum Security' (performance), Feb 9th, 9-10 pm. Live Art daily.

February 11th to March 3rd: "Humanity in Ruins" an installation by Karen Eliot at Central Space, 23-29 Faroe Road, Shepherds Bush, London W14.

February 16th at 7.30 pm: An evening of videos at Community Copy Art, Culross Buildings, Battle Bridge Road, Kings Cross, London NW1: Franz John, 'Instant Copier Animation', 'The Copied Gallery'; Malcolm Dickson, 'XS'; Simon Anderson, 'Disconcerted States of Mind'; Julia Gash & Neil Combs, 'Work in Progress'; Ben Allen, 'Untitled'.

Feb.23rd at 7.30pm: A second evening of videos at Community Copy Art, Culross Buildings, Battle Bridge Road, Kings Cross, London NW1: Simon Anderson, 'Flux Events', Ralph Rumney, 'Two Men & a Door'; Franz John, 'Crickets', instant Copier Animation'; more new work from Ben Allen; Ade Barradell, 'Wallpaper Performance'.

February 26, 27, 28: Three nights of music, noise and performance at London Musicians' Collective, 42 Gloucester Avenue, Chalk Farm, London NW1. Performances by Serle Kochberg & Chris Lee; Joseph Curwen; When; N.A.Palm & his Full Metal Jacket; Matthew Saunders; Le Pissoir; Big (all Feb.26; compere - Erik Fuller); A Workers' Operetta featuring the Massed Ranks of the Proletariat; Klang!; Bing Selfish & the Idealists (all Feb.27); Ilie Irresistible Force; Pornosect; A Spanner thru ma Beatbox (all Feb.28).

Articles about the 'Festival' appeared in 'Punch' (*All Whose Own Work?*, Jonathan Sale, Feb.5. 1988); 'Artists Newsletter' (February 1988); and 'The Times Higher Education Supplement' (*Living in borrowed time*, John Walker, 26.2.88). Part of the first edition of this 'Plagiarism' booklet text was reproduced in 'False Mental'



PLAGIARISM AS NEGATION IN CULTURE

GIVEN the total colonisation of daily life by Capital, we are forced to speak the received language of the media. It has always been impossible to give coherent expression to thoughts and practices which oppose the dominant ideology. However, we do not seek the creation of new languages. Such an act is doomed to failure and plays into Capital's hands (by reinforcing the myths of 'originality' and Individual creativity'). Rather, we aim to re-invent the language of those who would control us.

While we refute the concept of 'originality', we do not find it problematic that the idea of plagiarism implies an original. Although we believe all 'human creativity' is accumulative (that is to say, that all Innovations' are built on the sum total of what has gone before), it does not trouble us that there is, in the past, a 'point of origin'. We cannot give an account of this 'point of origin' and will not waste our time making philosophical speculations about such irrelevancies.

Plagiarism is the negative point of a culture that finds its ideological justification in the 'unique'. Indeed, it is only through the creation of 'unique identities' that commodification can take place. Thus the unsuccessful search for a new, and universal, language by 'modernist artists' should be viewed as a high point of the capitalist project. However, this in-no way implies that 'post-modernism' is somehow more 'radical' than its precursor. Both movements were simply stages in a single trajectory. Such developments reflect the establishment's ability to recuperate actions and concepts which in the past threatened its very constitution. 'Post-modern appropriation' is very different to plagiarism. While post-modern theory falsely asserts that there is no longer any basic reality, the plagiarist recognises that Power is always a reality in historical society.

Post-modernists fall into two categories. The first of these are cynics who understand the ideological process in which they play a minor role and manipulate it for personal gain. The second category of post-modernists are simply naive. Bombarded by media images, they believe that the ever changing 'normality' presented by the press and tv constitutes a loss of 'reality'. The plagiarist, by contrast, recognises the role the media plays in masking the mechanisms of Power and actively seeks to disrupt this function.

By reconstituting dominant images, by subjectivising them, we aim to create a 'normality' better suited to our requirements than the media nightmare dictated by Power. However, we have never imagined that this can be achieved solely through 'gallery' exposure. The attitudes used to sell washing powder have a powerful hold over our consciousness precisely because the images associated with them are those most often reproduced in the media. For an image to be effective it needs continuous reproduction in the press and on tv. The only viable alternative to our strategy of exposure to images reconstituted by the process of plagiarism, is the physical destruction of transmission stations and print technology.

Karen Eliot (first published in the catalogue accompanying 'Desire In Ruins', Transmission Gallery, Glasgow May 1987).

AUTO-PLAGIARISM

FROM Lautremont onwards it has become increasingly difficult to write. Not because people no longer have anything to say, but because Western society has fragmented to such a degree that it is now virtually impossible to write in the style of classical, coherent, prose. That is, writing held together by a single idea, or body of ideas, with each paragraph and chapter flowing smoothly into the next. Today, thoughts seem to break apart before they are fully formed, and then turn back on themselves in a welter of contradictions, making it impossible to write in a traditional manner.

The major problem of twentieth-century art is the constant demand for something new and original. The consequence of this demand is that while everything appears to change, nothing actually changes. Instead there is a constant reappearance of the same half-baked ideas, using a succession of increasingly silly names. It took thousands of years to develop perspective, and yet today people demand radical innovations every week. The result is that they get exactly what they deserve — insults.

The great advantage of plagiarism as a literary method is that it removes the need for talent, and even much application. All you really need to do is select what to plagiarise. Enthusiastic beginners might like to start by plagiarising this article on plagiarism. A purist will choose to plagiarise it verbatim; but those who feel the need to express the creative side of their personality will change a word here and there, or re-arrange the order of the paragraphs.

Plagiarism is a highly creative process because with every plagiarism a new meaning is added to the work. Unfortunately, the forces of order have contrived to make plagiarism of recent texts illegal, making the risk of prosecution a deterrent even to the most dedicated plagiarist. However, a few sensible precautions can be used to reduce this risk. - The basic rule is to take the ideas and spirit from a text, without actually plagiarising it word for word. Orwell's '1984', which is a straight re-write of Zamyatin's 'We', is a fine example of this. Another possibility for avoiding prosecution is to work under an assumed name such as Karen Eliot, or use non-copyrighted material such as the texts of the Situationist International.

To conclude, plagiarism saves time and effort, improves results, and shows considerable initiative on the part of the individual plagiarist. As a revolutionary tool it is ideally suited to the needs of the twentieth-century. For those who find the selection of material too much of a 'creative' challenge, the remedy is to introduce a system for randomly selecting material. Let's do away once and for all with the myth of 'genius'.

Stewart Home (collage of material 'originally' written in 1984/5).

PLAGIARISM

WHILE the use of the word is recorded in the early seventeenth century (and novelists such as Fielding in the eighteenth discuss the issue), the idea of plagiarism gained currency in the Romantic era, i.e. in the era which marked the triumph of the bourgeoisie. It emerged as a concomitant of Romantic formulations of Genius.

The (paradigmatic) Plagiarist is the obverse of the (paradigmatic) Genius. Whereas the Genius bypasses the demands of time by recourse to a mysterious and 'natural' internal power, the Plagiarist does so by stealing the property of others. The Genius 'legitimately' saves time by doing at age seven what others cannot do until they are thirty; the Plagiarist 'illegitimately' saves time by misappropriation. The actions of the Plagiarist subvert concepts of value based-in labour time and the difficulty of production, i.e. the political-economic bedrock of capitalism.

Obviously, notions such as Genius and Plagiarist only have currency insofar as society defines reality in terms of how time may be 'spent', 'wasted', and 'saved'. Plagiarism suggests implicitly that much labour is a 'waste' of time: as such it is unacceptable in a productivist society, even if (as in the West) this society actually condones institutionalised waste in the forms of war, stock-piling food, &c. Analysis of plagiarism uncovers many similar contradictions. The practice of plagiarism articulates the effects and extent of these contradictions.

Traditionally, the Plagiarist does not own up but is discovered by whomsoever has access to certain specialist areas of knowledge (necessarily similar to the plagiarist's own). Thus Coleridge was accused of plagiarising many (untranslated) German philosophers by De Quincey, whose autobiography curiously includes two entire chapters lifted from an obscure work by the Rev.Gordon. De Quincey was in turn plagiarised by Alfred De Musset and Baudelaire, two writers whose 'original' outpourings were ironically attacked by Lautreamont - whose aphoristic 'Plagiarism is necessary. It is implied in the idea of progress' has been taken up repeatedly since: for example, by Alfred Jarry; by the surrealists (Breton reaffirmed Baudelaire's call 'for ever to find the new'); and by the situationists. Similarly, T.S.Eliot's maxim, 'Bad poets borrow, good poets steal' has also become a modern commonplace, regarded as symptomatically important of the attitude of the would-be creator towards the great and influential works of the past. (The argument is not confined to literature: Stravinsky has been credited with an almost identical remark). Recent critical trends have proposed an 'Anxiety of Influence' which prompts the creator to work in such a way as to make the works of the past appear like 'anticipatory plagiarisms' - an idea which is itself prefigured in the theories of the OuLiPo.

The issue of plagiarism still constitutes a dilemma: in the nineteen seventies George Harrison was found to have stolen a musical idea for a hit record he recorded. More recently, Princess Michael of Kent was accused of presenting another writer's work as her own. The issue of 'ultimate responsibility' for a work, legally expressed in terms of copyright (an increasingly confused area since the advent of modern technological developments) has been thrown into further disarray by another exemplary case: namely the marketing of countless blank sheets of paper signed by Salvador Dali, apparently filled indiscriminately by forgers intent on profiting from unscrupulous art dealers.

Plagiarism in late capitalist society articulates a semi-conscious cultural condition: namely, that there 'is nothing left to say', a feeling made more potent by the theoretical possibility of access to all knowledge brought about by new technologies. The practitioners of much post-modern theory have tended to proclaim this feeling rather smugly; but if there is nothing to say, they yet demonstrate that there will always be something to sell. On the other hand, there are practitioners active in many disciplines who, recognising the necessity for collective action demanded by media such as film and electronic tape, engage in plagiarism in an attempt to expose and explode once and for all the individualistic attitudes which tend to make all current human activity seem redundant and increasingly alienated.

Some of the results of a concerted effort on the part of practitioners concerned with the analysis of the untenable contradictions which still inform contemporary artistic practice comprise part of the Festival Of Plagiarism, London & San Francisco 1988.

Tex Beard (written 1987 and published simultaneously here and in the Edinburgh Review).

WHY PLAGIARISM?

ANYONE with more than half a brain will agree that art has never been a 'superior' activity and that even as a 'therapy' it holds little attraction unless one is really raking in the money. Ideologically art is used to promote an ethic of individual, or separated, subjectivity. Such a practice is encouraged by high financial rewards, which endow art with the secondary characteristic of being an 'unofficial' stock-market, in which capital can be valorised at increasingly accelerated rates.

