

# Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

1993

## **FE Letters Policy**

The *Fifth Estate* always welcomes letters commenting on our articles, giving reports of events in your area, or stating your opinion. We don't guarantee we will print everything we receive, but all letters are read by our staff and considered.

Typed letters are appreciated, but not required. Length should not exceed two double-spaced pages. If you are interested in writing a longer response, please contact us in advance.

## **Emma Co-opted**

Dear Editors:

I hope you can find use for this bit on Goldman. (FE Note: enclosed with this letter was a clipping regarding Candace Falk's Emma Goldman Papers project. (See News & Reviews in this issue for another item on this situation.)

Recuperated by the spectacle of opposition, or rather by academic imbeciles, we will have a toothless Emma. Not working for the abolition of the state and commodity economy, but serving as a role model and "vision of hope" for L.A. students as they are integrated as servile robots and happy consumers into the modern capitalist way of death.

"Captured" by those who will further reinforce the structure of non-life, she will be made to confess, in good stalinist fashion, for her aberrant principles. Neutered, she will speak in favour of reform, but we know where Emma is truly alive.

The riotous looters and arsonists of L.A. have never heard of Emma, but their acts against the commodity, their contempt for the commodity, private property and authority have rendered a tribute to a life that will never be captured and whose memory can only have any meaning in our practical life of refusal!

Alexis Viera

S. Kent CT

## **Hurrah for 404!**

Dear Fifth Estate:

I was heartened by the article in FE #339, Spring, 1992 about 404 Willis, Detroit's collectively run community center (See "Anarchy in Action.") I wonder if San Francisco will ever get something like that going.

Personally, I'm considering buying a van and living in it. I don't believe in paying rent, even if it were a fair amount. I like how the FE keeps a running dialogue between readers and its writers. I think people can feel very isolated in their ideas, and so a communication set apart from much of the false information and propaganda generated by TV, radio and newspapers can be very valuable. Keep it up!

Maya M.  
San Francisco

## Technology's a deadend

To The Fifth Estate:

In modern times, Science and Technology (written with capital letters to distinguish them from sciences and techniques which are just fragmentary activities among many others) have become socially recognized ideologies.

More and more technological knowledge is needed in order to feel recognized by others. Of course, everyone possesses perfected technological devices for communication, but communication between individuals has never been so difficult.

Anyone who wants a job is obliged to transform his or her very personality in order to conform to the employer's requirements and to sell oneself on the job market. Today a person doesn't dare be himself or herself; but has to fit a mold determined by competitiveness and possession.

Anything can be justified in the name of the vast scientific knowledge that "we" have achieved and by our impressive technological know-how: massive environmental destruction, nuclear power, the invasion of human activities by computers, our brutalization by the media—all reflecting a society where technology is used as an agent of power to control individuals. The recent Gulf war is just one more example of the level of delirium which can be attained by proponents of the reigning technology.

But who is the "we" who benefit from this knowledge and know-now? And, who is the "we" who decided to channel knowledge and know-now in this particular direction? In order to enhance which values?

Looking at the real world, one is dismayed at the number of those excluded not only from the modern knowledge, but from earlier ones as well. Contemporary knowledge and skills are largely the domain of specialists whose competitive sophistication tries to demonstrate the inferiority of practical, empirical knowledge.

Without a doubt, people know how to operate a hi-fi system and how to buy millions of records and cassettes (and some even know—the ultimate in radicalism—how to steal them). These consumers have professionals singing to them, but how many of these consumers still know how to sing?

If they don't know how to feed themselves, they pay the doctor and the pharmaceutical industry to treat them for malnutrition; if they have no time to devote to their children, they confer them to graduates of nursery school science or, lacking that, to day care centers, or, if neither is possible, to the violence of city streets.

Do any of us still know how to build a piece of furniture, fix a toilet, care for a sprained ankle, cure the flu without antibiotics...or grow vegetables? Do we really have any reason to be proud of our know-how?

Heme  
Paris, France

## Animal Liberation

FE Note: Federal grand juries in several states (including Michigan) have been impaneled and are subpoenaing witnesses in an attempt to suppress the successful activities of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Rod Coronado, a prime target of the government, is on the lam rather than submit to prosecutorial inquisition.

To the Fifth Estate:

I am a spokesperson for the Animal Liberation Front who has been hiding due to threats against my life from the FBI and the fur industry. However, I am willing to surrender to federal authorities under the following conditions:

1) That all grizzly bears held hostage as experimental subjects by Washington State University (WSU) be released to a wildlife rehabilitation center approved by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and Earth First!, with the intent of returning the bears to their native homeland.

2) That WSU issue a public statement promising never to capture or acquire more endangered species as research subjects or for any other purposes.

3) That all taxpayer supported research being conducted on mink, coyotes and otters by WSU, Oregon State, Michigan State, and Utah State Universities be suspended.

Although the Coalition Against Fur Farms and the ALF do not approve of the incarceration of any native wildlife, I believe that the hostage exchange of one species for another is a reasonable alternative. If these three conditions are met, I will turn myself in to federal authorities in Montana at the tribal headquarters of the Blackfoot Nation. As part of the agreement I will cooperate fully with the grand jury inquisitions into ALF activity that I am suspected of, relating to the defense of native wildlife and the environment.

Through the example of U.S. history, it is my understanding that if I was to continue my defense of Native American wildlife and lands I would be murdered by the FBI or people within the fur industry. The FBI, while questioning David Howitt in June 1992, acknowledged a threat against my life. In May 1992, when the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms raided my mountain home in southern Oregon, their use of automatic weapons testified to the government's willingness to employ deadly force against me.

In our ten years of non-violent resistance to the destruction of wildlife and land, I have never caused an injury or loss of life. Through my obligation as a citizen of the Earth, I have only targeted the implements of life's destruction, e.g., whaling ships in Iceland. It is only because of the FBI's record of violence against Native Americans such as Anna Mae Aquash, Leonard Peltier, Tina Trudell, Pedro Bissonette and other American Indian Movement (415/552-1992) activists that I avoid contact with the U.S. government by living a life in hiding.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,  
Rod Coronado, Coordinator,  
Coalition Against Fur Farms

## Aftermath of Riots

To The Fifth Estate:

Thanks very much for the papers. I found them very interesting including the account of the Earth First! gathering that I went to (See FE, Autumn 1992).

During the action to shut down Amoco, I got chased by State Troopers through the woods after hitting the prisoner vans with my fists. I felt like I was going to get Rodney King'd in the woods, but I got away no thanks to the circling vultures.

