

Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

2002

Fifth Estate Letters Policy

We welcome letters commenting on our articles, stating opinions, or giving reports of events in your area. We don't guarantee to print everything received, but all letters are read by our staff and considered for publication.

Typed letters or ones on disk are appreciated, but not required. Length should not exceed two double-spaced pages. If you are interested in writing longer responses, please contact us.

Color Ink Toxic?

To the Fifth Estate:

I don't like seeing the use of colored inks in the *Fifth Estate*. I'm afraid they are more likely to be toxic; am I wrong? It's nice to be able to use newspaper for mulch or kindling, although I do tend to save yours.

Jimmy Griffin
Palmyra, New Jersey

Wilde's Tomb

To the Fifth Estate:

While reading "Sexual Anarchy: The Monument to Oscar Wilde" in FE #355, Fall/Winter 2000, the details of the controversy surrounding Wilde's tomb seemed familiar to me and I wondered where I had previously read about it, then I remembered that it was mentioned by the legendary occult figure Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) in his autobiographical confessions (*The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, John Symonds and Kenneth Grant, eds. Penguin Arkana, 1989). Reportedly finished in the late 1920s but not completely published until 1969).

Because *Confessions* was dictated under the influence of heroin, not to mention what some regard as Crowley's megalomania, it is highly suspect on many factual issues, but is still interesting and entertaining.



Oscar Wilde's Paris tomb became a battleground for sexual liberation.

In *Confessions* Crowley, in typical fashion, places himself at the center of the Wilde tomb affair. He claims credit, in a seemingly farfetched scenario, for removing the tarpaulin from the monument (the design of which he dismisses as “lumpish and top-heavy”), and says that he was the man recalled by the tomb’s sculptor, Jacob Epstein, as appearing at the Cafe Royal wearing the bronze plaque (shaped like a butterfly, according to Crowley) that had covered the sculpture’s genitals.

Contrary to Epstein’s statement quoted in the article that “a band of artists and poets...made a raid upon the monument and removed this plaque,” Crowley recounts that he removed it by himself, concealed it under his coat, and left the cemetery with it. Well, who knows.

By the way, in *The Book of Lies* (1913) Crowley wrote, “While there exists the burgess, the hunting man, or any man with ideals less than Shelley’s and self-discipline less than Loyola’s—in short, any man who falls far short of myself—I am against Anarchy, and for Feudalism.”

He was a caution.

Thelema,

Dingo Dogman

Fifth Estate note: Maurice Spira, whose wonderful art has graced these pages for years, including the WTO cover drawing of issue #355, wrote to say that when he visited Wilde’s grave site in the 1980s, it was covered with graffiti and the genitals had been smashed off the statue.

Also, the standard cause of Wilde’s death in a Paris hotel in 1900 is usually ascribed to meningitis caused by venereal disease. Recently, however, South African researchers put the blame on a relapse from a longstanding ear infection.

There is no clinical evidence to support the theory that Wilde had contracted syphilis, but rather it easily fit the scandal and controversy that surrounded the writer. Wilde’s years in prison aggravated an already existing ear condition for which he had an operation in his hotel room several weeks before he died.

Not Science

FE friends,

Quite an article in the last FE—by Mosa Charlo—on Anxiety Disorders [see FE #355, Fall-Winter, 2000]. I liked it. But wondering why Mosa checked herself into

a mental ward to begin with. And even more wondering why, if she's anti-tech, toward the article's end she's thinking of having surgery on her stomach!

Maybe I shouldn't wonder. Mosa, no different from practically all folks on the left or into anarchism, still has faith in that extraordinarily authoritarian institution known as modern medicine. Radical folk, in fact—what irony!—are more medically-oriented than the rest of the population. I guess 'cause they consider modern medicine a science.

But I got news! Modern medicine is no science! No more than the prehistoric shamans had been. No more than the medieval doctors had been. Why no science? Because the living body is self-healing, self-sustaining. Any wound or infection, if kept clean, will, however slowly, heal itself, though sometimes not without a one-, two-, or three-day fast.

Mosa's stomach trouble would be no exception to this naturalism, this anarcho-healthcare. And that's the true-blue science.

S. Colman

FE Note: S. Colman is the author of *No More Medical Bills* and *Anarcho-Healthcare*.

Nader O.K.

To the Fifth Estate:

I disagree with Walker Lane's opinion in his article, "Saying No to Nader," in FE #355, Fall-Winter, 2000.

I worked with the Nader campaign here in Humboldt County, California. Our literature was moderately progressive to radical. We reached many people (13 percent for Nader), exposing the corporate death grip, U.S. imperialism, the prison-industrial complex, corporate health care, corporate destruction of the biosphere, the subversion of electoral politics by corporate cash, U.S. genocide in Iraq, etc.

Most average Americans don't have a clue about these issues as they're brainwashed by the corporate/state media cartels. How many people who sat out the election did you reach? How many are reached via obscure anarchist magazines?

There will be no change when 75 percent of Americans remain brainwashed. Radicals must counter corporate/state propaganda wherever and whenever possible. The Nader campaign provided a great opportunity for this.

David Ross
McKinleyville, Calif.

Monkey Shines

To the Fifth Estate:

I've been disturbed lately about all the jokes comparing George W. Bush to a monkey. (FE note: see BushOrChimp.com, uncuriousgeorge.com, etc.). It's insulting to the primates of the world.

I happen to like monkeys, and don't want the perception of them to be changed for the worse. After all, they have it hard enough in this world without being compared to the likes of W.

Therefore, I've dug out an old poem by Guy Lockwood that sums up quite well how I feel.