Regarding the forms of art as propaganda, there are a multitude of conflicting opinions, each reflecting the sectional interests of the varied racketeers with an investment staked in the maintenance of this society. While some claim that 'art' is the province of a few men (sic) of 'genius', there are others who shout that 'art must be made by all'. However, these reformist positions never go beyond rhetoric. Art is a commodity relation, and the admission of art by all onto the market would cause a drastic fall in the rate of profit.

Art has never been about quality. There is no intrinsic difference between 'failed' works (i.e. those that remain unsold because their makers are unable to persuade a gallery to promote them in the market) and those which become art upon the realisation of an exchange value. Of course the 'picture' is somewhat complicated by public and corporate 'funding'. Subsidies are a prestige investment. The 'art work' itself has always played a secondary role.

Art must always emphasise the 'Individuality' of ownership and creation. Plagiarism, by contrast, is rooted in social process, communality, and a recognition that society is far more than the sum of individuals (both past and present) who constitute it. In practice social development has always been based on plagiarism (one only has to observe children to realise that advancement is 99% imitation), but this reality is mystified by the ideology of 'art'. Art itself is based on pictorial traditions built up over thousands of years, and yet art historians and critics always focus on the very minor, usually negligible, 'innovations' of each 'individual' artist.

We are not denying the possibility of rapid transformation, indeed we are critical of capitalism precisely because it impedes such a process. Woman creates herself, not individually, but on the social level. When a mass of people 'believe' something it becomes possible. Art, by emphasising 'individual' subjectivity, inhibits the development of a collective inter-subjectivity which could transform the world a million times in the time it takes to paint a single picture.

To draw attention to these facts, the literary and artistic 'heritage' of womanity must be used for partisan propaganda purposes. Naturally, we will go beyond any idea of 'scandal', since the pseudo-neagation of art has been boring us for the past 80 years. Drawing a moustache on the 'Mona Lisa' is not in itself interesting, but it does indicate certain possibilities. The recent 'shooting' of the Leonardo cartoon in the National Gallery (London) was an exemplary act. The seriousness with which this incident was treated by the media left the majority of the population, to whom art means nothing, shaking with mirth.

Acts of 'art vandalism' are only found shocking by those who see 'Individual genius' as the ultimate justification of private property. The appearance of new necessities outmodes previous 'inspired' works. They are obstacles, dangerous habits. The point is not whether we like them or not. Plagiarism necessitates that we go beyond this.

Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can serve in making new combinations. When two objects are brought together, no matter how far apart their original contexts may be, a relationship is always formed. The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the bringing together of two independent expressions, supercedes the original elements and produces a synthetic organisation of greater efficacy. Anything can be used.

It is here, in the creation of new meanings, that we see most clearly the divergence between plagiarism and post-modern ideology. The plagiarist has no difficulty with meanings, reality, truth. The plagiarist sees no crisis of the sign - only the continual transformation of human relationships within a social context. When a post-modernist talks of plagiarism they call it 'appropriation' (transfer of ownership) in an attempt to maintain the ideological role of the artist. As Capitalism sinks further into crisis, it becomes increasingly difficult for any Individual' artist to exude an appearance of 'originality'. Reacting to this 'impossible' situation the post-modernist takes on a 'corporate' image and 'copyrights' an ill-digested assortment of fragments. This is in direct contrast to the plagiarist who, rather than accepting this stasis, seeks to speed up the process of decay, and opposes both modernism AND post-modernism (which are but two stages in the trajectory of Capital) with the totality of communist transformation.

Lautreamont, perhaps the best known exponent of plagiarism, is still misunderstood by many of his 'admirers'. In the 'Poesies', he uses plagiarism (drawing on the ethical maxims of Pascal and Vauvenargues) to reduce arguments, through successive concentrations, to maxims alone. However Viroux still managed to cause considerable astonishment in the '50s by demonstrating that 'Maldoror' is, among other things, one vast plagiarism of Buffon and other works of natural history. That Viroux saw this as justification for disparaging Lautreamont was less surprising than the fact that certain of his 'admirers' thought it necessary to defend him by praising his insolence! There will be no social transformation until the slogan 'Plagiarism is necessary, progress implies it', is widely understood. Once such an understanding occurs, industrialisation and information technology will be left looking like left-overs from the stone-age.

Ideas and realisations in the realm of plagiarism can be multiplied at will. For the moment we will limit ourselves to showing a few concrete possibilities starting from various current sectors of communication — it being understood that these separate sectors are significant only in relation to present day techniques, and are all tending to merge into superior syntheses.

A plagiarised architecture begins with an experimental baroque stage, the architectural complex — which we conceive as the construction of a dynamic environment related to styles of behaviour. Once plagiarism is extended to urbanistic realisations not many people will remain unaffected. We propose the exact reconstruction in one city of an entire neighbourhood of another. Plagiarism can never be too complete, done on this level the destruction of the old world could not be far away.

The methods we have dealt with here are not our own inventions, but represent a widespread practice which we seek to make visible. Plagiarism deals with the connectedness of things. These ideas are not new, they didn't appear as if from 'nowhere', like everything around us they arose from the collective activity of creating, and recreating, the world.

Bob Jones (first published in Variant 3, Autumn 1987).

PLAGERISM (sic)

IDEAS improve. Plagiarism implies it. The use of overt plagerism by 'art movements' like "The Generation Positive", "The Neoists" and "PRAXIS" does not, however, participate in this improvement. In the 'post-industrial' condition of information overload, the raw surplus of images, ideas and texts is so great that the selective process of choosing what material to plagerize is as much a 'creative' act as the construction of the images, ideas and texts in the first place. If the aim of plagerism is to make a 'radical' break with 'creativity' and its 'commodity value', plagerists must give up the selection process and confine themselves to a 'Cagian' 'random method'. Since the introduction of 'random method' in no way prevents the use of the resulting materials for storage of excess Value' (ART), a more appropriate action for consistent plagerists would be participation (sic) in the ARTISTS STRIKE, meaning (at least) three years of inactivity (between 1990 and 1993). Only through complete inactivity can we purge ourselves of the capitalist values of 'originality' and 'creativity' manifested through 'ART' and its double, 'Plagerism'.

John Berndt (first published in Smile 6/7, 1986).

EMPTY WORDS (extract)

PROGRESS is necessary. Plagiarism implies it. Ideas improve. The meaning of words participates in this improvement.

Karen Eliot (full article published in Smile 9, 1986).

ORIENTATION FOR THE USE OF A CONTEXT AND THE CONTEXT FOR THE USE OF AN ORIENTATION (extracts)

KAREN Eliot is a name that refers to an individual human being who can be anyone. The name is fixed, the people using it aren't. The purpose of many different people using the same name is to create a situation for which no one in particular is responsible and to practically examine western philosophic notions of identity, individuality, value and truth.

Anyone can become Karen Eliot simply by adopting the name, but they are only Karen Eliot for the period in which they adopt the name. Karen Eliot was materialised, rather than born, as an open context in the summer of '85. When one becomes Karen Eliot one's previous existence consists of the acts other people have undertaken using the name. When one becomes Karen Eliot one has no family, no parents, no birth. Karen Eliot was not born, s/he was materialised from social forces, constructed as a means of entering the shifting terrain that circumscribes the 'individual' and society.

The name Karen Eliot can be strategically adopted for a series of actions, interventions, exhibitions, texts, etc. When replying to letters generated by an action/text in which the context has been used then it makes sense to continue using the context, ie by replying as Karen Eliot. However in personal relationships, where one has a personal history other than the acts undertaken by a series of people using the name Karen Eliot, it does not make sense to use the context. If one uses the context in personal life there is a danger that the name Karen Eliot will become over identified with individual human beings. We are perhaps heading towards the abolition of the personal, perhaps everything is social and the personal (the individual) is just illusion; this area of activity must be debated, examined. However, previous experiments with multiple names, such as the Monty Cantsin fiasco, indicate that the failure to differentiate between the personal and the social, and in particular over-identification by certain individuals with the context, is disastrous. The use of multiple names for pop groups and magazines has proved far less problematic than with human beings...

...This text is not definitive, please plagiarise it, alter it, rewrite it, and otherwise freely adapt it...

Karen Eliot (first published as a leaflet, 1986).

THE QUESTION OF PLAGIARISM IN CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICE (extracts)

...'PLAGIARISM' stems from the latin word for a net, used in connection with the stealing of men, in other words, kidnapping, and its use in the arts is an ironic one — that, by stealing the idea, you are stealing the person. In my dictionary, it is defined as "the act of appropriating the writings or ideas of another and passing them off as one's own". Its use is illustrated by the example of the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was accused of plagiarism — according to Walpole's "Anecdotes Of Painting", "for having borrowed attitudes from ancient masters" — in which case, most of the artists up to the middle of the nineteenth century must be accused of it also. I don't wish to dwell on Reynolds, but suffice it to say that, even though accused of plagiarism, he became first president of the Royal Academy and was one of the most eminent portraitists of his time — his style has been plagiarised by baby-photographers and chocolate box artists for many years since... If we come closer to our time, there are several more examples of people lifting imagery from others to use in their own work. Picasso wasn't alone in using fairly blatant african imagery in his paintings... Even more contemporary are the pop artists, many of whom didn't even bother to integrate the pictures that they 'stole' into any wider scheme... Sherrie Levine...recently exhibited high-quality reproductions of Franz Marc's work in an exhibition... Plagiarism, the theft of ideas and their re-application by dadaists, by neoists, by neo-dadists, by Fluxus and by many other radicals of the twentieth century, sought — even if in vain — to change the relationship between art and society. The art of post-modernists seeks only to reinforce the status quo.

Simon Anderson (first delivered as a lecture at Norwich College Of Art 12/10/87).

PLAGIARISM

PLAGIUM is an old, latin-based, word used in civil law to describe kidnapping and manstealing. Stewart Home seems to suggest that plagiarism is a satisfactory translation of detournement: in usage plagiarism has come to mean 'the taking or using as one's own of another's thoughts, writings, or inventions. 2. A purloined idea, design, passage, or work'.

In its current usage detournement has implications of this; but the real meaning involves a change of context. Something familiar is taken and placed in a new context or environment so that its apparent meaning gives way to what the 'detoumeur' (plagiarist) perceives to be its real significance.

Essentially, both words are nowadays used in an artistic context. If art or religion or anything else has any role or function in the real world, we must allow these activities to be political. If, in regard to politics, we agree with Norman Dixon that "a potential for destruction, on a scale hitherto undreamed of, lies in the hands of a few ageing individuals who, in terms of personality, motivation, state of stress and cerebral efficiency, should hardly be trusted with the weekend shopping"; and if we are further aware of the intense interest shown in cultural matters by both the CIA and the KGB, we should not be astonished that some artists feel that they have a political role.

It can further be said, that the 'Courtauld' (for want of a better name) concept of art history, is based on a theory of plagiarism. However, they call plagiarism 'derivation' or 'evolution'. Perhaps art history should be reexamined in the light of the idea that the 'taking from others' was outright theft, breach of copyright if you prefer, and that the intention was **BASICALLY TO SUBVERT WHAT HAD GONE BEFORE**. We might even suggest that there were two categories of takers. Those who plagiarised blindly, and those who plagiarised in order to satirise their predecessors.