The article "Execution and Riot: Scenes from a California maul," [FE #340, Autumn 1992] came across a little Situationist-impaired, like Guy Debord is Lenin or Mao or something. I know only what happened to me in San Francisco through my own eyes, which I strongly and consciously averted from the media. So, I really don't know what LA was all about.

Here, the whole thing was very mixed, people coming together with incredible strength, all types—Vietnam vets, Latino gangsters, young girls—I don't know, just all types and barriers between people falling like leaves. But also obvious was a big gulf between blacks and whites

There were a number of attacks on whites by blacks which "Max Anger" totally minimized in his article in Anarchy in the interest of constructing his great proletarian uprising! I know his roomie was popped in the face.

At the hospital, on the first night of the rioting, out of a group of five wounded, two women were incredibly beaten by cops, one gashed his leg kicking out a window and two were creamed by other demonstrators, one by a bottle, one by a pipe. So much for the People's Army; self-defeating.

Overall, it was a very confusing time. I'd simultaneously feel like we had our own power, then I'd see the police declare martial law, be able to pull it off tactically and politically (for a while). Having just read Stefano Alle Chaie's troys [sic, original print version] and his strategy to provoke riots and disorder to justify martial law and fascist takeover, I really wondered what was going on. Also, when they arrested hundreds of demonstrators on sight (putting them in unheated pens without food, or on docks, or three counties away), I wondered, is this Argentina 1976?

Peter Kalberer  
Box 181

San Francisco CA

## Trapped in a Rich Suburb

Dear Fifth Estate:

I'd like to thank you for being the most comprehensive and the least overbearingly "politically correct" anarchist magazine I have yet come across.

I am a fifteen-year-old trapped in a rich, conservative suburb and I rely on magazines like the *Fifth Estate* to help me keep my beliefs alive and intact. While I feel I am doing my best to enlighten the people around me to the plight of the poor, I am eagerly awaiting the day I can escape from this ideological prison.

Thanks for making the wait easier.

KG

Rancho Palos Verdes CA

## The One Voice of Sanity

To The Fifth Estate:

I would like to keep receiving the FE as for so long it was the one voice of sanity in the insane, ultra-conservative place I was living. I have since moved and found people with minds of their own, but I still want to get the paper.

Through reading the *Fifth Estate* (Summer 1990 was the first I saw), I found there people who could articulate the vague way I felt about the world but was at pains to express to my friends and family. They all thought I was merely in a rebellious phase (you know, those out-of-control hormones of adolescence. I knew my feelings ran deeper than that, and through the FE, I found other people who would agree that I wasn't just being silly.

Joanne Bender

Waterloo, Ontario

## Prisoner gets 92 days in the hole for using the circle-A

High FE:

Here's just a little something to show the total ignorance, stupidity, fascism, nazism, censorship, lies, etc., that we are up against when dealing with the almighty pig government. Due to these enclosed prison conduct reports, I have spent a total of 92 days in the hole.

The latest conduct report I got is not yet been taken care of by the kangaroo court here. It is the one where they say that the anarchist symbol circle A is a gang symbol. On the first ticket for anarchy they gave me they said it was a symbol used by "satanists and white supremacists." On the second one it says I was ordered not to use the circle A symbol, and that it is "unauthorized forms of communication."

And, now they say it's a "gang symbol."

There can be no reasoning with these pigs. I have time and time again proved to them what anarchy and its symbol is and means. Noam Chomsky even wrote the prison warden and the security director explaining what it is. It's strange how a little symbol can inflict so much fear into them.

Well, I will get time in the hole again for this, it being my third offense for using this symbol. But as always, I will continue to use it, no matter what they do to me.

Peace, Love and Anarchy,

Dale Austin 76660

Box 900

Sturtevant WI 53177

*FE Note:* We have written the warden protesting the outrageous treatment of Dale Austin, but no reply as of this writing.

## T-time in Olympia

Dear FE & Friends:

Hi! I am writing to inform readers that there are anarchist get togethers happening in Olympia known as Teatime, occurring on the first and third Sundays of the month T-time is an informal gathering for people to meet, exchange info, get cheap or free literature, play games and throw out ideas or project proposals. We want short papers or pamphlets discussing the history of anarchy to present at a gathering.

Also, if people have interesting videos or films they could copy or loan that would be great, too. Thanks a lot.

bobEE

PO Box 10096

Olympia WA 98502

(206) LEG-V-LUV

## Kennedy Myth

Dear FE:

Just a note in support of Jack Straw's critique of the Kennedy myth. See "JFK: Cold Warrior: Debunking Oliver Stone's Mythology" [FE #339, Spring, 1992].

Oliver Stone and the many people who believe as he does are living in a kind of fantasy world where the bad is transmogrified through wishful think into the good. But no amount of wishing will make it so, especially in the case of John F. Kennedy.

In response to Straw, I.B. Pines (letter, FE #340, Autumn 1992) asserts that, "During the Cuban missile fiasco the Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted to launch a nuclear war, which Kennedy reportedly blocked." In fact, though, there is no credible evidence that the JCS advocated such a response at any time during the crisis.

*Newsweek* magazine (Oct. 26, 1992), in an article which sycophantically praises Kennedy's "presidential leadership" in the crisis, nevertheless accurately points out that, "The Chiefs (JCS) debated an array of military options ranging from bombing Cuba, 18 days of bombing followed by invasion and five days of bombing followed by invasion, a so called quick invasion. Administration officials also discussed surgical strikes on the missiles, but the JCS thought that wouldn't work."

Kennedy rejected these options and settled on a naval blockade. The *Newsweek* article went on to say that, "Throughout the crisis Kennedy fended off pressure to use military force..." but the pressure *Newsweek* was referring to was the JCS's invasion option plan. It's true that the Cuban missile crisis could have escalated into a nuclear war between the US and the USSR, but this certainly wasn't because the JCS "wanted" one; they didn't.

It's just historical revisionism to claim the nasty generals wanted to destroy the world in 1962 but that brave President Kennedy prevented them from doing it and saved us all.

I.B. Pines also says, "Kennedy did want to eliminate the gangster outfit known as the CIA, which most likely led to his demise." Again, there is no real evidence Kennedy intended any such thing. In a recent article thoroughly refuting the Kennedy-withdrawal-from-Vietnam myth, Noam Chomsky notes that, "Another common belief is that JFK was so incensed over the failure of the CIA at the Bay of Pigs that he vowed to smash it to bits, sowing the seeds for right-wing hatreds. Again there are problems.

"As historians of the Agency have pointed out, it was Lyndon Johnson who treated the CIA 'with contempt,' while JFK's distress over the Bay of Pigs 'in no way undermined his firm faith in the principle of covert operations, and in the CIA's mission to carry them out.'