Julie Herrada

Ann Arbor, Mich.

They tell me man from monkeys came,

With this I might agree.

But, Gosh all Friday, its a shame,

Or seemeth so to me,

To class a monkey with a man.

Here I arise to say

It isn't fair, denounce the plan;

I just stand for fair play.

.

What has a monkey ever done

To merit such abuse?

He lives as Nature's loving son;

Fashions no creeds obtuse;

He doesn't smoke, he doesn't chew,

Nor drink white mule or beer,

And to his mate he's kind and true,

Nor rules his child with fear.

.

He doesn't work for any boss,

Out in his forest, wild,

But shares his gain, likewise his loss

With kindred undefiled.

He never built a private fence

Around his cocoa tree,

Nor put up signs,

"Keep off the Grass!"

.

The monkey, far as I can see.

Has lived life as he should.

You say man came from Monkey? Bah!

That theory is no good.

At least if it is really true,

Get ready, pack your sack,

For I am sure that I can show

We really should go BACK.

—Guy Lockwood

No Images

Dear Fifth Estate:

I recently subscribed to your publication after seeing a 1995 issue with an interesting article; a critique of the Internet. When I finally received my first issue (Fall/Winter 2000), I was rather surprised. Color; who needs it?

Secondly, have you thought about the images in the issues? I doubt you have. Could you tell me what led you to waste so much space with images, and I shall concentrate on photos because they irritate me more than the drawings in this issue.

What exactly should I be thinking while looking at the photo on the first half of page one? (FE note: a large color photo of marchers at the April 2000 anti-World Bank demonstration in Washington DC.) What does it tell me? What value does it have; what relevance or importance? None whatsoever.

Don't you think we can more or less visualize a demo in our minds without wasting 435.2 square centimeters? The same goes for the second photo on page one (98.77 cm²); pointless image. In case you feel there is no better way to capture slogans carried around at demos, I'd suggest, treat them as what they are, text.

The rest of the images in the paper more or less follow the same tendency, images pointlessly included, images (photos especially) which do not add anything to the text.

All in all, 2044.88 square centimeters of photos which amounts to 2.373 pages! Well, you might ask, why this pedantic interest in square centimeters?

The answer is that besides the waste of space, I worry more about the meaning and consequences of this tendency. We live in a social order where images play a not insignificant role. What role? I hope I don't have to refer to the multiple criticisms of the role of images within the present framework of social relationships.

Please don't turn FE into a "news" paper; "news" are always messages of power and images usually increase their manipulatory content and effect. As another reader said, it was better when there were theoretical texts, less self-congratulatory accounts of "how we faced the cops" in this and that city. Not that I think demos are not important; they are. I participated

in the anti-WTO protests on Sept. 26 and felt a great deal of satisfaction from the outcome of them. But I would never go as far as boring people with fairy tales about street battle bravery or anti-cop demo strategy, lengthy narratives. There are more important things to say about IMF, WTO, etc., than what the cops did, or didn't use, etc.

Moreover, if I look at the message on the back page (FE note: an anti-technology poster), I cannot help but think that you have failed to resist the infection of advertising. One does not need to read theoreticians like Guy Debord to realize that communication seems to be replaced entirely by advertising. The image is not only a parody of ads, counter-ad, it is formally an ad!!! And, this is more or less true about most photos in the issue.

Roman Dergam

Prague, Czech Republic

Peter Werbe responds: As you indicate, the power of the image dominates within the spectacle of modern society as enunciated a generation ago by Debord and the Situationists. But, perhaps contradictorily, they were fond of using images to illustrate their texts, and their idea of detournement, rendering an ad or comic strip so it made its opposite point or an ironical one, was used as well.

It's also easy to agree that the empty image predominates in much of what passes for today's journalism with the standard being People magazine, and other such popular rubbish. Readers expect short, facile articles accompanied by photos that titillate or affirm already held beliefs.

Does the *Fifth Estate* do that? I hope not. I did the graphic design on the front page in question and used the photos, not as a substitute for people's imagining of the text, nor to communicate the message of their signs. Rather, to illustrate people breaking rules and confronting institutions of oppression.

For the Garden

Dear Fifth Estate Folk:

As an anarchist socialist, and an organic grower, although I prefer the label of ecological over organic, I am tired and perturbed by people claiming to be anarchist and engaging in acts of destroying plants that have nothing whatsoever to do with genetic engineering.

Obviously, such people know nothing about growing and the history of cultivating. They would do well by

starting with the great anarchist socialist theorist and gardener, Peter Kropotkin's, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*, or a more aptly updated version by Colin Ward, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops Tomorrow*.

Persons who destroy non-genetically engineered plants and leave behind the international anarchist socialist circle "A" symbol have forgotten or do not know that the first principle of anarchist socialism has always been that first we create, then we see what has to be destroyed.

The Earth is not a thing to dominate, nor is it something that can be returned to some pure, pristine, pastoral, pre-human, natural state. Humans are nature, conscious of itself, therefore, it is our responsibility to cultivate a very possible earthly paradise. Literally, it is the calling of all anarchist socialists to make people knowledgeable that this planet is our garden to cultivate.

Yes, social and ecological ugliness are also a human creation, but we can cultivate a more beautiful garden. This does not mean the elimination of the wild. The wild becomes our responsibility to preserve as part of our garden. The garden that I engender and nurture is a mix of wild places, a mix of wild and planned, and planned. Failure to create our garden is our failure. Ignorance has always been the enemy of freedom.

Writing from the garden,

Will Petry

Williston Park, N.Y.



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