After this preamble, I do not expect to surprise anyone by quoting extensively from a spy novel which is based on Sun Tzu's military theories. Sun Tzu was, of course, more concerned with gaining victory than with indulging in military combat, which he saw as a last resort, or a failure of strategy. I want to suggest that the artist ructions similarly. Like the worm in the apple or the termite in your chair, changing what is within, without touching the surface.

So, I am off into some plagiarism or detournement. The following citations are all taken from 'The Set Up' by Vladimir Volkoff; Methuen 1985. I would wish the gentle reader to look at their applicability to art; to attempt their detournement!

"It is very likely that I shall find ... men possessed of a virtue that is indispensable to me, namely sympathy? Courage, yes, and devotion, and guile, and cruelty ... but the ability to put oneself in the place of another, to leap into the consciousness and even the unconsciousness of another... ?

1. DISCREDIT GOOD
2. COMPROMISE THE LEADERS
3. SHAKE THEIR FAITH, DELIVER THEM TO CONTEMPT
4. USE BASE MEN
5. DISORGANISE THE AUTHORITIES
6. SOW DISCORD AMONG THE CITIZENS
7. INCITE THE YOUNG AGAINST THE OLD
8. RIDICULE TRADITIONS
9. DISLOCATE SUPPLIES
10. LET LASCIVIOUS MUSIC BE HEARD
11. SPREAD LECHERY
12. LAY OUT MONEY
13. BE INFORMED

'These,' said Abdulrahmanov with satisfaction, 'are the thirteen commandments that I have taken from Sun Tzu.'...

Those who are expert in the art of war make the enemy submit without a fight,... they take cities without mounting an attack and overthrow a state without prolonged operations."

Further on:

"Our comrade Mao Tse-Tung says that we must "mould" the consciousness of the enemy's masses: in so far as we design the mould, we will have them at our mercy ... I don't know that I shall be revealing any secrets if I tell you that we distinguish five methods that enable us to get the enemy to act as we want. First, white propaganda, a game two can play, and which consists simply in repeating "I am better than you" over and over again. Secondly, black propaganda, a game for three players: one attributes to the enemy fictitious statements intended to annoy the third party, for whose benefit this comedy is being played. Then there is intoxication, a game for two or three players: the aim is to deceive, but by more subtle methods than lying: for example, I would not give

you false information, but I would arrange for you to steal it from me. Then there is disinformation, a word that is now used to denote all these methods taken together. In the strict sense, disinformation is to intoxication what strategy is to tactics ... The fifth method is secret."

A little further on, we come to the ten recipes which are given to the spy for the composition of tendentious information.

"The unverifiable inversion of truth, the true-false mixture, the distortion of truth, change of context, blurring - with its variant selective truths -exaggerated commentary,illustration, generalisation, unequal parts, equal parts."

If more space were available I would quote the hilarious examples given of the application of these methods. In default, I suggest a game; apply the ten principles to the following 'fact'. Peter finds his wife in Paul's bed.

By this detournement of Sun Tzu, already detoume, I am trying to say something about the uses of plagiarism/detournement. The Dadaists, and later Leo Mallet, perceived this as the most subversive tool of the modern artist. I think, that in what I have written or copied, we can find ways to apply our skills to some purpose.

Ralph Rumney (written 1987, previously unpublished).

PLAGIARISM

PLAGIARISM is the conscious manipulation of pre-existing elements in the creation of 'aesthetic' works. Plagiarism is inherent in all 'artistic' activity, since both pictorial and literary 'arts' function with an inherited language; even when their practitioners aim at overthrowing this received syntax (as happened with modernism and post-modernism).

At the beginning of the twentieth-century, the way in which pre-existing elements were used in 'artistic' productions underwent a quantitative leap with the 'discovery' of collage. This development was pre-figured in the 'writings' of Isidore Ducass (1846—1870), who is better known by his pen name 'Lautreamont'.

In his "Poems", Ducasse wrote: "Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it." This maxim summarises the use to which plagiarism has been put ever since. Two, or more, divergent, elements are brought together to create new meanings. The resulting sum is greater than the individual parts.

The lettristes, and later the situationists, called this process 'detournement' (diversion is a literal translation from the french), but the activity is still popularly known as plagiarism - the term that Lautreamont used.

Plagiarism enriches human language, it is a collective undertaking far removed from the post-modern 'theories' of appropriation. Plagiarism implies a sense of history and leads to progressive social transformation. In contrast, the 'appropriations' of post-modern ideologists are individualistic and and alienated. Plagiarism is for life, post-modernism is fixated on death.

Stewart Home (written 1987, previously unpublished).

WHEN ART BECOMES A COMMODITY

WHAT type of company has its offices in Geneva, is registered in Panama, insured in London and banked in Bermuda; makes its purchases, issues and financial statements in dollars, and trades its shares in Swiss francs? Answer: an art investment fund, 'Modarco'. The Panama registration is useful because, as Note G of Modarco's 1975 financial report says, 'Under present legislation in Panama the company is not subject to corporate or other taxes'. Modarco's art collection is conservatively valued at 20 million dollars.

Modarco is typical of what the whole art market is about: maximum speculation in any art object — be it an old master painting or a signed can of artist's shit — with the minimum return to State or society.

The artist as creator and manufacturer of his product has an unusual degree of control over his (sic) work. But once his (sic) painting or sculpture is on the market it may disappear — often for years — to circulate between dealers, auctioneers and collectors, changing hands at a profit for all involved — except, of course, the artists.

If the artist is lucky enough to find a Bond Street dealer to promote his or her work, he or she must expect to give the dealer a commission of around 50 per cent. Since the trade is only inter-

ested in the artist's product, the presence of the artist becomes a liability.

An artist might 'produce too much' for the market to bear or lose their talent' — which means that the artist's recent work is being rejected by collectors and the market price is declining. From the art trade's point of view, the only good artist is a dead artist.

The dealer's trade is mostly export. In the case of contemporary art, exports account for 90 per cent of sales. The trend is towards quoting prices only in dollars, Swiss francs or German marks so as to avoid constant repricing in discredited sterling.

Every run on the lire also sends a wave of Italians to the art markets of Europe. While in Britain the art trade deny with monotonous regularity that speculation is a motive for collecting, in Italy it is openly encouraged.

One magazine issues half-yearly reports on the markets of contemporary artists. Each entry has subdivisions such as: Notes on the market history; General market characteristics; Current market situation; Market distribution; History of action prices; Circulation of forgeries (forgeries being the bane of the art world).

Although the art trade would happily strip the entire country of every art object if it was profitable, it closed ranks with the country's wealthiest 1 per cent in the battle against the wealth tax, and echoed the chorus of protest at this supposed threat to 'our' national heritage. In fact, the proposed tax would have allowed a measure of tax relief for works of art made available to the public — and a work of art available to the public is not available to the art trade.

Hugh Leggatt, a London dealer, became secretary to the anti-wealth tax pressure group called 'Heritage in Danger' ... at the same time, Leggatt was chairman of a committee set up to encourage the sale of works of art from Britain to Arab states.

Britain's 1 per cent have been victorious: the wealth tax is shelved. Meanwhile they have won another victory in the new capital transfer tax, which is replacing estate duty: works of art which form part of an estate are conditionally exempt from paying any tax.

The conditions are such that in order to make beneficial use of this 'escape clause' one would have to be very rich indeed; but being very rich one could end up paying very little tax through the simple expedient of transferring a large part of one's estate into gilt-edged works of art

Recently British Rail's pension fund purchased a number of old master paintings for investment. It paid prices that sent the dealers and auctioneers laughing all the way to the bank, but this is the least disturbing aspect of it. Far worse is the collusion of a state organisation in capitalism's most blatant speculative juggle.

As commodities, works of art act as completely unproductive repositories of capital, generating no tax or revenue and providing minimal employment. Speculation in land is governed by legislation that prevents the wilder type of adventure; nothing governs the art market, which hides behind the alibi of art and manipulates the critics, museum curators and other 'experts' into backing its cynical adventures.

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ART IS THE CREATION OF SUBSTITUTES

THE primary function of art is to objectify feeling, by which one's own motivations and identity are transformed into symbol and metaphor. All art, as symbolization, is rooted in the creation of substitutes, surrogates for something else; by its very nature therefore, it is falsification. Under the guise of "enriching the quality of human experience", we accept vicarious, symbolic descriptions of how we should feel, trained to need such public images of sentiment that ritual art and myth provide for our psychic security.

Life in civilization is lived almost wholly in a medium of symbols. Not only scientific or technological activity consists largely of symbolic processing. The laws of aesthetic form are canons of symbolization, often expressed quite unspiritually. It is widely averred, for example, that a limited number of mathematical figures account for the efficacy of art. There is Cezanne's famous dictum to "treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere and the cone", and Kandinsky's judgement that "the impact of the acute angle of a triangle on a circle produces an effect no less powerful than the finger of God touching the finger of Adam in Michelangelo". The sense of a symbol, as Charles Peirce concluded, is its translation into another symbol, thus an endless reproduction, with the real always displaced.

Though art is not fundamentally concerned with beauty, its inability to rival nature sensuously has evoked many unfavourable comparisons. "Moonlight is Sculpture", wrote Hawthorne; Shelley

praised the "unpremeditated art" of the skylark; Verlaine pronounced the sea more beautiful than all the cathedrals. And so on, with sunsets, snowflakes, flowers, etc, beyond the symbolic products of art. Jean Arp, in fact, termed "the most perfect picture" nothing more than "a warty, threadbare approximation, a dry porridge".

Why then would one respond positively to art? As compensation and palliative, because our relationship to nature and life is so deficient and disallows an authentic one. As Motherlant put it, "One gives to one's art what one has not been capable of giving to one's existence". It is true for artist and audience alike; art, like religion, arises from unsatisfied desire.

Art should be considered a religious activity and category also in the sense of Nietzsche's aphorism, 'We have art in order not to perish of Truth'. Its consolation explains the widespread preference for metaphor over a direct relationship to the genuine article. If pleasure were somehow released from every restraint, the result would be the antithesis of art. In dominated life freedom does not exist outside art, however, and so even a tiny, deformed fraction of the riches of being is welcomed. "I create in order not to cry", revealed Klee.

This separate realm of contrived life is both impotent and in complicity with the actual nightmare that prevails. In its institutionalized separation, it corresponds to religion and ideology in general, where its elements are not, and cannot be, actualized; the work of art is a selection of possibilities unrealized except in symbolic terms. Arising from the sense of loss referred to above, it conforms to religion not only by reason of its confinement to an ideal sphere and its absence of any dissenting consequences, but it can hence be no more than thoroughly neutralized criticism at best.

John Zerzan (extract from "The Case Against Art", first published in "Fifth Estate" Vol. 21 No. 1, Detroit 1986).

"GREAT ART" AND "CULTURE"

THE male "artist" attempts to solve his dilemma of not being able to live, of not being female, by constructing a highly artificial world in which the male is heroized, that is, displays female traits, and the female is reduced to highly limited, insipid subordinate role, that is, to being male.