"JFK promised to 'redouble his efforts' and 'improve' covert operations. He fired the CIA's harshest critic [Chester Bowles]...The CIA was 'reestablished in White House favor' and became a 'significant voice in policy making' under Kennedy, particularly in 1963, 'as covert actions multiplied in Cuba, Laos, Vietnam and Africa.'" (Z Magazine, October 1992)

So, if the CIA is indeed a "gangster outfit," under Kennedy, they had a proud mafia don leading them.

Robert Yamada

Seaside CA

## **Anarchy in Houston**

To the Fifth Estate:

Anarchy in Houston! Members of the Houston Anarchist Collective and the CSAW Collective have opened Houston's first (and only) alternative space.

Catal Huyuk is located in the city's warehouse district and will be open seven days a week from 10 PM on (except Wednesdays and Sundays). The space will feature live music, poetry readings, theatre, discussion groups and more.

It is also the home of Houston's first anarchist coffee house series (Wednesday from 8 PM to 2 AM). The coffee house is a project of the Houston Anarchist Collective. Both groups will also participate in a community outreach program modeled after the 404 Willis space in Detroit. There will also be a bookstore/newsstand at the same site.

Catal Huyuk is democratically run as are both collectives.

We encourage others to send suggestions, comments or contributions to Catal Huyuk, 2524 McKinney, Houston TX 77003, c/o Nicky.

Yours in Anarchy,

Nicky & Everyone in the Houston scene

## **Overcrowded Prisons**

To the Fifth Estate:

The federal prison system has a close and very unhealthy relationship with the military/industrial complex. Unicor/Federal Prison Industries is a private government corporation that uses cheap inmate labor for profit and provides the military with supplies and components for its imperialist goals.

Government propaganda says, "FPI is the number one inmate management tool for overcrowded prisons." Instead, it should read, "Overcrowded prisons are the number one tool for management of FPI!" With over 80 factories across the vast chain of the gulag archipelago and untold profits, Unicor is a very lucrative business to be in!

In using this simple formula: More inmates=More factories=More profits, it's not hard to see why the U.S. leads the world in the rate of incarceration and how we were able to mobilize for Desert Storm so quickly. Unicor has a slogan that says, "Factories Within Fences," which is their statement as well as their goal. It has also been the goal for every fascist and totalitarian government of the past 60 years—from Nazi Germany's concentration camps to the Soviet Union's gulags to China's Forced labor camps.

Are we really surprised to see the same thing in this capitalist country?

From the American Gulag,

James Daniel Armstrong 04617-051

PO BX 1000

Leavenworth KS 66048

*FE Note:* For a copy of an article published by Unicor entitled, "The Persian Gulf War — Federal Prison Industries," write: Wind Chill Factor, PO BX 81961, Chicago IL 60681 and include postage.

## **Lovebite review**

Dear FE:

Sorry I've taken so long in getting back to you about the review of *Lovebite* [reviewed by Debye Highmountain in FE #337, Late Summer, 1991] particularly as you said you were anxious to hear my response.

Frankly, I was disappointed. Whereas the recent review of *Anarchy & Ecstasy* seemed quite balanced, mixing appreciation and criticism, this review consists largely of summary and criticisms.

There are one or two points with which I would take issue. For example, the reality principle fetish that dotes on “evidence”—a highly overused word in the review. I found this particularly annoying with reference to cannibalism. In *The Man-Eating Myth*—as mentioned in my text—Arens characterizes cannibalism as an imperialist myth. But his conclusions are dismissed by the reviewer on the basis of undocumented (okay, I know it’s only a review) “fairly strong evidence.”

Isn’t it rather ironic that Rexroth’s “The official version of anything is most likely false and all authority is based on fraud” is used as a headline on the page opposite to the *Lovebite* reviewer’s reliance on official versions and citations of (anonymous) authorities?

My interpretation of the FEs ideological development over the last decade or so reads as follows: In the early eighties, perhaps with Fredy Perlman acting as a catalyst, the FE made some crucial and daring theoretical innovations. But since the mid-eighties (since Fredy’s death?), the FE has reached a theoretical plateau and has largely sought to consolidate its ideological position, buttressing it with “documentation” and “evidence” derived from (respectable? mainstream?) academic “authorities” (Diamond, Clastres, etc.).

So perhaps the over-emphasis on evidence in the review isn’t really out of character with current trends in the FE. Of course, I don’t expect the FE to come up with theoretical advances in every issue. But it sometimes means that the paper has lost its theoretical daring, preferring to cite its authorities interminably, rather than develop, foster, encourage, promote or even engage with new ideas. The review of *Lovebite* is a case in point.

I guess you might regard this as merely a reactionary nostalgia for vanguardism, but I don’t see it that way. I regard avant-garde ideas in a positive light. This leads me neatly on to my central contention.

I’ve said there are one or two points in the review with which I take issue. But my real problem with the review is not with what it says, but with what it neglects to say or notice—and this is a problem not confined to any individual reviewer but, as I feel the rejection of my banshee piece indicates, remains a more general problem with the FE. (I’m just using the banshee piece as an example: there’s no rancor here. I just hope I don’t sound completely self-obsessed or paranoid! I’m trying to be helpful here, honest!)

Here’s the real source of my disappointment with the review: it doesn’t notice what I’m trying to do with form, style and language—i.e., the fact that I am trying to develop a type of writing in which the style, the form, the organizing principles are commensurate with its meaning(s); an anarchic style of writing to complement an anarchic content.

I’ve said something about this in a piece published in *British Anarchist Review* 23 (Spring 1991) entitled “On the Metafactual,” where I explain my aims by drawing a contrast/comparison between my writing and metafictional texts. Another way of approaching this issue would be to read *Lovebite* as if it were a variety of experimental writing.

As the Rousseau epigraph in my text indicates, *Lovebite* isn’t intended to be a referential text, so taxing me with historical “inaccuracies” misses the point altogether. I’m trying to push back the boundaries of what constitutes anarchic textuality, not write a history textbook, and in doing so I’m deploying a range of intentionally conflicting discourses. The incoherences, the contradictions—what Derrida would call aporias—are deliberate. Foregrounding the constructed nature of the text exposes the artificial nature of all ideological representation and liberates those suppressed energies delimited by Barthes, Derrida and Kristeva.

I am trying to challenge the master narratives of Western discourse by subverting them from within, by rendering radically ambiguous the fall/redemption paradigm that structures so much of our thought—political, spiritual, whatever. I am not interested in representing primal people. Unlike many FE writers, I don’t believe that one can unproblematically engage with primal cultures and lifeways through (anthropological or any other) discourse.