The male "artistic" aim being, not to communicate (having nothing inside him, he has nothing to say) but to disguise his animalism, he resorts to symbolism and obscurity ("deep" stuff). The vast majority of people, particularly "educated" ones, lacking faith in their own judgement, humble, respectful of authority ("Daddy knows best" is translated into adult language as "Critic knows best", "Writer knows best", "Ph D knows best"), are easily conned into believing that obscurity, evasiveness, incomprehensibility, indirectness, ambiguity and boredom are marks of depth and brilliance.

"Great Art" proves that men are superior to women, that men are women, being labeled "Great Art", almost all of which, as the anti-feminists are fond of reminding us, was created by men. We know that "Great Art" is great because male authorities have told us so, and we can't claim otherwise, as only those with exquisite sensitivities far superior to ours can perceive and appreciate the slop that they appreciate.

Appreciating is the sole diversion of the "cultivated"; passive and incompetent, lacking imagination and wit, they must try to make do with that; unable to create their own diversions, to create a little world of their own, to affect in the smallest way their environments, they must accept what's given; unable to create or relate, they spectate. Absorbing "culture" is a desperate, frantic attempt to groove in an ungroovy world, to escape the horror of a sterile, mindless existence. "Culture" provides a sop to the egos of the incompetent, a means of rationalizing passive spectating; they can pride themselves on their ability to appreciate the "finer" things, to see a jewel where there is only a turd (they want to be admired for admiring). Lacking faith in their ability to change anything, resigned to the status quo, they have to see beauty in turds, because, so far as they can see, turds are all they'll ever have.

The veneration of "Art" and "Culture" — besides leading many women into boring, passive activity that distracts from more important and rewarding activities, and from cultivating active abilities allows the "artist" to be set up as one possessing superior feelings, perceptions, insights and judgements, thereby undermining the faith of insecure women in the value and validity of their own feelings, perceptions, insights and judgements.

The male, having a very limited range of feelings and, consequently, very limited perceptions, insights and judgements, needs the "artist" to guide him, to tell him what life is all about. But the male "artist", being totally sexual, unable to relate to anything beyond his own physical sensations,

having nothing to express beyond the insight that for the male life is meaningless and absurd, cannot be an artist. How can he who is not capable of life tell us what life is all about? A "male artist" is a contradiction in terms. A degenerate can only produce degenerate "art". The true artist is every self-confident, healthy female, and in a female society the only Art, the only Culture, will be conceived, kookie, funkier females grooving on each other and on everything else in the universe.

Valerie Solanas (extract from "S.C.U.M. Manifesto, first published by Olympia Press, New York 1968).

PLAGIARISM, CULTURE, MASS MEDIA.

Plagiarism and Capitalist Society

THE concept of 'plagiarism' has no natural or universal basis. It arose at a specific point (eighteenth century England) in the development of capitalist society. It was the 'intellectual' counter-part of the movement of land enclosures. Both phenomena represent the extension of 'individual ownership' into areas that had, previously, been considered inalienably collective and communal. Thus, plagiarism cannot be dealt with in isolation, but must be viewed as one of the many areas of discourse and discipline, which interweave to form the ideological base - and concrete expression - of what we now understand as modern consumer society.

In our consumer society the 'antithesis' of plagiarism is 'originality'. Originality is in turn linked to 'Individuality'. Free 'individuals' in our 'post-industrial' society express their 'originality' (the signifier of their individuality) primarily through acts of consumption. That is to say, their status within society rises as the speed with which they consume the latest fashions (in clothes, food, music, etc) increases.

The idea of the 'original' (the first) is directly linked to privilege. The original is viewed as superior to the 'copy' (whether this be the case of a first edition book commanding a higher price than a reprint, or live music being considered better than a recording), and from this perspective almost any hierarchy can be 'justified'.

Individuality and originality are only easily attained by the privileged classes. The majority of society, who lack 'blue blood' (a family, or in modern terms a 'brand', name), have to labour to be viewed as 'individual'. But this is labour with a new name — creativity. Increasingly this takes the form of planned leisure pursuits (such as shopping expeditions), where income still dictates the amount of individuality (brand names) any given individual is able to purchase.

In societies with a fully developed mass, media, the concepts of individuality, originality and creativity, are largely subsumed into a single discourse known as 'style'. The obsession with style is not limited to readers of the Face, Blitz, Cosmopolitan and Vogue: those who prefer Class War or New Socialist share the same obsession with style, but adhere to a somewhat less popular brand.

To fully understand 'positive plagiarism' as a strategy with which it is both possible - and necessary - to contest the 'assumptions', 'values' and very existence of the capitalist system, it is essential to be familiar with the history of the media's colonisation of language.

From National Socialism to the Situationist International

While the German Nazi Party was the first 'aesthetic' movement in politics, sloganeering as 'political' programme reached a peak with the self-styled ultra-leftists of the 'Situationist International' (SI). While the SI only had a negligible effect on the 'politics' of its time, the claims of its members and followers reached levels of megalomania which remain unrivalled to this day.

From their first publication in the fifties and sixties, the SI's texts have been read for their literary style, rather than any political content. The SI placed more importance on its public image than any effect it might have had on the world. In this they were tail-ending Hitler. Politics had long since been subsumed within the discourse of style. The difference between the SI and more successful politicians was simply the level of their egotism and pretence.

Richard Allen and the Seventies Teen Cult Novel

Richard Allen (born James Moffatt 1922) played a far more significant role in the colonisation of youth by the media than the 'great pretenders' within the Situationist International. Eighteen 'Richard Allen' books were published by New English Library between 1970 and 1980. The blurb

on the back cover of "Skinhead", the 'first' Allen novel, sets the tone:

"SKINHEAD is a story straight from today's newspaper headlines - portraying with horrifying vividness all the terror and brutality that has become the trademark of these vicious teenage malcontents."

"Skinhead" was followed by "Demo", "Suedehead", "Boot Boys", "Skinhead Escapes", "Skinhead Girls", "Trouble For Skinhead", "Teeny Bopper Idol", "Glam", "Smoothies", "Sorts", "Top Gear Skin", "Skinhead Farewell", "Terrace Terrors", "Dragon Skins", "Knuckle Girls", "Punk Rock" and "Mod Rule". To date, what critical attention these books have received has focused on the issues of football, violence, and the questions of authority and control (see for example Ken Hollings's "Mad Dog Culture" in "Performance 30", June/July 1984). However, what actually lies at the heart of these novels is the issue of style and the media discourse that dictates it.

Joe Hawkins, the 'hero' of "Skinhead", IS its hero because he has adopted a deviant set of beliefs, and on top of this has a deviant dress sense to match them. Although Allen's books are 'fiction', they are written in the 'best' traditions of tabloid journalism. Hawkins is a 'hero' because his beliefs, actions — and above all else the visibility that arises from 'his' dress sense — make him worthy of journalistic investigation'. Just as tabloid journalists write the most 'obviously opinionated' news, so there is no distance between Allen and his writing. He often interrupts his narratives with political rants. For example in "Smoothies":

"He couldn't begin to understand the mentality of youths who stoop so low. Even in a society that tolerated increasing violence on the picket line, in shop-floor disputes, in invasion of private property, in race riots, in general."

Another feature Allen gave his books, to lend them an added 'realism' and 'authenticity', were his introductions. From "Suedehead":

"SUEDEHEAD, like SKINHEAD, is an attempt to show a specific section of the community in action. Both are maladies of our permissive society which has, rightly or wrongly, encouraged the growth of off-beat cults within a framework peopled by law-abiding, decent, sometimes dull citizens. Youth has always had its 'fling' but never more blatantly, more unconcerned with adverse publicity than today. In fact, it is my opinion that leniency in courtrooms, soft-peddling attitudes by politicians who look to teenage votes to save their seats, and an overwhelming pandering by the news media are the real contributing factors of this instantaneous explosion which now places the nation as a whole in jeopardy.

However, despite his outspoken 'condemnations' of the news media, Allen's books serve as an encouragement for youth to enter the media's discourse on style. Reporters feature in many of Allen's books (for example "Boot Boys", "Skinhead Farewell" and "Punk Rock") and headlines are never far away. The climax of "Skinhead" is not the 'actual' incident of Joe Hawkins 'doing a rozzar', but the reproduction of a photograph of this act in the "Daily Express", alongside the following story:

"LAST SECONDS IN BRUTAL ATTACK ON POLICEMAN

Hardly had the camera shutter clicked than Sgt. Desmond Snow fell to the ground, yet another victim of skinhead thuggery.

Sgt. Snow was visiting a wounded victim of another skinhead encounter when he was suddenly seized and beaten into unconsciousness, a helpless victim of senseless viciousness. The 'frozen' horror of this picture captures once again the problem of our times — The Youth Revolution. If we are to expect our policemen to give us the protection we demand then surely it is our duty to stamp out this terrible evil that is threatening all of us?

No father, or mother, can feel proud of her son when viewed in the light of this attack.

But it is up to you — the parents — to assist the police in their efforts to put a name to the vicious thugs who perpetrated such an obscene crime..."

Passages such as this are scattered throughout Allen's books. Another example, from "Smoothies":

"REACTION

screamed the Daily Mercury's scare headline. A photograph accompanied the write-up showing demolished huts and weeping Asians standing in the middle of what had been a happy 'Social Security' abode.

TEENAGE GANG GO ON RAMPAGE

said the sub-heading.

"Last night", the text read, "a gang of vicious hoodlums attacked a defenceless Ugandan Asian camp and caused considerable damage — not to mention serious personal injury — in an effort to drive out those they consider to be unwelcome on our shores... " "

The blurb of "Terrace Terrors" even boasts:

"Ex-skinhead Steve Perm hits the headlines as he tackles football hooliganism".

While the climax of "Teeny Bopper Idol" relates how 'Johnny Holland and His Jolly Green Men' achieve fame by invading the stage at a pop concert. The final chapter of the novel relates some of the resulting headlines:

"ACTON GROUP TAKE OVER TEENY BOPPER SHOW"

"TEENY BOPPER SENSATION"

"JOLLY GREEN MEN OUTSMART HEAVY MOB"

"SHARP FALLS FLAT AS HOLLAND MARCHES ON"

The conclusion of "Teeny Bopper Idol" reads as follows:

"Johnny Holland enjoyed his breakfast. He had one newspaper to read. One only. And he couldn't take his eyes off the column written by his favourite television critic.

'...left a sour taste in Wilf Russell's mouth. The inadvisability of presenting pop 'live' came home to roost with a vengeance. However, one startling fact shone through the disastrous event. Johnny Holland. This young man will certainly cause a few teeny bopper hearts to flutter this morning. To agents and disc productions managers — act fast. Johnny Holland isn't going to be in the wilderness for much longer.'

Johnny smiled. By studying the tactics employed to promote Bobby Sharp he could tell the columnist a few things. He wasn't going to be rushed into any contract. They could come and go. He'd listen and only when all the offers were in would he and his Roundhead mates make a decision. And that was a guarantee!"

In Allen's world media discourse and style are everything. This view both reflected and moulded the consciousness of the teenagers who bought his books. However, Allen's books were not the only New English Library novels to promote such a view. The 'Hells Angel' books by Alex R. Stuart present a similar view-point. For example, from "The Outlaws":

"84 KILLED AS HELLS ANGELS RIOT AT DRUG ORGY FESTIVAL"

And in "The Last Trip":

"TERROR BIKERS, PC DEAD; SIR FRANK FIGHTS FOR LIFE"

and:

"MARAUDING GANG PILLAGES HOME OF SIR FRANK RUTLEDGE"

These examples are quoted to show the extent to which the media had colonised all areas of cultural (and sub-cultural) life by the early seventies. By the eighties, if one wanted to speak at all, there was no viable alternative to entering the media's discourse. The success of groups such as 'Class War' demonstrates this 'fact'. By using media techniques (some literally learned from Allen - for example the phrase 'the New Breed' was taken straight out of "Boot Boys" and placed in the pages of "Angry" by a school-aged supporter of Class War living in Stirling), Class War made its voice heard. This was effective propaganda — the media coverage of the 'anarchist menace' in East London is amazing considering that there were often no more than fifteen Class War members in the whole of London. The effect in 'real' terms was negligible, but its impact on the consciousness of the general population was considerable precisely because of the media coverage. I cite this to demonstrate a trend.

Pauline Smith and COUM Transmissions

In Allen's "Skinhead" the 'political views' expressed waivered between 'Strasserite' (albeit by implication) and conservative:

"Roy nodded. Yes, he thought, I'll follow the bloody band. I dare not go against it. He believed that Jack Dash was the man closest to God; believed fervently in the right of the docker — and every working man — to take measures to combat the capitalistic employer. He was completely disenchanted with this Labour government — but he couldn't abstain or vote Tory. He would vote Labour as he always had. It didn't matter what he said between elections — that the long period of Tory rule had been the best in living memory — providing that, when the day came, he could make his "X" against the local Labour Party candidate. In his constituency — Plaistow — the ineffectual hands on the helm of England counted for less than a man's worth to an employer. 1926 and the "cloth-cap" image had to be preserved. Forgotten were the affluent days of Tory rule. Forgotten were the massive debts piled on a staggering nation by yet another Labour administration. It didn't count that Britain was being dictated to by the International Monetary Fund."

By the time of "Terrace Terrors" (Allen's fourteenth novel) his 'right-wing radicalism' had been moderated via Powellism to the worship of money. In this he prefigured the Thatcherite Tory nutters of the 1980's:

"He followed Cochrane back up the incline, into a semi-finished series of plush box seats with private bar being built at the rear of the glass enclosed spaciousness. This was his first experience of the style to which directors had become used and he liked the feeling permeating him. One day...

Cochrane caught the admiration, the puffing chest. He recognised the signs. Recalled the day he'd taken his first tentative steps up the money ladder."

In contrast, the "mail artist" Pauline Smith enjoyed none of the financial rewards that Allen attained with his novels, and her 'right-wing radicalism' was reinforced by the police raids her activities triggered. In "Corpse Club" (included in "About Vile", edited by Anna Banana, Banana Productions, Vancouver 1983) she writes:

"All the hostility encountered during the time of the "Adolf Hitler Fan Club" was part of the event and where-ever possible incorporated into it. It is amazing how easily people living very much in the Permissive Society may still be shocked... "The Adolf Hitler Fan Club" developed gradually. There were references to Adolf Hitler in the second series of postal editions and even in other work made as long ago as 1970. Adolf Hitler was always interesting but I did not read "Mein Kampf" until 1971. At that time I was struck by the way Hitler's description of

decadent Austrian democracy prior to WWI could equally well suit the last few British governments. In 1971 ruthless destruction of the community in which I lived was being carried out by commercially minded people whilst those who had the power to stop this happening stood by like reeds in the wind... The "Wreath" edition was to have been the last. The strength of hostility engendered by the very mention of Adolf Hitler's name made me realise that the man is very much more alive than I ever suspected beforehand, so I made the Last Edition "Adolf Hitler Lives" in conclusion. By way of confirmation, the police raided my flat as I was placing copies of this edition in the envelopes. It seems that Jewish people in this country had become worried that the "Adolf Hitler Fan Club" may be a front for some kind of pressure group building up against them. The police were asked to investigate as a 'possible contravention of the Race Relations Act' may have occurred."

Smith was, quite obviously, more interested in the effect playing with fascism had on other people, than with the content of Nazi ideology itself. This is, of course, the basis of the subsumption of politics within the discourses of 'glamour' and 'style'. Like all media inspired 'thought' appearance is privileged over content.

Smith aimed to elicit an emotional response from her 'audience' and succeeded. 'Real' nazis were upset by the frivolous manner with which she treated their 'ideology', while liberals were enraged by her sympathetic treatment of fascism. Such a response confirmed in Smith — and her fellow mail artists — a sense of superiority. They understood the 'Adolf Hitler Fan Club' to be aesthetic, and what they perceived as others missing the point reinforced their opinion that the majority of woman-kind lacked their Intellectual capacity'. Anna Banana in "Women In Mail Art" (included in "Correspondence Art" edited by Michael Crane and Mary Stofflet, Contemporary Art Press, San Francisco 1984) has this to say about Smith:

"Pauline Smith has been consistently involved in the mail art network in the past few years with her Adolf Hitler Fan Club and more recent Corpse Club. Because of the controversial subject matter, she has been harassed by the British authorities, postal and otherwise. My view of her use of this theme is that it reflects what she sees happening around her, rather than a policy she advocates. Upon the occasion of a train wreck, caused by a bomb which split the cars open 'like peeled bananas', Pauline sent a postcard with the headline to me for my banana collection. A day or so after she mailed it, she returned home to find the British Bomb Squad ransacking her apartment in search of a 'bomb factory'. They found none, so left her alone with the mess."

While Pauline Smith restricted her 'controversial' subject matter to fascism, COUM Transmissions (Cosey Fanni Tutti, Peter Christopherson and Genesis P-Orridge) explored a wider range of taboo subjects, although their chief interest was in sexual 'deviation', particularly sado-masochism. COUM acted as a bridge between performance art, mail art and, later, punk. Like Smith, they relished the use of shock tactics, and were fascinated by the media's discourse of style. P-Orridge and Christopherson had the following to say about their activities in "Annihilating Reality" (included in "Performance By Artists" edited by A.A.Bronson and Peggy Gale, Art Metropole, Toronto 1979):

"We found the art world on every level less satisfying than real (sic) life. For every interesting performance artist there was a psychopath, fetishist or intense street individual who created more powerful and socially direct imagery. We were also unhappy about our art being separated from popular culture and the mass media. It seemed to us that it was far more effective propaganda/information dispersal to be written up in the NEWS section of daily papers than in a back page column of a specialist Art journal. Now we much more rarely make actions in Art spaces, we create private documentation. We have moved into the public arena and are using popular cultural archetypes. We live our lives like a movie, we try to make each scene interesting viewing. We use the press to record our activities like a diary. Our documentation is newspapers and magazines.

COUM TRANSMISSIONS has a diverse membership. At its active core are Peter Christopherson, Cosey Fanni Tutti and Genesis P-Orridge. Cosey Fanni Tutti is working as a professional striptease dancer and topless go-go dancer in London pubs. Peter Christopherson is using photography to create private archetypal situations and Genesis P-Orridge is producing private images as Art and then deliberately attempting to man-

ipulate the media to absorb these as "News" and via the news media to distribute these images into hundreds of thousands of ordinary homes to see if it stays art, mutates or just what the implications of elite versus popular are."

COUM caused a major scandal in 1976 over their ICA (London) exhibition "Prostitution" which consisted of documentation of Cosey Fanni Tutti's activities as a model for pornographic magazines. The press was outraged and questions were raised in Parliament. COUM's use of shock tactics were absorbed into the punk movement, with whom the group had direct links via their activities as "Throbbing Gristle" (an industrial music band).

Punk

Punk has been to date, the last 'great' cultural movement. Its practitioners took numerous styles and ideas from the past and recombined them to create something that was apparently 'new'. Style is here of primary importance, since the punk movement was intent on situating itself in the media discourse. Punk lyrics broke down narrative into a series of quoteable slogans, and many punk songs were based on themes taken straight from news headlines ("Career Opportunities" by the Clash and "Gary Gilmore's Eyes" by the Adverts immediately spring to mind). Just as punk consisted of a series of quotations from past styles, so it was itself easily quoteable. Hence its success. The media is not 'prepared' to 'deal' with 'difficult' ideas.

Conclusions

While the media continues to plagiarise itself, we too are forced to plagiarise the media in an attempt to be heard. For the time being we will content ourselves with plans of 'kidnapping' media discourse. If this strategy fails, we may find silence (or armed assault on communication centres) more to our taste. Time will tell.

Klaus Oldenburg (written 1987, previously unpublished).

ART STRIKES

IN his section of the 'Art Into Society/Society Into Art' catalogue (ICA, London 1974), Gustav Metzger issued a call for a three year strike by artists. Metzger believed that if artists acted in solidarity, they could destroy those institutions (such as Cork Street) which had a negative effect on artistic production. Metzger's strike failed because he was unable to mobilise support from other artists.

During martial law in Poland, artists refused to exhibit their work in state galleries, leaving the ruling elite without an official culture. For months the art galleries were empty. Eventually some mediocre artists were discovered, who were prepared to take advantage of this situation, and their work was shown. The Polish intelligentsia immediately organised an effective boycott of openings, denying the art an audience and the bureaucracy any credibility.

In 1985 the PRAXIS group proposed an art strike for the three years between 1990 and 1993. In 1986 this proposal was extended to a more generalised 'refusal of creativity'. The idea was not to destroy the art world. PRAXIS doubted that enough solidarity existed between artists for such a strategy to work. Instead, PRAXIS were interested in how they, and many other 'activists', had created identities based on the supposed 'superiority' of their 'creative' and/or political actions to the leisure and work pursuits of the social majority. This belief in individual superiority was seen as impeding a rigorous critique of the reigning society. Put bluntly, those whose identity is based on 'their opposition' to the world as it is, have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. To change the world it is necessary to abandon those character traits that aid survival in capitalist society.

Stewart Home (written 1987, previously unpublished).

MULTIPLE NAMES

MULTIPLE names are 'tags' which the 'avant-garde' of the seventies and eighties have proposed for serial use. These have taken a number of forms, but are most commonly 'Invented personal names' which, their proponents claim, anyone can take on as a 'context' or 'identity'. The idea is usually to create a collective body of artistic works using the 'invented identity'.

The first of these 'collective identities', 'Klaos Oldanburg', was propagated by the British mail artists Stefan Kukowski and Adam Czarnowaski in the mid-seventies. A few years later, the American mail artist David Zack proposed 'Monty Cantsin' as the name of the 'first open pop-star', a name anybody could use. Factional differences between those using the 'Monty Cantsin' tag resulted in the 'rival' contexts of 'No Cantsin' and 'Karen Eliot', both of which emerged in the mid-eighties. A number of individuals and groups have independently 'originated' similar concepts. For example, a group centred around Sam Durrant in Boston (USA) proposed 'Bob Jones' as a multiple identity in the mid-eighties.