Due to the self-reflexive nature of discourse, it remains impossible to engage directly with referents (“the world out there”). All we do is allow our texts to engage in an intertextual dialogue with one another. Meaning always remains deferred. The referent always remains radically other. So, when, for example, we try to talk about primal lifeways, we are actually engaging with other texts about primal lifeways, not with those lifeways themselves, which remain inaccessible to us.

Our considerations of primal lifeways tell us more about ourselves and the structure of our discourse than about primitive peoples. A trite point, perhaps, but a not insignificant one. It’s not insignificant because it suggests the impossibility of regarding (in the reviewer’s words) “the origins of human society and culture without illusions.” Discursive encodement always renders those origins indeterminate.

Marshalling “evidence” means little more than placing artifacts within an ideologically-structured hermeneutic schema—a schema that can be used to reinforce one or other of the master narratives of Leviathanic discourse. It isn’t my intention to challenge a hegemonic narrative merely to replace it with another, but to rupture the entire narrative-making process as part of a total revolutionary project.

John Moore

London

*Lewis Cannon responds:* John Moore wants to make any claim he likes without having to answer to critics. He cites authorities to make his arguments, but objects when others use evidence to question him. When he wrote that “primal people refrained from eating their animal relatives, regarding flesh eating as disgustingly cannibalistic,” he tells us he wasn’t speculating about primal people or history but playing with texts, engaging in “literary experiment,” with meaning itself “deferred.” Convenient! In fact any knowledge (and presumably any reasoned judgment) of such matters is impossible. Then on what basis could he reject the writing of the reviewer?

Moore abandons claims to making an argument; he employs “intentionally conflicting discourse.” But he is not so forgiving about the perceived contradictions of others. One is reminded of Humpty Dumpty’s comment to Alice that words mean whatever he deems them to mean. The rest of us are expected to take his word for it—that’s anarchy, right?

But one cannot attempt literary experiment without the risk of failure. Language may redeem the text of an excellent writer whose ideas we dislike, but in Moore’s case the language is not compelling enough for us to disregard our objections. He is free to write whatever he likes. But his readers are equally free to doubt.

Finally, Moore is trying to be helpful, he assures us, in describing our long theoretical decline. His evidence is that we rejected his article. Sorry, but from here, it did sound like sour grapes.

## Aids Debate Continues

Dear Fifth Estate:

I had mixed feelings about the original AIDS article by *Romances with Wolves & Birds* [FE #339, Spring, 1992], but Peacott’s, Bacon’s and Bradford’s letters helped me clarify my misgivings. *Romances’*...response provided a clearer view of the intent of the original article and left me with a much broader understanding of an issue I have explored at some length.

Peter Laughingwolf

Santa Rose CA

## Safe sex v. environment

Dear FE:

I’m happy to see you’ve entered the debate on the AIDS disease and crisis. (See Spring and Autumn FEs 1992.)

All the letters combined hit on the key issues—the debate on co-factors, healing, activism, and safe sex. But what is the Fifth Estate arguing exactly? Is it arguing for condoms?

The calls for safe sex and condoms reminds me of the calls for recycling as a solution to the environmental crisis, which is not surprising because I think we should start thinking about AIDS in the context of the environmental crisis, that is, in the context of another interconnected threat to our species’ survival.

The AIDS issue seems to embody everything the Fifth Estate has been talking about for several years. Bradford, in his letter, insightfully points out that the current activism hinges on “the assumption that there even is a cure for AIDS,” but he doesn’t follow it up adequately.

It seems that the longer the present social system (capitalism, civilization, or whatever other name one wants to call it) continues, the more it reveals itself. The AIDS crisis is but the newest and most obvious example of the assumptions upon which the dominant society is founded.



The call for a cure to the disease is the self-justification of our social system, its hierarchy, its technology, its myth of progress. It is quasi-religious, for people are looking to the state, business, industry, and a high-tech world for salvation, for the promise of life after death (after being diagnosed HIV positive). The modern state justifies itself as our savior and our dependence is secured. For this, we should begin calling ourselves the New Heretics.

This dependency is affirmed every time we practice safe sex. Capitalism and its consequent diseases have so invaded our lives that we cannot participate in intimate physical encounters between two or several persons without worrying about our lives. Safe sex is the newest commodity activity on the market.

But what about the consequences of the condom boom? How much of the planet does your safe sex cost? That we have inexhaustible resources necessary for condom production is but another assumption activists fail to question. It is another glaring example of the way in which capitalism (and civilization) perpetuates its own myths (with great help from well meaning people). Let me be clear that this is not to diminish the sincerity of activists.

Unless we have a death wish we have no choice but to use condoms, especially those of us in the higher risk categories, just like we have no choice but to depend on the state and its industry to purify our drinking water which they continue to pollute which necessitates our dependency on a never ending cycle.

No wonder I've never enjoyed sex with condoms as much as sex without, even though AIDS activists try to diminish the pleasure difference and try to create the myth that sex with condoms is actually better. Their campaign to eroticize the condom commodity is better than anything advertisers could come up with.

Sex with condoms is beginning to feel as much an affirmation of the state as voting. And, if anything is really justified, it is humankind's increasing despair. Looking forward to more debate on the subject.

JM

Montreal, Quebec

*FE Note:* in support of the questions JM poses, he sent a news clipping discussing tropical forest destruction to provide for rubber tree cultivation. Condoms and surgical gloves have created a vast expansion of the use of latex and an increased demand for raw rubber.

## Mixed feelings

Dear Fifth Estate:

We of *Bayou La Rose*, feel your paper is very important to the anarchist struggle. I would like to write a few words about the HIV-AIDS issue (see "Anarchist Perspectives on AIDS: FE Readers and Writers Disagree," FE #340, Autumn 1992).

I fully support groups like ACT-UP that keeps pushing the issue in every way they can until a cure is found. We cannot depend on either the government or the capitalists for they do not act in the interest of the people.

I do not have any answers more than we need to keep pushing, for this is not a debate about ideas, it is a struggle for survival. Still, I believe that we must broaden the issue because what this all comes down to is health care.

The statists and capitalists do not view people's health as important, rather it is something to make profits from. AIDS teaches us the importance of health care.

If the importance of dealing with AIDS was seen in the beginning things would not be as bad as they are. This problem shows up all the time.

One of the worst is asbestos. The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare statistics estimate that between four million and eight million American workers may die of asbestos related diseases. Asbestos is in over 3,000 products. The point is that health should be at the forefront of our struggle, and not set aside if a cure to AIDS is found.

I disagree with Michael Bacon (see last issue's discussion on AIDS) that few anarchists are paying attention to AIDS. I have seen articles in most anarchist papers, including the good discussion in your paper. In the Bayou we have printed a number of articles about AIDS in prison.

The one area I disagree with ACT-UP on is when they push aside other struggles for their own. Two examples of this happening will make my point.

We had a Leonard Peltier rally planned for three months and then some politician comes to town and ACT-UP calls a demo at the same time even though they knew about the rally. On Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>, native people and others had anti-columbus events throughout the Americas and in Europe, so ACT-UP puts on a D.C. demo at the White House. They said their issue was too important to step aside for one day.

For 500 years native struggles have had to wait for one day of international protest. ACT-UP could have waited a day. Such racism does not build common struggle. Also, there is little talk about AIDS and people of color and about how bad AIDS is in Africa. AIDS has been made into a white gay issue rather than a human issue.

Will these people fight just as hard for health care and against other diseases once there is a cure for AIDS? This is one area where anarchists should make a difference and not let people of color and poor people forever ride at the back of the bus behind privileged white folks.

Arthur J. Miller  
Bayou La Rose  
P.O. Box 5464  
Tacoma WA 98415

## Flawed “total critique”

Fifth Estate:

I want to comment on George Bradford's response to my letter regarding HIV/AIDS (FE #340, Autumn 1992). More exactly, on the line near the end, “Is keeping some people alive (or even staying alive) worth maintaining that whole edifice of misery and oppression?” So this is what your “total critique of anti-technology/civilization” has led to? Then, your “critique” is less than useless and something to be ashamed of.

While reading your response, I thought it was predictable, dogmatic, and disappointing, until the above quote. I was shocked by it and still am. It makes sense that a “total critique” experienced in a vacuum can lead to extremes. Or is this statement from the frustration which must come from the incoherence you feel believing in such a “critique”?

In my earlier letter, I had related the tale of my companion who has Marfan's Syndrome—a genetic disorder, potentially fatal, which predates industry and commerce. I asked you what your “total critique” would say to her. This section was not printed along with the rest. I assumed it was in part because of the difficulty for one of your persuasions to actually tell someone to drop dead rather than make use of science. I was wrong. Your answer is very clear.

If your “total critique” is of such value that you can recommend people with HIV/AIDS or Marfan's die in order to not help maintain the edifice of misery and oppression (which is their decision and not that of anyone outside of their experience), then I ask you to do two things. The first is to go to some persons with HIV/AIDS or Marfan's and tell them in person.

The second is to give up your job, nice home, and health insurance; go to the country, what's left of it, and live your fucking “total critique” totally. It would accomplish one thing for certain—you would no longer be called “hypocrite.”

Don't mistake the lack of response to your writing for opprobrium. More likely it indicates a vacancy of an audience or, at least, one that cares. Also, don't put the FE in the false position of having something to say about HIV/AIDS, poverty, racism, crime, etc. You can have real interaction only with Zerzan, the zealots at Anarchy magazine, Earth First, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Cardinal O'Connor.

HIV/AIDS is a little more complicated, dynamic, and revealing than your dogma can allow. There would be no point in trying to convince you of this. I hope there is a point in your knowing that your thoughts and words are grotesque and unforgivable.

Michael Bacon  
Jersey City, N.J.

*George Bradford responds:* Michael Bacon's pain is apparently great—he is starting to sound as if he thinks he is the only one who has seen loved ones suffer and die. His letter is little more than an outburst of rage. He isn't treating this discussion with a clear mind; otherwise how could he turn my concluding statement that “our responses

to medicalization cannot be a simple one, and is definitely not a question of abandoning all medicine” into a recommendation that people simply die to conform to some “total critique” (a term which I did not use)? Likewise, he calls my letter predictable and dogmatic, even though its intent, clearly, was to point out the problem of seeking easy answers, and only a third of it was devoted to the medicalization/bioengineering question.

I’m sorry if Michael finds my raising of difficult questions “unforgivable” and “shameful.” But let’s remember that they were raised as questions, not answers. He seems to be completely unaware that such matters are being discussed at great length in the literature of so-called medical or bioethics—questions that modern technology brought into being and to which neither our cultural experience nor technology itself has adequate answers.

All that technology offers in response is public relations for itself and faith in itself. Michael will at least forgive me, I hope, if I do not share this faith, whether it is I or someone else whom technology promises to save from disease and death

The parent of a three-ounce newborn, or the dying person in need of multiple organ transplants, or the person suffering from an incurable disease hoping for some miraculous genetic engineering breakthrough might not want to hear of limits, of pulling back from technology’s promises, of a greater good that might transcend one’s own circumstances and personal suffering.

But while my own mind is still relatively clear, I want to raise such questions, in part because I may need to confront them later (and likely will), and also because society (if we are any longer a society in a meaningful sense) needs to ask them with its own continuance in mind.

Human beings have lived with suffering, disease and death from our origins.

Technology raises the false hope of escape; for every syndrome and illness there is a cure, we are told, as long as we give science a *carte blanche* and follow instructions carefully. Few have asked what this process does to us as a society, to culture, or to our prospects of survival for that matter.

But well being is a cultural construct, not an immutable, universally equivalent, objective condition. One culture’s health is another’s hell. It’s certainly no manifestation of an extremist “total critique” to point out modern technological civilization’s denial of death; it is the other side of its denial of life. And suffering isn’t eliminated, since it cannot be. As Ivan Illich writes in *Medical Nemesis*, “The technical and nontechnical consequences of institutional medicine coalesce and generate a new kind of suffering: anesthetized, impotent and solitary survival in a world turned into a hospital ward.”

But this “perception of medical nemesis leads to a choice,” Illich argues: “Either the natural boundaries of human endeavor are estimated, recognized and translated into politically determined limits, or compulsory survival in a planned and engineered hell is accepted as the alternative to extinction.” Presumably, Michael also finds Illich’s remarks “unforgivable.”

But the question remains nevertheless. There is always some limit one reaches when going on is no longer worth it. We can all imagine numerous scenarios of a life not worth living. Capitalism has conditioned us on the other hand to consider survival of an individual life as the ultimate, unquestionable end (this, ironically, while cheapening and destroying life in unprecedented ways). And saving individual lives must be carried out no matter what the consequences, even if it means the total instrumentalization of life or possible (inevitable, really) biogenetic catastrophe.