There have also been multiple names for magazines ('Smile' originating in England in 1984 is the best known), and pop groups ('White Colours' first proposed in England in the early eighties).

Multiple names are connected to radical theories of play. The idea is to create an 'open situation' for which no one in particular is responsible. Some proponents of the concept also claim that it is a way to 'practically examine, and break down, western philosophic notions of identity, individuality, originality, value and truth'.

Stewart Home (written 1987, previously unpublished).

HUMANITY IN RUINS

Prologue

CHORUS: No longer in the name of literary value

Which spoilt the enjoyment of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Richard Allen,
Nor for some bombast purpose,

Nor for moral preaching, and certainly not with 'revolutionary' intent,
Does our muse vaunt this plagiarised verse.

Only this, people, we must perform

The form of Faustus's fortunes, good or bad.

To patient judgements we appeal our plaud.

Now is he born, his parents of good working class descent,

Who wouldn't give the time of day to a pig.

Brought up in a district of London known as Tottenham,

At riper years to Bethnal Green he went

Whereas his kinsmen chiefly brought him up

So much did he profit in his studies

That he left school at sixteen with good qualifications

And went into an office job.

But getting pissed off with the bullshit he receiveth from his boss,

He switched to factory work.

This being the time of Thatcherism, he got made redundant,

After three years solid service.

And now we find him impoverished, but trying to make the best of his unemployment.

Act 1

FAUSTUS: Is this the arse that launched a thousand shits,

Leaving lurkers that outclassed modern plumbing?

Sweet Helen, let me lick your rim!

The thought drives me to distraction.

Come, Helen, come, let me penetrate your sphincter.

Here will we activate the DNA code buried deep in every brain

And learn the secrets of genetic descent.

I'm a polymorph, and for love of pleasure I shall wrack your arse,

Leaving my cock bruised from the endeavour.
I will anoint your shit with great wads of my genetic wealth,
Sinking my cock between these cheeks of yours,
Without risk of engendering children.
We will shave each other's bodily hair
And thus denuded indulge our basest lusts.
Let us eat several packets of laxative
And fuck til the brown stuff comes shooting out,
To coat our milky skin,
And smooth as monumental alabaster, oh shit, let's bask in this perversion.
HELEN: Jesus H. Christ, can't you think about anything but sex?
FAUSTUS: What else is there to think about?
HELEN: Well how about getting a job, so we can settle down together?
FAUSTUS: You know there aren't any jobs going!
HELEN: Yes there are, you've got qualifications, you could become a policeman!
FAUSTUS: You've got to be joking, I'm a good proletarian!
HELEN: Well you'd better think of some way to earn a living. I've suddenly got religion, so you'll
get no more nookie until we've tied the marriage knot!
FAUSTUS: What about the fire brigade?
HELEN: That'll do. Get down to the Job Centre quick, and see what they've got going.

Act 2

FAUSTUS: Fuck, shit, buggery backwards and blast it!
PAULINE: What's wrong John?
FAUSTUS: Watch out or I'll beat your head in.
PAULINE: It's not me that's for the hurdles, it's the bosses we must do in!
FAUSTUS: By my over-sized dildo, you're right.
PAULINE: So what's up?
FAUSTUS: That fuckin' Helen. She won't let me knob her till we marry, and we can't get married
till I get a job.
PAULINE: But marriage is counter-revolutionary. Besides, there's so many unemployed now, what
hope do you have of getting a job?
FAUSTUS: But that's where you're wrong. I've just been to the Job Centre. There was no chance of
getting into the fire-brigade, but they offered me the fuzz or the services.
(Enter Helen)
HELEN: Well, I ain't living in no army barracks, so it's a police career for you.
FAUSTUS: I'm resigned to it.
PAULINE: Oh Faustus, lay such damned thoughts aside,
And think not of them lest they tempt thy convictions,
And heap the proletariat's heavy wrath upon thy head.
Read, read Marx and Engels, this is treachery!
HELEN: Go forward Faustus, for that rewarding career,
Wherein power and money are contained,
Be thou in East London as Hitler was in Germany,
Lord and master of these estates.
FAUSTUS: How am I glutted with conceit of this!
Shall I make gangsters fetch me what I please,
Act out my whims to avoid getting run in,
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
Ill have them forge cheques and benefit forms,
Mug old ladies, the crippled and infirm,
And search all corners of East London
For sexual partners who'll gratify my basest lust;
I'll have them recite me the catalogue of their crimes,
And tell the secrets of their sexual conquests;
I'll hold Hackney and Tower Hamlets in a grip of fear,
And drive the Yuppies from our once great land.
(Turns to Helen)

Helen, sweet Helen, you fucking genius,
Know that your words have won me at the last
To join the police force and enjoy its benefits.
Yet not your words only but mine own fantasy
That will receive no object for my head,
But ruminates on the Will To Power.

Liberty is odious and obscure,
Fraternity and Brotherhood are for petty wits;
Equality is basest of the three,
Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible and vile,
Tis Power, Power, that hath ravished me.
So sexed-up bitch, aid me in this attempt,
I have the application form in my pocket,
Help me fill it in.

HELEN: Faustus, this form, thy wit, and my cunning,
Shall make all London Canonize us.
As running dog communists to their totalitarian states,
So shall the criminals of Bethnal Green,
Always be serviceable to us two.
Like lions they shall guard us when we please.
Like cows in rut, or bitch dogs on heat,
Or rent boys following Johnny Dollar,
Sometimes like sex objects they shall bare an arse to you,
So that you can truly boast you've had more arse than a toilet seat.
The bent businessman — and which businessman isn't bent? — shall worship you,
Carrying great argosies of flowers to lay at your feet,
If ambitious Faustus will be resolute.

FAUSTUS: Helen, as resolute am I in this
As thou to live, therefore object it not.

HELEN: The Power a police career will give you,
Will make thee vow to work at nothing else.
He that is grounded in authority,
Enriched with training and a uniform,
Hath all the principles that Power doth require.

PAULINE: Sweet Faustus, think of communism and working class solidarity!

HELEN: No, Faustus, think of Power, and of Wealth!

FAUSTUS: Wealth, why the whole of Mare Street shall be mine,
When the force of law stands behind me and my uniform,
What Revolution can hurt me? Faustus thou art safe;
Cast no more doubt. I'll complete this form and post it off.

HELEN: Well said Faustus.

PAULINE: You fucking scab!

Act 3

FAUSTUS: Now that the gloomy shadow of the night,
Longing to view Orion's drizzling look,
Leaps from the antarctic world unto the sky,
And dims the welkin with her pitchy breath,
Faustus, make ready for the interview,
Seeing as thou hast filled in the application form.
Within thy heart is Adolf Hitler's name
Forward and backward anagrammatized:
The abbreviated names of leading nazis and other fascist dictators,
Figures explaining the basics of capitalist economics,
And characters and symbols of liberalism
By which the bourgeoisie were able to rise.
Then fear not Faustus to be resolute
And try thy best to make the grade as a trainee P.C.
(Enter the Recruiting Officer)

RECRUITING OFFICER: John Faustus?

FAUSTUS: Aye, sir, that's my name.

RECRUITING OFFICER: So you'd like to join the police?

FAUSTUS: That's correct, sir. I feel I have the necessary qualities. I'm both strong of will, and strong of frame. But my strength of character is tempered by a natural respect for authority. And, these traits are brought out to their best advantage when directed by a wisdom I could not hope to possess at my age.

RECRUITING OFFICER: And how did you vote at the last election?

FAUSTUS: Conservative, sir. Why to do anything else would have been to waste my vote.

RECRUITING OFFICER: Well answered son. We'll take you on.

Chorus 1

Scab Faustus,

To learn the secrets of Power

Graven in the fucking cop manual

Did get sent off to Hendon Police College,

Where under reactionary teachers

His view of the world and 'human nature'

Was suitably falsified.

At the end of his period of tutelage,

He was turned loose upon a proletariat weary of police brutality.

Faustus, a human killing machine,

With the worst kind of racist, sexist and homophobic views,

Did get to patrol the streets of Harringay,

Where he had been brought up a good working class son,

And where Winston (Sticks) Silcott had slain the oppressor Blakelock.

Act 4

FAUSTUS: You're nicked son.

BOY: What for?

FAUSTUS: You know very well what for, you drug smoking juvenile delinquent. I don't know why your kind ever came to this country. You should have stayed in Africa where there's no civilisation to condemn your degenerate habits.

BOY: I don't understand. I was born in Hammersmith hospital.

FAUSTUS: In that case your parents should have stayed in Africa.

BOY: But my parents were born in London, and my grandparents came from India.

FAUSTUS: India, Africa, what's the fucking difference? You're a trouble maker. I'm taking you to the nick where I've got a half-pound of hash stored in my locker. When I get you into court don't try and claim it was planted. No one will believe you. You're my tenth arrest today. At this rate I'll soon get promotion.

Act 5

CHORUS (in background): Winston Silcott, Winston Silcott, we'll support you ever more!

FAUSTUS: Where art thou Faustus? Wretch, what hast thou done?

Damned art thou, Faustus, damned: despair and die.

The proletariat claims its right, and with a roaring voice

Says 'Faustus, come, thine hour is almost come'.

(Pulls out a dagger)

And Faustus will come to do thee right.

(Enter proletarian who wrenches dagger from Faustus)

PROLETARIAN: Tis too late Faustus, you will not deprive the proletariat of its retribution!

(Enter Pauline)

PAULINE: Oh Faustus, if thou had given ear to me

Innumerable joys had followed thee.

But thou didst betray thy class.

FAUSTUS: I'll burn my uniform. Ah, God, Queen and Country!

(Proletarian plunges dagger into Faustus's heart)

Epilogue

CHORUS: Faustus is dead, his head impaled upon a stick,
His genitals cut off and stuck into his mouth.
May his fiendful fortune exhort our class
To remember where their solidarity lies:
For those who love the bosses
Are bastards born to die.

Karen Eliot (written 1987 as part of an audio installation which the Central Space committee decided was unsuitable to be installed).

ABSOLUTELY FRESH (extracts)

UNFORTUNATELY, until very recently fine art and related institutions like museums, libraries, and universities have treated mass visual culture with snobbish disdain. They delegate it to sociological studies that seek only to understand the low-brow tastes of the audience, not the value of the art itself. The reasons are many; but they all come down to the same hidden desire to preserve post-Renaissance notions of individuality and autonomous expression. Pop culture is "low" precisely because it expresses corporate ideology; not the authorship of free individuals.

These distinctions between high and low culture have come to be known as that between "free" and "applied" art following the work of sociologist Herbert Gans. I have some trouble with the logic behind the notion of "free" art. To consider any artist in contemporary America free of commercial constraints is purely a self-delusion. The impact of the gallery system and mass media on fine art is equal, albeit less direct, than that on paid commissions in so-called applied art. Rank and value in any form of art should not apply solely to these arbitrary categories. Instead one must look at the intrinsic quality of the work and the degree to which it successfully satisfies or transcends the context in which it was created. This is not to say that a Schlitz ad or a Krazy Kat cartoon equals a collage by Richard Hamilton or a painting by Elizabeth Murray; they are interesting in their own way to anyone concerned with accurately assessing and preserving American culture on its own terms.

Advertisements are an unavoidable part of American art and life. In fact it is no longer possible to separate advertising from reality because ads have ingrained themselves so deeply in the American consciousness. The funny thing though, is that the separation of avant-garde from commercial art is only a relatively recent phenomenon. It arose in the post-Renaissance era from a growing sense of the artist as bohemian (anti-bourgeoisie) and the development of the media through mechanical reproduction as a cheap means of mass distribution in the late Eighteenth century. It is becoming clear that at the end of the Twentieth century this dichotomy is waning.

Our society is now defined by pervasive instances of self-reflection. Interiorization, now common in ads and TV programmes, is no longer the sole province of artists and intellectuals. This general level of self-awareness in the media has contributed greatly to the breakdown of temporal linearity at the end of the Twentieth century. In the same respects this perfectly follows the break-down in spatial relations, beginning with Cubism, that defined the early part of this century. Contemporary art and fashion is a patchwork of various older styles applied simultaneously rather than sequentially. This is not a nostalgic tendency — but an utterly new sense of the past as an infinite repository of information made perpetually available through mechanical reproduction and image retrieval.

We live in a society defined by signs of simulacra rather than nature. In no small part is this the aftermath of a century of intense advertising. In particular, advertising which by definition seeks to create a greater need for its product than called for by the general conditions of survival. This "false need", as Marx termed it, is ideally served not just by new products and new fashions, but by style itself — the need for psychological, rather than physical, gratification. The superficiality engendered by our consumer society has registered and will continue to register in contemporary art, both in terms of acquiescence and outrage.

John Carlin (written 1985, previously published in *Ferro-Botanica* 5, 1986).

THE ARTS & THE MEDIATION OF CULTURE (fragment)

The plagiarist knows s/he is consigned to repetition, to technique: to death. But death is not a problem, since this attitude entails a definition of life as a process in and of itself. It is ridiculous that we should have to insist upon this - but the culture is thoroughly informed by a (Christian & political-economic) principle by which life is just a 'preparation' for what comes after - endless foreplay. "Life after death - why wait?" (Bob Black)

This notion of a reward, a pay-off, requirement - is utterly obscene. Yet the same trick governs every aspect of existence in our 'civilisation'. Measurement, particularly in political-economic terms, is the guiding principle which underpins the general attitude towards artistic activity in Great Britain. Thus we are presented with the following symptomatic remark, which is well worth close scrutiny: "I have helped to finance a report which is due out very soon from the Policy Studies Institute, providing overall economic statistics about the arts, the contribution they make to the economy and tourism, all of which add to the overall evidence about the importance of the arts to this country" (Richard Luce). Clearly 'the country' here means Britain as a coherent economic entity, something quite separate from any idea of 'culture', which is in effect mediated through 'the arts'. Generally, we no longer have any purchase on culture except in terms of its economic identity. But what if the work with which an artist and an audience are engaged does nothing for the economy? Such work does not feature under the umbrella of 'the Arts', it is necessarily dismissed — as amateur, as avant-garde, as 'not art', and so forth.

In fact, 'the Arts' must be understood as being nothing more and nothing less than a political construct, the geometry of which is gleaned solely from how it interacts with 'the country'. In contradistinction to this, there does exist a realm of cultural activity which pitches itself in opposition to the political-economic boundaries formulated by those occupying a position of power. Furthermore, there is — and probably always has been — a cultural activity which does not even define itself in terms of its opposition to the status quo, wary perhaps of becoming in some sense dependent on what it is not (in other words, wary of being identified and becoming subject to control); or else entirely unconcerned with any 'outside' pressures, but occupied rather with exploring uncategoryed and 'invisible' areas of existence (activity then which appears to take place on the very borders of 'the cultural' and which necessarily is a far cry from both 'art' and 'the arts'; an index of such activity is 'art brut', an admittedly problematic (because categorised!) activity). Such activity is invariably stigmatised until such a time as it simply disappears or can be bought up.

Anon (1987?)

Re.DISTRIBUTION

"It is here," writes Bob Jones (Variant No.3, 1987) "in the creation of new meanings, that we see most clearly the divergence between plagiarism and post-modern ideology. The plagiarist has no difficulty with meanings, reality, truth. The plagiarist sees no crisis of the sign - only the continual transformation of human relationships within a social context... As Capitalism sinks further into crisis, it becomes increasingly difficult for any 'individual' artist to exude an appearance of 'originality'."

'Originality' and 'creativity' occur in the realm of production. Is the plagiarist truly involved in this realm, or does plagiarism occur in the realm of distribution rather? That is, is it a question of access? In which case, is the 'creation of new meanings' the issue? Such an activity is actually bypassed by the plagiarist, though new meanings may arise anyhow. To say that no difficulty with meaning arises is to be inaccurate and to miss the point. Perhaps plagiarism becomes useful at a time when the display of 'meaningful' images actually provides evidence of the lack of any 'truth'. The reality of so-called post-modern conditions, of the present crisis, consists of a generalised inability to distinguish between meanings which are of any use and those which are of no use at all. Plagiarism may hammer home this point, by demonstrating the apparent lack of meaning and by emphasising the materiality of things as they exist - rather than their evident or supposed 'meaning'. Glenn O'Brien implies this in a recent article concerned in part with rap music:

'Spinning by hand shows the direct relation of tempo and pitch in a copy. This is shown when a record is started at the wrong speed, but in scratching it is also shown that the standard speeds are arbitrary conventions and that, in fact, there is no real time contained in a record, or any real sounds. A record contains only symbols of sounds, and time symbolised by space. These revelations change the audience's relation to music and copies of music' In other words, rap music emphasises the materiality of the medium with which it works: it is not concerned with creativity but with the manipulation of already 'fixed' objects, with the use of created objects. An

underlying suggestion is that there is already enough materially to be going on with, that a point of saturation has now been reached - which in the west is most surely the case.

What plagiarism can do is to insist upon the priority of the medium, in opposition to the ridiculous and insulting cult of 'stars' (latterday versions of genius) and to the empty promises of redemption on offer from the various ubermensch figures in every field. The plagiarist implicitly articulates an acceptance of an ongoing tradition that takes little notice of individuals, no notice of names, but which is rather grounded in the activity itself. Regardless of the artist, who acts merely as a channel for combinations of past ideas, media and objects have a 'life of their own'. It may be, as has been argued elsewhere, that the so-called product actually produces the so-called creator: that our serves are the by-products of a (material) process over which we have less control than we fondly imagine. The artefact has a power of its own which we struggle to grasp.

The law relocates the power of the artefact it apparently 'protects'; the law redefines an artefact as surely as the most flagrant plagiarist. Little wonder that the plagiarist, whose activity may expose this similarity, often comes up against the law; a confrontation that may expose the contradiction in present attitudes towards responsibility and the location of power. Control being problematic — if not unapplicable — the onus is liable to fall on access to the processes of cultural activity; access to the history of the development of the medium, and to contemporary history of its development — a contemporary struggle, then, to assert a certain vision of history (and of precedent). But this struggle is a matter far from simple.

No one nowadays need rely on, say, the use of multiple names 'to create a situation for which no one in particular is responsible'. The very existence of the law implies a generalised absence of responsibility, one reinforced in the realm of 'the arts' by the 'death of the author' (cf. Barthes) and the 'liquidation of originality' (cf. Warhol). Indeed, part of the problem is that this state of affairs seems to belong to the past, to an accepted but understood history; a plagiaristic repetition of the issues will tend to result in the erection of a facade of ahistoricity; a kind of fetishisation. The 'art world' logically, may well encourage plagiarism, for its own recent history comprises a series of such encouragements: forgeries are demanded by the barrow-load, artists' ideas (i.e. conclusions reached from a knowledge of history) are bootlegged by administrators and 'suggested' to those more malleable favourites who queue up at every gallery door. Art, as an 'unproductive' commodity, evidently requires 'stimulation': in the 'art world' this means the creation of divisions, the encouragement of competition, and the establishment of reputations.

Generalised ignorance and irresponsibility in this context, invariably excused as 'the cultural condition', gives rise to a ludicrous puffing of randomly selected bootleggers in the Press. As an example, the reader is referred to 'A museum of mirrors' by Andrew Graham-Dixon (The Independent, 25.9.87): " 'Palaces of Culture' is a tribute to the courage of those in charge at Stoke City Museum; it is also, indirectly, a tribute to the Arts Council's "Glory of the Garden" policy — Emma Dexter, who curated the exhibition, is a 'glory' appointee of two years standing; as she says, by establishing lively contemporary art departments in museums such as Stoke's, the Arts Council not only 'attracts the kind of people who would never be seen dead in the ICA or Arnolfini to modern art shows', it also fosters a healthy atmosphere of debate...The great danger...lies in the dusty acceptance of some long-established status quo." This passage is interesting on several counts and gives a fair indication of the relationship between Critic, Administrator, Institution and Arts Council. To underline the absence of the Artist from this list is to risk being needlessly verbose; the Artist, after all, does not have any existential substance any more, does not create anything, and is, after all, dispossessed; at least, so the clichés run, allowing the squeezing out of artists from the 'art world' — in which they appear never to have belonged anyhow. A historical note to the review cited above throws an interesting light on the situation sketched out here; the 'Palaces of Culture' was preceded at Stoke by some months by 'Road to Ruin' by the Art In Ruins duo (see reviews in Art Monthly No. 101, Nov. 1986; Artscribe Jan/Feb 1987). The pompous claims of the critic (presumed ignorant); the apparent institutional plagiarism ('appropriation') by the administrator, backed up by the inverted snobbery displayed towards potential audiences; the way in which such attitudes interface with the requirements of the state and its policies; the moral tag — 'healthy debate' — and the pretence to rejuvenation of culture (in truth the dusty acceptance of a 'new' status quo rather than a long-established one) — all of these indicate that cultural activity is not a one-way street; for every plagiarist intent on demolishing the system, there will be a dozen whose actions reinforce it under a different name. As no one is 'responsible', and with 'originality' out of the window, the struggle to advance from a state of generalised inertia and ignorance to one of comprehension and respect will be difficult. There can be no going back, obviously; time cannot be reversed, even if history appears to consign us to eternal repetition. This temporal illusion, however, is a seductive distract-

ion, time, which began with the first copy, is rapidly running out.

Waldemar Jyroczech (1987, previously unpublished: from a forthcoming book)

PLAGIARISM COMMON WITH THE INTELLECTUALS WHO FOUNDED THE UNITED STATES

EVEN as Senator Joseph Biden's Judiciary Committee was grilling the foremost exponent of the doctrine of Original Intent, the Senator stood accused of the very thing that the Founders intended and practiced so well — plagiarism. The Founders were quite adept at borrowing, almost always without acknowledgement, from other writers, living and dead.