Clearly, if it were possible to utilize mass medical institutions and genetic engineering in a vacuum, as an entirely separate, personal choice, there would be no controversy. But it isn’t—mass technics affects the whole world around it. That was precisely the question I raised that Michael refused to consider. I wrote, “Bioengineering may likely help a few people to live longer or better, but what of its overall effect on society, the human organism, and the natural world? Is Michael and are we all willing to live with all of those implications and the obvious risks that such intervention necessitates? And let there be no illusions: you can’t have the medical technologies which he defends without the enormous labs, blind experimentation, instrumental exploitation of nature, and complex work hierarchies that constitute the megamachine.”

That is the question Michael found unforgivable and hypocritical. He chose to malign it but not to respond to it, accusing me instead of rejecting all medicine and challenging me to tell people they must die to fulfill the demands of my “total critique.” A rather demagogic argument; but let us turn it around for a moment. Given that he seems to have little objection to mass medicalization if it might possibly help someone he loves, then is he willing to accept

the terrifying consequences for biological and symbolic life genetic manipulation portends along with the miracles it promises of keeping some people (him, or me) alive?

Now it has been reported that a new, more virulent and resistant AIDS virus has appeared, transmitted from AZT users to others. Michael defended (at least obliquely) the use of AZT in his first letter. Is he willing now to accept that it may cause others to sicken and die? Will Michael now face them? Where does he draw the line, recognize limits? The two-ounce baby? Brain transplants? Genetic engineering only to here, but not to there? Who is dogmatic—and who is the hypocrite?

In *Autonomous Technology*, Langdon Winner writes, “The force of technological imperatives is reinforced by their connection to what are perceived as the necessities of life. Certain technical means stand at the very basis of human survival. Failure to provide for them is to invite discomfort, suffering, or even death. For this reason the technological imperative is much more than a functional requirement. It is also a moral standard, a way of distinguishing the good from the bad, the rational from the irrational, the sane from the insane. It tells us what is necessary for our continued existence and happiness. Any attempt to deny this necessity can only be an expression of malice, stupidity, or madness. If we have chosen to utilize electrical apparatus in many of the basic activities of life, then we absolutely must have all the means necessary for the supply of electricity. We must build as many power plants as are necessary to take care of the need. There are some things we cannot do without.”

In the past, because we criticized and questioned mass technics, the FE was accused by others, in the same self-righteous tone of outrage and indignation that Michael Bacon now employs, of wanting to reduce people to “dirt-scratching primitives” or worse. In fact, all I have ever proposed is that we begin to set limits, begin a process of inquiry and deconstruction of the trap we have built for ourselves, understanding, after Winner and others, not only technology’s wider possibilities, but its wider demands.

If it is an appropriate question in regards to the energy grid, mass communications and computers, petrochemicals and other destructive aspects of the megamachine, it is no less important for health.

What is health, after all? Just as industrial capitalism’s premises are that true wealth comes from maximum production and energy output, it assumes that health is the result of increased intervention into and management of life by medical and social science.

But health is more—or perhaps better to say it is something wholly other—than that. Health must be redefined beyond the parameters of industrialism. Genuine health could never mean ever-increasing dependence on powerful technocratic institutions, professional hierarchies and synthetic (including genetically engineered) drugs, but rather autonomy from such forces—the autonomy to face not only our life but also our death.

Bioengineering, in combination with information technology, is the next stage in the development of technocratic capital’s house of horrors, promising to resolve hunger, ecological devastation, and disease. But we already know where this promise leads: to where we find ourselves now, with the Dream of Progress proved nightmare, and the conditions of life unravelling. Now we face a biological roulette that will be far costlier to us as a species than even nuclear power. Some may find it unforgivable for us to raise these questions; but if we do not, the future prospects for life will be even less forgiving.

Finally, let me say for the record that I argued for printing Michael Bacon’s letter in its entirety, but it was very long, and contained personal attacks on other correspondents, so I was overruled. The longer one’s letter, the more one can expect it to be cut. Inquiring in advance about long responses is a good idea.

## Not Reformist

Dear Fifth Estate:

I’d like to respond to George Bradford’s writings on AIDS [in last issue]. Bradford discussed “an emerging philosophical rejection of the consciousness...of modern industrial capitalism in general and its medical paradigm in particular.” He went on to write, “AIDS activism, the most militant form being ACT-UP, does not address this question at all.” At all?

While I have some difficulties with the general thrust of ACT-UP, Bradford’s blanket statement negates reality (some of which he may be unaware), and I’d like to set the record straight (the only thing I wish to set straight!).

Bradford wrote that he has seen ACT-UP “do little more than use ostensibly radical tactics to make reformist demands on politicians, the state and the corporate empire.” I guess you did not see ACT-UP join together with persecuted Haitians, Mexicans, and Central Americans to protest the brutality of borders, and their effect on refugees and persons with AIDS. Some AIDS activists have articulated anti-statist positions strikingly similar to anarchist voices for a world without borders.

I will never forget my comradery with Michael Ryan (now dead), an ACT-UP member whose energetic spirit I cherished as we protested the Nevada nuclear weapons testing. Michael knew that the military corporate madness weakened the earth and the immune system of all its beings.

Michael Smith was another dear friend and AIDS activist who went beyond reformism. He was a native rights activist in Toronto, a queer performer, and a Radical Faerie who sought alternative therapies while criticizing the hierarchical, industrial medical system. Throughout his struggles with AIDS-related illnesses, he remained a dreamer of anarchy. We once took a break from a massive ACT-UP demonstration to feast on wild edible weeds growing near the urban concrete. This didn’t save Michael’s life, but it nourished his sissy boy nature spirit.

Ortez Alderson burned Vietnam draft files and struggled to have the Black Panthers integrate lesbian and gay liberation into its efforts. Later, he struggled in ACT-UP to help voice the views of people of color who demanded that they not be marginalized by white AIDS leaders. He untiringly challenged the all too common corporate-style AIDS bureaucracies. Fittingly, when my close friend Ortez died, his lover Arthur publicly rejected the City of Chicago’s gay achievement award for Ortez, thereby rejecting the posthumous, guilt-ridden overtures of the state.

There are my living friends too, including my boy friend of 4-1/2 years who is HIV infected and sifting through the confusing mess of medical decay to find a path of herbal and nutritional health. There are ACT-UP women undermining patriarchal control of their bodies. There are people getting arrested for simply distributing condoms to high school students.

There is ACT-UP Amsterdam meeting in a squat, seeking to crack the mythology of the utopian, liberal state. There is a gathering of queer anarchists in Germany this month addressing AIDS among other concerns. The list goes on.