Consider the case of Thomas Jefferson. Some of the most moving and memorable lines from The Declaration of Independence were lifted straight from other writers, most notably John Locke, the 17th century English political philosopher. Jefferson's fellow Virginian, Richard Henry Lee, was not as impressed as everyone else by the rhetorical power of the Declaration. 'Tom,' he said, 'just copied it from Mr. Locke.' Well, parts of it anyway. Here is Jefferson's Declaration:

"...all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed."

And Locke's Second Treatise (1690):

"People are not so easily got out of their old forms of government... the People... are more disposed to suffer, than right themselves by Resistance."

The Declaration abounds with such borrowings.

So, for that matter, do The Federalist Papers. As Douglass Adair demonstrated several years ago, James Madison borrowed copiously from the writings of the 18th century Scottish philosopher David Hume, without acknowledging or crediting his source. Similarly, Madison's fellow Federalist James Wilson borrowed freely from Rousseau's Social Contract. As Garry Wills notes in a forthcoming essay on Wilson's political philosophy, 'Wilson has studied the book well and uses large excerpts from it without citation in the ratifying debates of 1787 as well as in his law lectures of 1790'.

The list of distinguished plagiarists could be extended to include Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, and even George Washington himself. The fact is, or was, that in the 18th century the practice that we call plagiarism was both common and morally acceptable. The borrowing of another's ideas and phrases brought no discredit upon the borrower.

But if the Founders could get away with plagiarism, why couldn't Senator Biden? The answer to that question reveals a good bit about our present attitudes toward political ideas and language, and even more about the ways in which they differ from those of the Founders.

Educated men and women in the 18th century considered themselves members of an international and intergenerational community of discourse. Political ideas and idioms were common property, owned and shared by all members of that community. Their readers recognized immediately that Jefferson had borrowed freely from Locke and Madison from Hume. Far from diminishing Jefferson's and Madison's stature, the borrowing actually only served to enhance the reputation of Locke and Hume. In this respect, political writing and rhetoric was what economists nowadays call a positive-sum game in which all players are made better off.

Senator Biden found himself in a very different linguistic game, a zero-sum game, in which one player's loss is another's gain. We no longer belong to a common community of discourse. Political ideas and phrases are 'private property' upon which 'trespassing' is strictly forbidden. There are no borrowers, only thieves. Imitation is tantamount to theft and an 'admission' of rhetorical incompetence and lack of creativity.

Is this progress? I doubt it. The privatization of political discourse impoverishes our language. And as we speak, so we are. Is it any wonder that the quality of public speech in our time is at such a low ebb and that the accompanying quality of thought is likewise so greatly diminished? I, for one, am afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason, because I suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that we would do better to avail ourselves of the general bank and capital of nations, and of ages. I said that; but I borrowed it from Edmund Burke.

Mario Rossi (original plagiarism 1987, previously unpublished under this name).

PSEUDEPIGRAPHY

Pseudepigraphy is the false attribution of a piece of writing to an author. The activity was popular from the pre-Christian era until the middle ages but declined with the development of bourgeois society. For hundreds of years authors writing on, for example, Pythagorean theory would routinely ascribe the piece to Pythagoras himself. Thus a whole body of writing in one area would be accredited to the earliest or most eminent figure in this area.

Discuss the relationship between pseudepigraphy and plagiarism.

Gustav Metzger in the catalogue to "Art Into Society/Society Into Art" (ICA, London 1974)

ON CONSUMPTION

"Advertising like art is a source of meaning in contemporary society, filling vacuums created by the decline of other ideologies - religion, politics, family, etc. People are hungry for meaning. Advertising transforms sheer objects (products, services) into meanings (brands) which consumers use to help structure their lives and differentiate between brands which otherwise have product parity.

The commercial message of course is that successful meanings are exchanged in the marketplace for cash. The aesthetic experience can add to the bottom line." (Peter Cooper and Tina Kaye, *The Art of Consuming*, Survey vol.4 Number 3: Market Research Society 1987)

Discuss.

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INDEX

- Adams, J., 27
advertising, 24, 28
Allen, R., 14, 15, 16
animalism, 13
appropriation, 5
Arp, J., 12
Art In Ruins, 26
Arts, the, 25
Banana, A., 17, 18
Barthes, R., 26
Baudelaire, C. 6
Biden, J., 27
Black, B., 25
Bond Street, 11
brand names, 14, 25
Breton, A., 6
British Rail, 12
Buff on, 8
Buonarroti, M., 12
Cantsin, M., 9, 20
capital, 5, 7, 8
Cezanne, P., 12
Christopherson, P., 18
Class War, 14,17
Coleridge, S.T., 6
copyright, 10, 25, 26
Cork Street, 19
Coum transmissions, 18
Czarnowaski, S., 20
Da Vinci, L., 7
Dali,S.,6
De Quincey, T., 6
De Musset, A., 6
detournement, 10, 11
Durrant.S., 20
distribution, 25
Eliot, K., 6, 9, 20
Eliot, T. S., 6
exchange value, 7
faith, 13
Festival of Plagiarism, 3, 4
r-tishization, 26
Fluxus, 9
forgery, 12, 26
Gans, H., 24
genius, 6, 7, 26
Hamilton, A., 27
Hamilton, R., 24
Harrison, G., 6
Hawthorne, N., 12
Hitler, A., 17,21,22
Humanity in Ruins, 21
Hume, D., 27
individualism, 7, 14
Jarry, A., 6
Jefferson, T., 27
Jones, B., 25
journalism, 15
Kandinsky, W., 12
Kent, Princess Michael of, 6
Klee., P., 12
Krazy Kat, 24
Kukowski, S., 20
Lautreamont, 5, 8, 11
law, 26
Lee., R.H., 27
Levine, S., 9
Locke, J., 27
Luce, R., 25
Madison, J., 27
Mallet, L., 11
Mao Tse-Tung, 10
Marc, F., 9
markets, 12
Marx, K., 24
mass media, 5, 14, 15
Metzger, G., 19
modernism, 5
Moffatt, J., 14
Murray, E., 24
negation, 5
New English Library, 16
Nietzsche, F., 13
O'Brien, G., 25
originality, 5, 14
Pierce, C., 12
political-economy, 25, 27
post-modernism, 5, 11
pseudepigraphy, 25
punk, 19
Pythagoras, 28
neoists, 8, 9
news, 18, 19
Orridge, G. P., 18
Orwell, G., 6
OuLiPo, 6
Pascal, B., 8
Picasso, P., 9
Poland, 19
Praxis, 8,19
rap music, 26
Reynolds, J., 9
Rousseau, J.J., 27
Schlitz, 24
Shelley, P. B., 12
silence, 19
situationist international, 6, 11, 14
Smith, P., 17, 18
Stravinsky, I., 6
strikes, art, 8, 19
Sun Tzu, 10
tax, 12
time, 6, 25
Tutti, C. F., 18, 19
vandalism, 7
Vauvenargues, 8
Verlaine, P., 12
Viroux, 8
Volkeff, V., 10
Walpole, H., 9
Warhol, A., 26
Washington, G., 27
Wills, G., 27
Wilson, J., 27
Zack, D., 20
Zamyatin, 6

A SHORT REFLECTION ON THE FESTIVAL OF PLAGIARISM

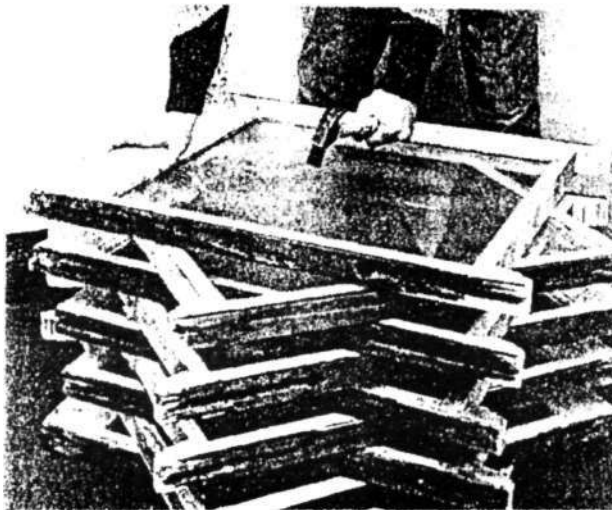
Looking back on the "Festival Of Plagiarism" my feelings are chiefly negative. No serious debate emerged from the Festival itself - although a certain amount did occur during its planning and in the production of accompanying literature. Plagiarism itself had been intended as the starting point for a wider discussion about the role art plays - as an ideology of individualism which celebrates the cultural, political and economic hegemony of the ruling class in capitalist societies - in the maintenance of snobbery, hierarchies and elites. Because participation was solicited on an open basis - anyone who came into contact with the organisers was encouraged to participate (even if they considered themselves to be "artists") - it inevitably appeared that we were more interested in democratising art, than rejecting it as elitist.

Although I had hoped the "Festival Of Plagiarism" would provide a radical critique of existing culture, my practice - the fact that I was prepared to work with individuals whose activities were very far removed from my own position - which was ultimately liberal, prevented any such radical critique being made. The reason that artists were interested in working with me in the first place was because I had made the mistake of negotiating for the use of art spaces. Before holding the Festival I had naively imagined that it was possible to use platforms of privilege to make a critique of privilege. Instead of lending weight to my arguments, the use of these art spaces merely compromised me as an individual.

I still believe that cultural work can contribute towards social change. (However, for change to be achieved requires that one works intelligently - unfortunately in my organisation of the "Festival Of Plagiarism" I did not work intelligently enough.) If society is considered as a totality there must be a dynamic interaction between economic, political and cultural (using the term in its normative, everyday sense) spheres. Cultural conditions dictate political and economic conditions to the same extent that economic and political conditions dictate cultural conditions - or at least this would seem to me the lesson to be drawn from the theory and practice of the feminist, black and gay movements.

I have written this in the first person because I suspect that my opinions are at least to a degree at variance with those of the other organisers - as a result it gives the impression that I alone am responsible for the event. Officially the Festival was co-organised by Graham Harwood and myself; unofficially Ed Baxter played as important a role in the administration of the Festival as either Graham or myself - and of course everyone who participated added their own (in my opinion often, but not always, negative and/or nebulous) input. Despite the failure of this particular event I still feel that the conditions for progressive social (cultural, political, economic) change are riper than they've been for twenty years. In England at least people are both bored and have an accumulated pool of expectations. The Tory vision of the future - pretending a Wimpey home in the Isle of Dogs is an eighteenth-century country house - will not long sustain its dominance in the face of a serious challenge. We have only to make that challenge.

Stewart Home, London March '88.





**First there were MODERNISTS
Then there were POST-MODERNISTS
Now there are PLAGIARISTS**

Karen grinned as her fist chopped against the back of the art dealer's neck and the blow jarred her muscles. She lashed out with her foot as the man went down.

**Then the boots went in - HARD!
Muffled moans were lost in the frantic chanting down Cork Street:**

Plagiarists! Plagiarists! We are the New Breed!

**PLAGIARISM: _____
More virulent than MODERNISM
More critical than POST-MODERNISM
Read the full story inside!**