AIDS activists are not all stooges who “demand the empire provide a cure for disease.” We are not all angels either. We can’t wave our arms and wither away the state and its technologies. Some of us might even choose distasteful survival mechanisms so that we can be around longer to strike blows to corporate capitalism. These might include invasive medical procedures, or using cars to get around, or mailing newspapers through the government post office.

I agree with Bradford that “the industrial mystique can only lead us closer to our own extinction.” It is not such a simple message to convey. We can begin by acknowledging the efforts of those AIDS activists who are not mere cheerleaders for reform.

Faerily yours,  
Mark Weinstein  
Ann Arbor MI

*George Bradford responds:* Thanks to Mark Weinstein for giving a fuller picture of ACT-UP. As Mark himself points out, the activities of more radical elements are frequently overshadowed by the reformist, pressure-group orientation. I’m glad that the radicals are there; with Mark, I mourn those whose stories he tells.

I also hope it’s clear I have never dictated how an individual should face disease. My criticisms of technological medicine are social; I’d never presume to tell someone to pick either chemotherapy or alternative practices. Every decision is part of a context. I only hope that as a society we learn to make decisions that are best in the long run for the planet and for ourselves.

## **Beware Black Shades... and Ideological Blinders**

Dear Fifth Estate:

A comment on your “Pornography and Pleasure: Beyond Capital, Beyond Patriarchy” (FE #340, Autumn 1992):

On first reading, I sensed some alter ego behind the text, an educated young woman, maybe Iranian, struggling to tear the veil away; a discourse loaded with the signifiers of sexual repression—"veil of fear," "deepest erotic secrets," "rebel," "sexually deprived condition," "unmentionable." After all, how could the "Free World," two and a half decades on from counter-culture, feminist liberation and sexual revolution, produce such desperation?

But this is a North American text, albeit couched in Foucauldian vocabularies of "pleasure," "resistance," "the gaze," and spiced ambiguously with references to Marx's commodity fetish. So, why the relapse? What's happened in the last 25 years, that radicals should come to defend a capitalist industry, Porn, in the name of liberty and life?

The '60s taught us about this too—"repressive tolerance." In other words, systems of domination constantly remodel their terror by stealing the very tools of those who dissent. Moreover, the State, with its vacuous First Amendment Rights, in this instance, allows constitutional protection to the new compulsory consumption. Here's the rub: pornography is bourgeois morality in its contemporary form!

But sexuality, whether mediated by silicon, metal, petroleum jelly, electric current or not, isn't really about consuming. It's not a linear process of gratification tailored to individual tastes. Sex is about sharing life energies between ourselves, our partners, our environment. Plants, for example, have been found to move in response to orgasmic sounds from human lovemakers nearby. Some eco-feminists believe sharing sex on a beach or among trees sets up energies that heal the distracted flows of our planet. Fucking in these ways, just like using our hands to work the earth, helps reconnect our senses, mends fractured communication with each other.

Industrial societies rape and colonize human bodies and their living habitat through the media, computers, pharmaceuticals, cars. We are routinely numbed and disempowered by highly specialized work. Literally, we lose touch. North America has gone the furthest along this hi-tech track, and the sensory deprivation of people here is intense, deforming, brutalizing. Pornography presents itself as a solution to this condition; but those who would politicize their fix as challenge to the status quo are duped.

Not surprisingly, the author of "Porn and Pleasure" longs to "discover what our living body is..." This self-reliant anarchist advocates noncommercial "do it yourself" varieties of titillation. Yet the call for aphrodisiacs is symptomatic of and plays into the hands of political repression.

The recent proliferation of reductive sexual "identities"—punk, drag queen, polysexual—indicates how profound the authoritarian denial of diversity is in this culture. Porn star Annie Sprinkle's vaudeville exhibitionism and the reformist lifestyle politics that support it, do nothing to expose, let alone undercut, the roots of techno-anesthesia. And not just porn, but even intellectual analysis ad nauseam of rape, serial killing, AIDS and death, serve the craving for stimulation. Just to be able to feel...

The modern world certainly is "sterile" as "Porn and Pleasure" says. but the instrumentalization of sex is no answer to that. Quantification of sexual release with ever inflated "numbers of partners," number of positions," number of holes "resourced" or newly engineered "parts" to enjoy, doesn't necessarily bring more pleasure. If anything, good sex has more to do with history than geography: communication between trusted ones, subtly evolving its messages over time.

Though it appears to move beyond the phallic principle, post-modern porn is no less patriarchal in its destructive logic. To look at Guy Hocquenghem (quoted in "Porn and Pleasure") again: "What we want, what we desire, is to kick in the facade over sexuality and its representations...We want to free, release, unfetter, and relieve this living body so as to free all its energies, desires, passions, crushed by our conscriptive and programmed social system."

What is not understood is that pornographic sex is the ultimate expression of capitalist industrialism. The creative organization of energies given in "Nature" is abandoned for the law of the commodity, the exchange principle, homogeneity, equivalence. Any partner—every orifice—is equal to every other. Just as in cancer, every cell is equal to every other, multiplying "in their pleasure," unfettered consumption, structureless death. Cancer, human end-product of the technological era, is a perfect analog to its fissioning culture.

The porn v. anti-porn debate is pitifully North American, parochial and middle class to the core. The murderous politics of triple-X-rated video snuff—resulting in live dismemberment, even disemboweling of Third World "starlets" is waved aside in the clamor to consume. But the hyper-sexualization of femininity in "developing and developed nations" alike, keeps women workers harassed, intimidated and pliable for capital. The psychological sense of male power many men experience from the degradation of women provides scaffolding for economic exploitation.

Feminist celebrants of porn would be wise not to dance with the ghost of Columbus, yet they seem to forget these political questions when they accuse anti-porn campaigners of being “in collusion with” the religious Right. MacKinnon, Dworkin, Stoltenberg, et. al. are not unreconstructed moralizers. They are forceful opponents of religious mores—Judeo-Christian, Islamic, or whatever patriarchal belief systems—now working neatly with capital and bringing devastation to people’s lives. To the life force.

In dealing with pornography, we need to draw on both radical analyses of the commodity, labor relations, imperialism, and on radical feminist deconstructions of systemic misogyny. However, anti-porn groups might also strengthen their case if they pushed beyond men’s predictable victimization of women after pornographic arousal. They could build broader alliances by focusing on how the patriarchal split of “Man versus Nature” leads to wholesale violation of peoples of color, women, children, animals, plants, the earth.

Hopefully, a post-patriarchal, post-capitalist sexuality will renew the pulse that joins us to each other and to the wide green world. Pleasure sure is “due for redefinition.” But we won’t be able to “re-humanize” erotica as “Porn and Pleasure” urges, until human relations with nature are represented differently. Women who are secure in their sexual subjectivity are not threatened by this. Individually and collectively, we have everything to gain by reasserting our “identity with nature”—and in helping men to discover theirs as well.

How we work with nature to satisfy human needs and how we live together, will have to change, of course. Industrial economies which pulverize the earth and labor power, spoil water and air, can’t nurture and sustain sensual awareness. In reply to “Pornography and Pleasure” then: No, we won’t be needing porn in Utopia, and it isn’t really needed now either! Meantime, on the road to revolution, beware black plastic shades. They have too much in common with veils.

Ariel Salleh  
New York

*Sunfrog responds:* I’d like to thank Ariel Salleh for her passionate and articulate response to my discussion of erotic representation. I was able to remove my “black plastic shades” to give her thoughts several close readings and found many points on which we agree, several places in which my article was misunderstood and a basic ideological disagreement accentuated by different definitions of that problematic term, “porn,” which separates our arguments like a semantic wedge, a virtual monkey-wrench of meaning.

“Porn” can not be both a fluid term ripe for redefinition by libertarian feminists and “the ultimate expression of capitalist industrialism.” Perhaps my piece should have been called “Poetry and Pleasure” or “Pictures and Pleasure.” Yet it seems Salleh envisions a liberated world which abandons all mediation and representation of desire for “sharing sex on a beach or among trees.” Of course such moments suggest healing for our sexualities and our planet, but not everyone has the privilege to spend such idyllic moments in the sun. Those of us trapped in the industrial cities of capital may only discover such pleasures by the mediated description offered by Salleh.

Do the typewriter, the camera or the paintbrush always turn “sharing” into “consumption”? Were the rhetorical questions I asked about the “alienating” aspect of all “mediated representation” simply ignored? How does the erotic art of the ancients and indigenous peoples from all over the world fit into the “pitifully North American” and “middle class” nature of this debate?

I wholeheartedly share Salleh’s sentiment that we must move beyond the “patriarchal split” of “Man” and “Nature.” I agree that “human relations with nature” should be “represented differently” just as I suggested the need for representing different gender relations between men and women. I find it quite interesting that Annie Sprinkle, who Salleh criticizes for her “reformist lifestyle politics,” seems to share Salleh’s sentiments when Sprinkle writes about her erotic relationship with the sky or when she urges people to “make love to the earth and sky and all things and they will make love to you.” (See “Beyond bisexual,” by Annie Sprinkle in the anthology *Bi Any Other Name*, available from the FE bookstore.)

This debate poses complex questions in a society plagued by intricate networks of mediation and domination. Rather than resolve the interrelated issues raised, I hoped my article would provoke more questions, suggest erotic alternatives, and expose the reductive absolutism proclaimed by both sides of the “porn v. anti-porn” debate. It seems Salleh understood the problematic nature of this discussion but preferred to revert to polar oppositions, aligning herself with the rigid doctrines of anti-porn crusaders Andrea Dworkin, Catherine MacKinnon and John Stoltenberg.

These activists do share some things in common with anti-authoritarians and are not the “same” as the religious right, but when they call upon the State to impose laws preventing the production, distribution and consumption of “porn,” they are not just moralisers, they are vigilante censors and cops. (MacKinnon supporters recently confiscated a videotape from an exhibition by multimedia artist Carol Jacobsen, “Porn’im’age’ry: Picturing Prostitutes, at the University of Michigan. When the artist confronted the students who removed the tape, it was decided the entire exhibit should be taken down.)

In the process of writing this response I consulted the writings of Dworkin (*Pornography: Men Possessing Women*) to give her opinions a second chance. While she clearly and correctly detects a penchant for destruction, disguised as sexuality, in a culture dominated by the phallic principle, she sees nothing else. She envisions no alternative sexuality and inadvertently endorses restrictive sex roles as she meticulously deconstructs the most offensive examples of porn she can find. I myself might be compelled to burn some of the magazines she cites in her book but she neatly equates her horrifying examples with all porn and all men. In the world of Dworkin’s discourse all men are “penises and fists and knives and fucks and rapes” and women are still “vile whores,” “masochistic sluts” and “voracious cunts.” While Dworkin obviously opposes such male supremacist stereotypes, her language leaves no room for a gentle, free, consensual sexuality. Hardly a recipe for a loving world or revolution.

Salleh misread, or perhaps I misrepresented, my celebration of a multiplicitous, polymorphous sexuality as an expression of the “more is better” principle endemic to capital. Sexual deviance in the era of the nuclear family is often qualitatively opposed to the “natural” sexuality of “family values.” The “polysexuals” and “drag queens” of pagan and pre-capitalist societies were seen as magicians with unique spiritual powers rather than as perpetrators of “reductive sexual identities.” Transgendered people have been around for millennia; they have not been recently “engineered” by capitalism. Also, one can identify with deviant sexuality and remain a practicing heterosexual or celibate. Reconnecting with the “wide green world” does not require reinscription of conventional notions of masculinity and femininity.

Salleh’s reading and response sadly ignored many key questions central to my text, especially the opinions we seem to hold in common. Instead she tailored her response as a rant against industrial capitalism, something we both oppose.

I see the possibility of erotic literature more in the realm of “sharing” than in notions of “instrumentalization,” “stimulants,” “quantification” and “fix” that Salleh assigns to my arguments. I acknowledge that in a repressed, industrial society, “porn” can act as a substitute for erotic communication, love and trust. If taken to one extreme, “porn” will evolve in modern society until cybersex replaces sensual liberation in a “virtual reality” matrix of hyper-mediation. I don’t want that “fix” and we don’t need it, as Salleh eloquently warns us.

Was not my article, along with Salleh’s response, more about sexual liberation in stark contrast to the “sex industry”? If “porn” cannot be reinvented outside the logic of commodity consumption, perhaps a new term is needed. Further entrenching in the oppositions of man against woman, people versus the earth, will not end domination. While Salleh seems fully cognizant of the need to move beyond such polemical polarizations, she nevertheless cites arguments which reinforce these debilitating dichotomies.

Salleh doesn’t need porn and that’s great. I never wanted to claim that erotica is as “necessary” to revolution as the halting of industrial capital. By the same token, those of us who want to continue to read stories and look at pictures which express a free sexuality before and after the revolution are not unequivocal defenders of “capitalist industry.” I still believe erotic representation created by opponents of capital and patriarchy can express profound liberatory potential for women, men and the planet.

Beware of ideological blinders. They have too much in common with black shades.



# fifth Estate

Various Authors  
Letters to the Fifth Estate  
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